

Effects of an Early Childhood Education Program with Parent Involvement on oral Language Acquisition

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Abstract: Sixty children, ages four to five, and their parents participated in a 36 week study, located at three sites in Orange County, California, to determine if the children would increase their oral language proficiency levels through participation in language-rich and print-rich activities. Ninety percent of the children were Hispanic with a home language of Spanish. The children attended a two day preschool session and a one day parent/child Bridge session and received curricular interventions for oral language development and phonemic awareness. Teachers received 101 hours of training on language acquisition and emergent literacy. Parents attended a weekly parent/child Bridge session where they were instructed on principles of child development and emergent literacy. Between sessions, parents participated in oral language home activities and submitted a log of these activities. The children were administered the Pre-IPT Oral test at the beginning and end of the study to measure oral language gains in both English and Spanish.

The findings in this research study reported out of 60 students, a majority of the students increased at least one English designation level and 2 students gained two levels. Thirty-one students scored as Fluent English Speaking. Fifty-four students took both the English and Spanish Pre-IPT Oral test, 15 students increased at least one Spanish designation level and 38 students scored as Fluent Spanish Speaking. Students increased their English scores based on days of attendance and oral language home activities. Children whose parents had 7-9 years of schooling made the greatest gains in English. The largest student gain in Spanish scores was from the eight students whose parents had some college experience. Parents, at each of the three schools, continued to be involved in their children's classroom following the end of the study. This study's findings revealed that by providing a no-cost preschool to the most at-risk children, primarily from Spanish-speaking homes, will increase both their English and Spanish language proficiency levels. This study also found that parent directed activities helped reduce the school readiness gap and that parents continued to be involved in their child's education.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my thanks to the many people who have supported me through the doctoral program at Pepperdine University. I want to thank my committee members Dr. Farzin Majidi and Dr. Linda Purrington for their insight and advice. A special thanks to Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael who mentored me along this journey. I am deeply grateful for her support and guidance.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Saddleback Valley Unified School District Second Language Department staff. Through their dedication and hard work the children and families involved in the School Readiness and Resource Center project have received valuable knowledge about school readiness and the importance of parent involvement. A special thanks to my good friend and colleague, Ingrid Anderson, whose hard work and encouragement helped to make this possible. Thank you Ingrid for your constant faith in me and never ending support.

Finally, thanks to my family and friends who encouraged me along the way. Kimberly and Kathryn whose love inspires me daily. Thank you to my husband, Brett, who patiently supported and encouraged my efforts to earn my degree. Thanks you to all my friends, family, and colleagues for their faith in me through this journey.

CHAPTER I

The Problem

Introduction

Young children enter kindergarten each year with varying degrees of school readiness and oral language proficiency. They may come the first day of kindergarten with basic skills such as knowing their first and last names, their addresses and phone numbers, recognizing letters and shapes, how to hold a pencil, and how to follow simple classroom instructions. Unfortunately, other children enter their first day of school without these skills and the added support of parent involvement (California Department of Education, 2000). A growing number of children come from low-income, non-traditional homes; more often than not, they are members of minority groups whose home language is not English. With no or limited English language skills, children are at a disadvantage as they enter school. Many of these children have not had the advantage of center-based programs such as childcare centers or preschools.

When children come to school ready to learn, they are more likely to succeed in classes and to become responsible, productive members of society. A child's readiness for kindergarten is based on his or her physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Successful school readiness involves parents, children, and the school community. The complex lives faced by families of young children today involve multiple, interrelated factors that can either promote or undermine human development, family well-being, and the ability of the child to succeed in school. Many children come from lower socioeconomic neighborhoods where there is a lack of knowledge about the important role parents play in their child's school success. Parents, as a child's first teacher, model and support their children in the learning process. Additionally, many parents are unaware of the importance of oral language development and how it relates to learning how to read. Language-rich and print-rich preschool environments, along with strong parent involvement, contribute to the language and literacy development of preschool children.

Reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for building the concepts and skills necessary for learning to read (Neuman, Snow, & Canizares, 2000). When teachers and parents read aloud, children's vocabulary grows and they begin to relate words to social context. Exposing children to literature and print increases their chance of being successful readers. Print-rich activities help children learn about patterns and sounds, phonics, and phonemic awareness.

Research has established that phonemic awareness is the highest predictor in learning to read (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Phonemic awareness is the conscious awareness that words are composed of separate sounds, and the ability to identify and manipulate sounds (Saddleback Valley Unified School District, 2001). Oral language activities that include rhymes, chants, songs, stories, and word play help foster phonemic awareness in young children (California Department of Education, 1999). Young children build a foundation for reading and writing through oral communication about everyday experiences (California Department of Education, 2000). In order for children to learn how to read, they must have developed the ability to decode print and have a strong foundation in phonemic awareness.

Developmentally appropriate preschool programs and parent involvement provide opportunities for young children to increase oral language acquisition and the fundamental skills necessary to read and write.

Statement of the Problem

Oral language development, reading, and writing are complex skills that are developed during the early years of a child's life. Oral language proficiency is necessary for emergent literacy and the ability of children to decode print, which is a condition necessary for learning how to read. Many children enter kindergarten lacking oral language proficiency due to limited exposure to oral language activities. Many children also lack preschool experience or limited exposure to phonemic activities such as songs, stories, rhymes, and word play. English language learners (ELLs) from lower socioeconomic areas are more likely to experience limited oral language proficiency in both English and their home language. It is believed that early childhood education preschool programs that promote language-rich and print-rich environments supported by parent involvement will help promote oral language proficiency and second language acquisition, yet research is lacking that demonstrates the relationship between parents, teachers, and children in language acquisition.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted in Saddleback Valley Unified School District (SVUSD). The District covers over 95 square miles and serves the cities of Lake Forest, Rancho Santa Margarita, Mission Viejo, and Laguna Hills. Saddleback Valley Unified School District has 12,000 students and is the fourth largest school district in Orange County, California. This research study was conducted at Ralph Gates, Olivewood, and Lomarena elementary schools. These three elementary schools have the largest number of students who qualify for CalWORKS and Free or Reduced Meals programs. The Saddleback Valley Unified School District has grown from 687 English language learners in 1989 to over 2,8000 in 2002. Each of these three elementary schools currently operates a School Readiness and Resource Center Preschool serving low-income and English language learner preschool children and their families.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine if preschool children will increase their oral language proficiency levels through participation in a language-rich and print-rich preschool environment that includes parent directed oral language activities.

Research Questions

The following eight questions were directed toward obtaining the information necessary to address the purpose stated:

RQ1. What are the demographic characteristics of the students for gender, primary language and ethnicity?

RQ2. What are the demographic characteristics of the parents for family income, marital status, and mother's educational level?

RQ3. What were student's gains in designation levels for English and Spanish from the beginning of the programs (pretest) and the end of the program (posttest) according to the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT).

RQ4. What is the difference in the pre Pre-IPT Oral and post Pre-IPT Oral test scores for English and Spanish and the following children's variables: gender; ethnicity; days of attendance in preschool; oral language activities; and books read to the children?

RQ5. What is the difference in the pre Pre-IPT Oral and post Pre-IPT Oral test scores for English and Spanish as related to the selected parent variables of level of education and attendance in the parent Bridge program?

RQ6. What is the difference in the pre Pre-IPT Oral and post Pre-IPT Oral test scores for English and Spanish related to the teacher’s level of education and prior preschool teaching experience?

RQ7. What is the difference in the pre Pre-IPT Oral and post Pre-IPT Oral test scores for English and Spanish between the individual school sites?

RQ8. Do parents who participated in the Bridge program continue to be involved by volunteering in their children’s kindergarten classroom?

Theoretical Model

The theoretical foundation for this study is based on the Interactionist theory of language acquisition. In this language theory, both first language and second language are learned over time and are influenced by social environments and caregivers. Teachers and parents play an important role in how children learn language. Children are active in the learning process through natural interactions with others. The Interactionist theory of language acquisition states that language emerges through interactions or spheres of influence from others and through social environments (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000).

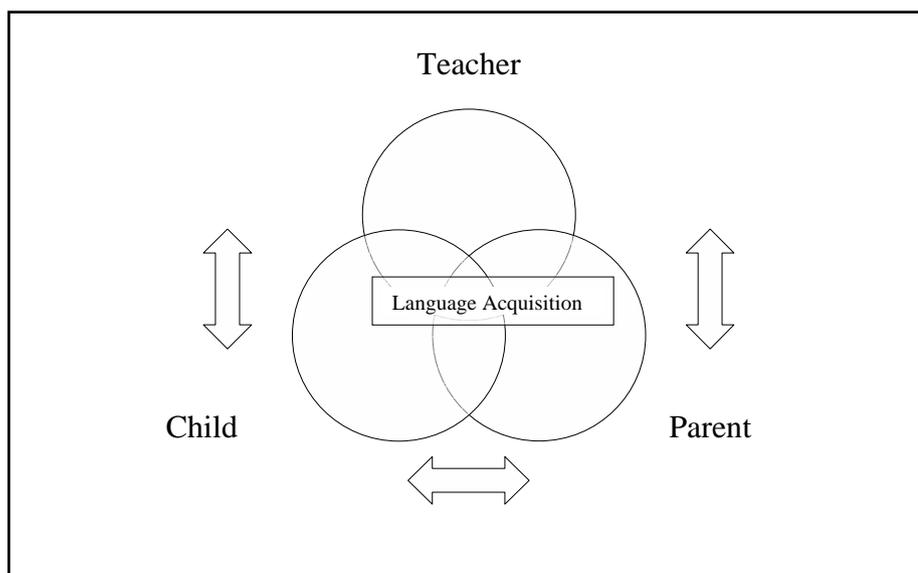


Figure 1. *Spheres of Influence.*

Significance of Study

This study should contribute useful findings to the field of early childhood education and English language development. The findings will contribute information to policy makers at the local, state, and national level who fund second language acquisition and preschool programs. Policy makers will be able to use the findings to develop and support best practices for school readiness programs for low-income second language learners. This study will provide statistical data that supports the theory that exposure to a print-rich and language-rich environment, teacher training, and parent involvement promotes oral language development.

Assumptions

The following are the assumptions upon which the study was based: parents participating in the study will understand the language used in the survey; parents will honestly answer the

questions on the parent survey; parents will report oral language activities done at home in an honest manner; children will comprehend the directions and language used in the Pre-IPT Oral test; the Pre-IPT Oral test was administered in a consistent manner; and teachers will deliver the desired curriculum according to the training provided. Further assumption areas are as follows: print-rich environments provide opportunities for language development and phonemic awareness; parent involvement is a critical element in oral language proficiency; creating a partnership between school and home is critical to a child's oral language development; educational training prepares early childhood teachers on the current methodology in education and increases their skills for effective teaching; and developing curriculum that is culturally sensitive is important in reaching the varied needs of the school population.

Limitations

The following study was limited to the children attending the three preschool sites, their parents, and teachers. Findings cannot be generalized beyond the population selected but other schools may use the findings as they apply to their situation.

Definition of Terms

Child-initiated. Activities that the child discovers and initiates without the direction of the teacher, sometimes referred to as child-directed.

DAP. Developmentally Appropriate Practices: classroom practices that enhance a child's development and promote learning (Dunn & Kontos, 1997).

Emergent literacy. A range of activities and skills that young children engage in that are related to the process of learning to read and write.

ELL. English language learner: A student with limited English proficiency as identified on a state approved language proficiency test such as the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). This student is also referred to as Limited English Proficient (LEP).

Environmental print. Writing that is a part of the environment such as logos, signs, and labels (California Department of Education, 2000).

NES. Non-English Speaking.

LES. Limited English Speaking.

FES. Fluent English Speaking: A student whose English language skills are at a sufficient level to succeed in the mainstream program with little or no modification of instruction.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In order to address the problem identified in this research study, literature was reviewed to determine existing research, theories, and methodologies relative to the problem. A review of the National Education Goals Panel, California demographics, the *Desired Results for Children and Families*, longitudinal studies on early interventions for young children, language acquisitions theories, parent and teacher partnerships, emergent literacy practices, classroom and curricular strategies were examined.

Preparing Children for Kindergarten

Early childhood educators have long been aware of the importance of preparing children for kindergarten (California Department of Education, 2000). One of the goals of early

education is to prepare children for entry into school along with helping them develop the skills necessary for emergent literacy. Scholars such as Catherine Snow and Patton Tabors (1996) believe that learning to read does not happen all at once, but is a process that begins early in a child's life. Learning to read begins with language development, exposure to literature, and print materials. Beginning literacy involves young children, families, and teachers working together to help children increase their oral language proficiency and make the connection between the spoken and written word. Early childhood is the most important time in a person's life when language is being developed. Developing oral language proficiency in young children is increased through language-rich and print-rich early childhood environments and parent involvement.

Early literacy skills can often predict a child's educational path. Research on young children has shown that emergent literacy skills begin at birth and that the success of reading in the first grade is largely dependent upon how much children have learned before they arrive there (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Emergent literacy skills in kindergarten have proven to be a strong predictor in children's reading abilities throughout their educational careers (Child Trends, 2001). Educators today are faced with the problem that children are entering the kindergarten classroom with a varying degree of school readiness and emergent literacy skills. Children from low-income families who are members of racial minority groups and whose native language is not English have been identified as being more at-risk for lacking the readiness skills necessary for kindergarten (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Many of the low income at-risk children entering the K-12 school system are English language learners. Preschool children who are ELLs are not only learning their first language, but are also acquiring competencies in a second language. Children lacking English language proficiency are at a disadvantage as they enter the kindergarten classroom. The kindergarten classroom today is very different than the kindergarten classroom of the past. Preschool children entering kindergarten classrooms today must have emergent literacy skills including letter recognition, and phonemic awareness in order to successfully master the rigors of the kindergarten classroom.

It is widely known that children growing up in middle-class families have more opportunities at home to learn letters and sounds as well as handling books, making lists, writing notes, and other uses of literacy (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Parents who have higher educational and income levels understand the value of early childhood education and have the resources to send their young children to preschool programs. On the average, these children tend to have more emergent literacy materials in their homes and are read to more often. In general, children from families with higher incomes and children of more highly educated mothers have larger vocabularies at school entry than children from low-income families (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001).

Understanding the role of language in fostering children's later literacy skills has important implications for all children. It is of special significance for teachers who work with low-income families and children who are not proficient in English (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Children who have limited English proficiency (LEP) have four times the drop out rate than that of their peers who are fluent in English (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2001; Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). Preschool children who are ELLs need emergent literacy interventions in order to increase their English language skills and help prepare them for the high academic standards of today's English academe. Although kindergarten

standards vary from state to state, the foundation for education standards lie in the National Education Goals.

National Education Goals Panel

The bipartisan National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) was established in 1990 to report on the state and national efforts to reach eight National Education Goals. In March 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Goals 2000 Act that appropriated resources to improve each state's entire elementary and secondary education system (Goals 2000, 2002). The first goal stated that all children by the year 2000 will start school ready to learn (Child Trends, 2001). The NEGP identified three components as they addressed school readiness. They are: (a) readiness in the child; (b) schools' readiness for children; and (c) family and community supports and services that contribute to children's readiness (Child Trends, 2001).

The NEGP broadened the definition of school readiness not only to include the physical, social, emotional well-being, and cognitive ability of a child, but to view the readiness of a child as multi-faceted. Participation in quality early childhood education programs has led to gains in cognitive test scores, better kindergarten achievement, lower rates of grade retention and special education placement, and higher rates of high school graduation. Two studies, the Carolina Abecedarian Project (2002) and the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project ((2002a), studied the long-term effects from the benefits of a preschool education for children living in poverty and children from low-income families.

Benefits of Early Interventions

The Carolina Abecedarian Project. The Carolina Abecedarian Project studied the potential benefits of early education for children reared in poverty. The Abecedarian Project was a longitudinal study in which 57 infants from low-income families were randomly assigned to receive early intervention in a high quality childcare setting and 54 were in a non-treated control group (Carolina Abecedarian Project, 2002). The treated children received educational interventions from infancy through age five. Each of the treated children received full-time high quality interventions that were individualized to each child's specific needs. This prescription consisted of "games" that addressed the social, emotional, and cognitive development of each child with an emphasis on language. The treated and untreated children were initially compared on infant mental and motor tests. Children from age 18 months through the completion of the childcare program in the intervention group had significantly higher scores on mental tests than children in the control group. Cognitive assessments completed at ages 12 and 15 years reported that the intervention group continued to have higher scores on the average than the control group on the mental tests (Carolina Abecedarian Project, 2002).

The treated and untreated groups from the project were followed into their adulthood. At age 21, their cognitive functioning, academic skills, educational attainment, employment history, parenthood, and social adjustments were measured. One-hundred-four of the original 111 infants were assessed. The young adults in the study who received the intervention from infancy to age five had significantly higher mental test scores from toddlerhood through age 21. They had enhanced language skills, higher reading, and mathematics achievement scores. Differences were also found for the percentage of young adults who ever attended a four-year college. About 35% of the young adults who were a part of the intervention group had either graduated from or were at the time of the assessment attending a four-year college or university. From the control group, only 14% of the young adults had done so (Carolina Abecedarian Project, 2002). Young adults in the intervention group were, on average, older

when their first child was born and had higher employment rates than those in the control group. The Abecedarian study provides scientific evidence that early childhood education intervention significantly improves scholastic success and educational attainments for low-income children. The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study also studied how early interventions positively impact children living in poverty.

High/Scope Perry Preschool Study. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation of Ypsilanti, Michigan studied the lives of 123 African Americans born in poverty and were seen as being at high risk for failing school. Children ages three and four were randomly divided into a group who received a high-quality, active learning preschool program, and a group who received no preschool program. At age 27, 95% of the original study participants were interviewed, with additional data collected from their school, arrest records, and social services information (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2002a). The High/Scope Research Foundation (2002a) addressed the areas of social responsibility, earning and economic status, educational performance, and commitment to marriage when collecting data on the participants. The data collected found major differences favoring the 27 year olds who had been enrolled in the High/Scope preschool program. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (2002b) study also found the following differences: only one fifth as many preschool program group members had been arrested five or more times (7% vs 35%) and only one third as many had ever been arrested for drug dealing (7% vs 25%). Four times as many preschool program group members as no-preschool program members earned \$2,000 or more per month (29% vs 7%). Almost three times as many preschool program group members owned their own homes (36% vs 13%) and over twice as many owned second cars (30% vs 13%). Only three-fourths as many preschool program group members as no-preschool program group members received welfare assistance or other social services at some time as adults (59% vs 80%) (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2002b).

The study also found significant differences between the two groups in the areas of educational performance, marriage, and children. In educational performance, almost a third again as many preschool program group members as no-preschool program group members graduated from regular or adult high school or received General Education Development certification (71% vs 54%). Earlier in the study, the preschool program group had significantly higher average achievement scores at age 14 and higher literacy scores at age 19 than the no-preschool program group. In the area of commitment to marriage, the same percentage of preschool program males and no-preschool program males were married (26%) nearly twice as long as no-preschool program males (averages of 6.2 years vs 3.3 years). Five times as many preschool program females as no-program females were married at the time of the age-27 interview (40% vs 8%). Further, preschool program females had only about two thirds as many out-of-wedlock births (57% vs 83%) as no-preschool program females (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2002b).

The High/Scope Perry Project findings indicate that high-quality preschool programs significantly impact the future success and contributions a child will make to society. The Project also indicated that by empowering children to initiate and carry out their own learning activities they will become more independent and self sufficient. Further findings demonstrated the importance in involving parents in the learning process and that by providing a quality preschool program where teachers are empowered and receive continual training on curriculum development a dramatic difference can be made in the lives of children.

Head Start and Early Head Start. Head Start and Early Head Start are two federally funded programs that have also added to the research on the importance of preschool education on young children's readiness for school and in school success. Early Head Start is an infant and toddler program for low-income families and also provides education to low-income pregnant women. Early Head Start (2002) grew out of the Head Start program addressing the developmental needs of infants through three years of age. Early Head Start (2002) programs promote high quality programs, positive relationships between parents and school, parent involvement, inclusion for special needs children, sensitivity to home culture and language, and collaboration with school and community. Early Head Start programs support the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development of each child (Early Head Start, 2002). Early Head Start focuses on providing the first early interventions for low-income children by enhancing the very young child's development, promoting healthy family functioning, and self-sufficiency. The Head Start program provides programs for low-income children three years of age and older preparing both children and parents for school.

The Head Start program has found that in a study comparing matched groups of low-income children attending Head Start, other preschool, or no preschool, the Head Start children scored higher in school readiness skills. The readiness skills measured were verbal achievement, perceptual reasoning, and social competence. The Head Start program founded in 1965 has served more than 18 million preschool children and their families (National Head Start Association, 2001). In recent years, the National Head Start Association has insisted that preschool programs provide more focus on preparing children academically.

Head Start programs have focused on the importance of language-rich and print-rich environments for school success. Head Start emphasizes language development by implementing programs that address the following issues: phonemic, print, and numeracy awareness; understanding and use of language to communicate for various purposes; understanding and use of increasingly more complex and varied vocabulary; develop and appreciate books; and in the case of non-English background children, progress toward acquisition of the English language (National Head Start Association, 2001).

Several conclusions have been drawn from the research findings of the Head Start program. When children born into poverty are provided with high quality child-directed learning experiences, the benefits are significant (National Head Start Association, 2001). Studies on Head Start have found that Head Start children are better prepared to learn and have higher self-esteem at the time of entry into school. Children attending Head Start programs also demonstrate high levels of socio-emotional development. Parents who were involved in the program demonstrated more positive growth and were found to have a greater quality of life, satisfaction, increased confidence in coping abilities, and decreased feelings of anxiety and depression (National Head Start Association, 2001). Another Federal program, Even Start, also addresses early care and education for preschool children.

Even Start. Even Start programs began in 1989 and are funded by Title I of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Most participants have limited English proficiency and need English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. All participating households have at least one child between birth and age seven. Sixty-six percent of Even Start families report annual incomes of under \$10,000 (Even Start Program, 2002). The Even Start program offers family-centered educational programs that involve children, parents, and teachers working

together. Parents are encouraged to become active in the education of their children and to learn ways to assist their children in reaching their full potential (Even Start Program, 2002).

Even Start programs offer instructional services for parent education, adult education, and early childhood education. Many of their programs are home based and work to bridge the gap between home and school and to educate parents on the important role they play in their child's education. Most of the parents whose children participate in Even Start programs have not graduated from high school and need adult basic education skills or General Education Development (GED) training. Findings from the Even Start program study support parent education and parent involvement in children's preparation for school.

The Even Start study found positive changes in parents whose children attend Even Start programs as well as their children. Adults whose children attend Even Start participate more frequently in adult education, parenting education, and early childhood education than those parents who did not participate in Even Start. Even Start helped many adults attain a GED; in the experimental study, Even Start children learned school readiness skills earlier than control group children (Even Start Program, 2002). One of the study's most important findings was the gain in children's vocabulary. Parents who took part in parent education reported a higher gain in their children's vocabulary (Even Start Program, 2002).

Children need to develop verbal language and emergent literacy skills as a way of preparing for school. The National Educational Goals Panel addressed language development as one of its goals of children's readiness for school. Language development is critical to understanding print and acquiring the skills necessary in learning how to read. Verbal language includes listening, speaking, and vocabulary (Child Trends, 2001). The majority of reading problems faced by today's youth and adults are the result of problems that might have been resolved or avoided through early literacy and reading activities during their early childhood years (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Literacy continues to be an important social and political issue.

In January 2002, President Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001. The Act calls for reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act enacted in 1965 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The Act redefines the federal role in the K-12 educational system and helps close the gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. The *No Child Left Behind* Act focuses on four basic principles: stronger accountability for results; increased flexibility and local control; expanded options for parents; and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). As the Department of Education begins to administer the *No Child Left Behind* Act, each state will need to provide classroom environments that address the growing number of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Demographics

There have been many changes in the demographic and social trends within the United States. It is estimated that over 3.4 million children with limited proficiency in English were in United States elementary and secondary schools in the school year 1996-1997 (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2001). According to the *Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines* developed by the California Department of Education, the profile of preschool children in California is as follows:

Table 1: *Profile of Preschool Children in California*

Profile of Preschool Children in California
Number of preschool-age children in California aged three, four, and five years old in 1999: 1,544,584*
Total number of children from birth through age five estimated to be served in state and federal programs:+ State funded: 311,000 Head Start: 89,000
Ethnic breakdown of children from birth to four years old (estimated for 2000)++ Hispanic 48%, White 34%, African American 11%, Asian/Pacific Islander 7%
Number of limited-English-proficient children in kindergarten in 1997-98: 166,682 (35.9% of a total of 463,684)++
* <i>Population Estimates for the U.S. and States by Single Year of Age and Sex: July 1, 1999</i> (ST-99-10). Washington, D.C.: Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau. + Based on California Department of Education estimates, <i>Fact book 2000</i> . ++The source for these figures may be found at the Web site for Ed-Data, http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/ .

Over one quarter of the young children under the age of five living in California live below the poverty level. In California the poverty level is \$16,450 or less annual income for a family of four in 1998 (Children's Services Coordination Committee, 2001). Young children living in poverty are more likely to have limited access to quality childcare settings, thus impacting their readiness for school.

California state legislators created California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS, 2001) program to provide assistance to low-income families. CalWORKS was part of the federal welfare reform moving families from welfare dependency to work and self-sufficiency (CalWORKS, 2001). Those participating in CalWORKS program are required to either work or be in a work preparation program. Childcare services are provided for parents who participate in the work preparation program. Although the demands for CalWORKS families needing early childhood programs continue to grow, the availability of spaces for children in affordable childcare is limited. Because of the high cost of childcare in California, many children who do not qualify for CalWORKS programs or whose parents do not have the ability to pay for preschool programs are entering kindergarten with limited skills. The California Department of Education developed the *Desired Results for Children and Families* initiative to address the demographic changes in California and to meet the United States Department of Education demands.

Desired Results for Children and Families

The California Department of Education/Child Development Division (CDE/CDD) developed an initiative called the *Desired Results for Children and Families* in 1997. The *Desired Results for Children and Families* developed a system of standards, assessment, and accountability for state and federally subsidized childcare and development programs including center-based programs and family childcare homes to improve the conditions and well-being for children and families (California Department of Education, 2000). The initiative focuses on six desired results for children and families and will be implemented through trainings to childcare providers and families over a two year period. The *Desired Results for Children and Families* strategy has been found to be effective when working with culturally and linguistically diverse families with young children living in the State of California (California Department of Education, 2000).

This system will serve as the foundation for the CDE/CDD childcare and development initiative for California.

The six desired results for children and families are as follows: (a) children are personally and socially competent; (b) children are effective learners; (c) children show physical and motor competencies; (d) children are safe and healthy; (e) families support their children's learning and development; and (f) families achieve their goals (California Department of Education, 2000). These standards will provide childcare practitioners, educators, and families with tools and methods for achieving the six desired results. All childcare and development programs supported by the CDE will be required to complete developmental profiles to measure how the child is achieving each of the six desired results. Language, social-emotional, cognitive, and physical developmental domains are interrelated and woven throughout the six desired results (California Department of Education, 2000). California faces an increase in low-income families, many of whom will be non-English speaking families. As these children enter the K-12 school system, educators will be challenged in how to prepare ELLs for school. This will require strategies to improve the English language proficiency of students in California.

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

The Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Association published ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 students in 1997. The ESL Standards describe what students learning English as a second language should know and be able to do as a result of their ESL classes (Gomez, 2002). Although they are voluntary national standards, the ESL Standards are seen as benchmarks for students working to meet school, district, or state educational requirements. The ESL Standards are meant to improve instruction in content areas such as math, science, and social studies and focus on the development of social language and socio-cultural knowledge for all ESL students.

The members of TESOL support their students in native language instruction. TESOL encourages parents to speak and read to children in their native language. They advocate the need for parents to take trips to the library and check out books in their native language. They support parents in helping their children develop critical reasoning skills in their native language. Research findings on learning a second language suggest that students who learn to read in their native language perform better in school, are more likely to be judged as competent readers in the second language, and have the ability to transfer the task of reading well in their native language to English (Gomez, 2002). TESOL believes that parents and schools working together can help students meet the ESL Standards. Young students working toward learning a second language are also developing language skills in their home language which helps prepare them to be strong readers.

As English language learners enter the K-12 school system in California, they are given the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). The CELDT covers listening and speaking skills for children in kindergarten through first grade. Children grades two through twelve are tested in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Children are tested and assigned a specific language designation. Students are tested each year in order to measure their progress in learning English and determine when they are considered proficient in English. Currently, preschool children are not tested for English proficiency. Developing both first and second language will help prepare young children for entry into school.

In a supportive environment, a child's language proficiency, vocabulary, and understanding of the meaning of words are increased. Language proficiency includes vocabulary, comprehension, pronunciation, grammar, and syntax. If a child is identified as Non-English Speaking (NES) or Limited English Speaking (LES), developing interventions

and educational services will help meet the language needs of these children. Children with limited language skills will need more direct assistance and resources to achieve acquisition of the English language (Ballard & Tighe, 1999a). With more focused communication and interventions in English, students will increase in acquisition towards the goal of Fluent English Speaking (FES). There are several theories on how children acquire first and second language acquisition and move toward fluency.

Second Language Acquisition

There has been a great deal of political and public discussion over second language learners over the past few decades. Many parents and members of the community feel strongly that children should only speak English in school. Others have strong sentiment on the importance of strengthening the home language while at the same time teaching English (McLaughlin, 1995). With the increase of a non-English speaking (NES) or limited English speaking (LES) population in California, children becoming bilingual is being seen as an asset. Being bilingual has economic advantages, is a way of retaining one's home language and culture, and is viewed as a useful way of communicating with parents and grandparents who are non-English speaking. Many people believe that allowing home language to be lost jeopardizes the well-being of children and ultimately, the well-being of society (McLaughlin, 1995). Therefore, providing programs that help English language learners develop first and second language is significant in preparing children for the future.

English language learners, like native English speaking children, learn to speak English at various rates. Second language acquisition is generally used to refer to any language other than the first language spoken by an individual (Ellis, 2000). It is rare to find children who have equal fluency in both languages. As second language is developed, usually one language is more dominant. (McLaughlin, 1995).

Children who are bilingual are able to reach a proficiency level in their dominant language given enough opportunities for use of that language (McLaughlin, 1995). As children learn a second language, a teacher may feel the child is behind in both languages. Teachers realize that learning language, both home language (L1) and second language (L2), is a process learned over time. Sometimes what looks like limitation in both languages is more appropriately described as language imbalance. The more teachers know about how language L1 and L2 are developed, the better they can plan and implement programs and interventions to assist the child in language development.

Specially-Designed Academic-Instruction in English (SDAIE) sometimes called "sheltered instruction" provides instruction to teachers on special techniques and strategies for teaching limited English proficiency (LEP) students (Gulack & Silverstein, 2002). SDAIE methodology makes content more comprehensible for students. It provided teaching techniques using real objects and materials, manipulatives such as storyboards and posters, multimedia, visuals, and planned opportunities for interaction between individuals (Gulack & Silverstein, 2002). Instructional strategies assist LEP students increase their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Understanding the three main theories in language acquisition will also assist teachers working with second language acquisition.

Language Acquisition Theories

The three basic theories of first and second language acquisition over the years are the Behaviorist, Innatist, and Interactionist theories (Peregory & Boyle, 2001). The following table summarizes first language acquisition according to Peregory & Boyle (2001, p. 39):

Table 2: *Theories of First Language Acquisition.*

Acquisition Aspects	Behaviorist Perspective	Innatist Perspective	Interactionist Perspective
Linguistic focus	Verbal behaviors (Not analyzed per se): words, utterances of child and people in social environments	Child’s syntax	Conversations between child and caregiver; focus on caregiver speech
Process of acquisition	Modeling, imitation, practice, and selective reinforcement of correct form	Hypothesis testing and creative construction of syntactic rules using LAD	Acquisition emerges from communication; acts scaffolded by caregivers
Role of child	Secondary role: imitator and responder to environmental shaping	Primary role: equipped with biological LAD, child plays a major role in acquisition	Important role in interaction, taking more control as language acquisition advances
Role of social environment	Primary role: parental modeling and reinforcement are major factors promoting language acquisition	Minor role: language used by others merely triggers LAD	Important role in interaction, especially in early years when caregivers modify input and carry much of conversational load

The Behaviorist theory emphasizes stimulus-response reinforcement as a basis for learning language. Behaviorists believe that the mind is a blank slate and language is acquired through modeling, imitation, practice, and selective reinforcement in social environments. Noam Chomsky argued against the Behaviorist theory, concluding that language is accounted for by an innate, biological language acquisition device (LAD) or system. Chomsky claimed that infants were prewired for language and that they possessed an innate “grammar template” (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). In Chomsky’s Innatist perspective, children learn language through hypothesis testing and by using rules rather than repeating messages heard. In this theory, parents and others play a diminutive role in language acquisition.

The Interactionist theory of language development sees caregivers and social environments as playing a critical role in how language is developed (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Children’s language is developed over time and is constructed through meaningful interactions with others. In the Interactionist theory, parents provide ongoing support through conversation, reading, and other oral language activities that promote language development. They encourage questions that assist the child in scaffolding their learning and vocabulary and language development. In this theory, both the child and the caregiver play an active role in how language is developed. These three theories see second language development similar to first language development (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001, p.47).

Table 3: *Classroom Strategies of Second Language Acquisition Theories*

Instructional Components	Behaviorist	Innatist	Interactionist
Source of linguistic input	Language dialogues and drills from teacher or audiotape	Natural language from the teacher, friends, or books	Natural language from the teacher, friends, or books
Nature of input	Structured by grammatical complexity	Unstructured, but made comprehensible by teacher	Unstructured, but focused on communication between learner and others
Ideal classroom composition	All target language learners of similar	Target language learners of similar second	Native speakers together with target language

	second language proficiency	language proficiency so $i + 1$ can be achieved	learners for social interaction aimed at communication
Student output	Structured repetitions and grammar pattern drill responses	Output is not a concern; it will occur naturally	Speaking occurs naturally in communication with others
Pressure to speak	Students repeat immediately	Silent period expected	No pressure to speak except natural impulse to communicate
Treatment of errors	Errors are corrected immediately	Errors are not corrected; students will correct themselves with time	Errors that impede communication will be corrected naturally as meaning is negotiated; some errors may require explicit corrective instruction

The Behaviorist theory views second language development as depending upon structured repetition of grammar and vocabulary. In this theory, language is learned through drills and constant correction of errors. The Innatist theory sees students correcting their own errors and learning takes place in a more unstructured environment. Stephen Krashen developed five hypotheses that relate to the Innatist theory of second language acquisition (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Krashen asserts that language is learned through meaningful interactions in a formal setting. He suggests that as a child learns a second language, they develop an internal monitor which corrects errors as language is learned. Krashen focuses on communication in low-anxiety settings that allow children periods of silence as they are learning a second language (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

In the Interactionist perspective, second language acquisition occurs through natural conversations between native and non-native speakers. The relationship between children and caregivers, including parents and teachers, plays an important role in students learning a second language. Learning in natural settings that are relaxed and culturally sensitive helps children make connections between vocabulary and everyday activities. The Interactionist theory sees L2 learning occurring through trial and error where children feel comfortable and where meaning is negotiated. Both the Innatist and the Interactionist theories assert that language-rich social environments help facilitate second language acquisition in children.

Interactionist Theory

As a child enters school, he or she will acquire English language skills idiosyncratically based upon a variety of other variables including the level of native language proficiency; age; motivation of parents for the child to learn English; and the amount of English introduced at home. Research indicates that children code switch languages when they are first learning an L2. They will switch languages and scatter second language words and phrases throughout their English speech and vice versa (McLaughlin, 1995). For example, a young Spanish-speaking child might say, “I want a *verde* crayon” rather than saying, “I want a green crayon.” This code-switching or language switching, is done by young children as they resolve uncertainties in each language and begin acquiring second language mastery.

Children learning a second language go through a process where mistakes and errors are common. As children learn to form noun and verb endings, they go through a stage in which they will say “foots” instead of “feet,” “goed” instead of “went,” and “mines” instead of

“mine” (McLaughlin, 1995). Teachers and parents who are helping children learn a second language must allow children to experiment with language and recognize that the classroom is a safe arena to develop language skills. Interactionist classrooms allow children to learn a second language in ways that support the child in a naturalistic setting.

Naturalistic settings have shown to be effective for young children learning language. Children learn language through social interactions and communication between others including teachers, parents, and peers. Acquiring a second language in a naturalistic setting allows a child to effectively communicate and become motivated to increase their second language skills. Wong Fillmore (1985) recommended the following when generating language development in young children: modeling, role-playing, and demonstrations to teach children English; present information in the context of subjects and areas that are familiar to children; paraphrase rather than correct a child’s language errors; use simple language or language that is slightly more advanced; use simple sentence structures; repeat patterns and phrases; and be aware of the differing levels of proficiency of children in the classroom. The literature reveals that ELLs acquire English language skills when educational interventions are adapted to the child’s linguistic, cultural, and academic learning needs (Garcia, 1998). Dual-language classrooms provide curriculum and instruction in both English and Spanish, which benefits English language proficiency.

Dual Language Programs

One of the reasons dual language programs tend to be effective is because they support the culture and home language of students (Izquierdo, 2000). Early childhood programs that are rich in home language instruction or primary language support increase learning English in naturalistic settings. Primary language support promotes English language learners with the opportunities to expand their second language skills in ways that lessen anxiety. Primary language support helps children who are non-English speaking (NES) and limited English speaking (LES) acquire English language skills in a safe supportive setting. Young children learning home language are learning the content of language and how it connects to the written word or print. When instruction is taught with home language support, children are able to transfer content from their home language L1 to L2.

Another model of language development is called the Dual-Iceberg model. In this model, experience in either language can promote development of the underlying language (Leyba, 1994). For example, as Spanish-speaking children are developing their Spanish skills at home, they are developing a deep conceptual and linguistic framework in the home language. As these children learn English or L2, they are able to transfer this framework of language skills to a second language. These common underlying cognitive and academic skills transfer assisting the child in learning a second language. Although the languages are separate, the underlying cognitive and academic proficiency is common across languages (Leyba, 1994).

Language Models

The two language models designate differing amounts of time to each language. They are as follows: in 50/50 models, half of the instructional time is in L1 (Spanish or another non-English language) and the other half is in L2 (English) at all of the grade levels. In this model, some programs provide instruction for half of the day in one language and the other half in the other language. Others change the language of instruction every other week or every two weeks (Izquierdo, 2000).

Children being taught in a 50/50 model are learning within two phonological systems or two languages at the same time. These children are developing phonemic awareness in L1 and L2 simultaneously. They are constructing two sets of rules along with two languages. Children are indirectly learning that there are certain sounds in one language that are not present in the other (Izquierdo, 2000). In the 90/10 model, 90% of the children's instruction is in non-English (L1) before they learn to read and write in English (L2). Children taught using the 90/10 model gradually decrease non-English language by 10 percent each year. Children who are taught in a 90/10 classroom are gradually receiving instruction in a 50/50 classroom by the fourth or fifth grade. There are some programs that teach dual language programs through high school. Creating learning environments where preschool children can learn and expand English and home language skills are important for their readiness for school. Parents and school partnerships are integral to a child's readiness for school and language acquisition.

Parents and Teachers Working In Partnership

Parents, as a child's first teacher, play a critical role in a child's education. Parents motivate and model for their children attitudes and behavior that strongly influence a child's attitude. For thirty years, research has confirmed that parent involvement has a powerful influence on a child's achievement in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b). Joyce Epstein's framework of involvement that influences learning includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating (Simon & Epstein, 2001). Epstein extends parent involvement to partnerships between the family, school, and community.

Epstein (2001) states that workshops that teach parents about child development help create home conditions that strongly support a child in his or her learning process. Many school and family partnerships include home visits that give the teacher, parent, and child an opportunity to learn more about each other in the home setting. Communication between school and home is also a critical component in a child's school success. Through conferences, newsletters, and information sent home, parents and teachers can keep the channels of communication open and inform the parents of the child's school progress. Providing opportunities for parents to volunteer in their child's classroom increase student academic success, attendance rates, and lower suspension rates (Safe and Responsive Schools, 2002). When parents volunteer in the classroom, they assist teachers, work one-on-one with children, and begin to see the importance of the school and parent partnership. This is especially useful to many at-risk families who have yet to overcome the barriers between school and families.

Parent involvement helps bridge the gap between school and home. Schools can teach parents ways that they can influence and guide their children with their schoolwork. Parents can assist their children in preparing for class assignments along with practicing activities learned at school. Parents can become involved in schools through activities such as Parent Teacher Association. Many parents of second language learners are encouraged to become involved in the English Language Advisory Committee. One of the responsibilities of the English Language Advisory Committee is to encourage parents on ways they can support their children in school and encourages parents to become involved in school activities. Also, this involvement gives parents opportunities to become active leaders in their community and influence the decisions that are affecting their children. Lastly, involving parents, schools, and community on how parents can access information on health and dental services, social services, and community referrals assists families in becoming more resilient.

Parents, teachers, and community partners, together, can strongly affect a child's school success. Research has shown that children whose parents are involved in their education have better attendance, higher graduation rates from high school, fewer retentions in the same grade, and increased levels of parent and student satisfaction with school (Hiatt-Michael, 2001). Research also reports students whose parents are more involved in school have more accurate diagnosis for educational placement in classes, reduced number of negative behavior reports, and higher achievement scores on reading and math tests (Hiatt-Michael, 2001). The National Education Goal Panel confirms the important role parent involvement plays in influencing a student's academic success. The NEGP has included parent involvement as one of the education goals.

The NEGP stated that along with all children having access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that prepare them for school, every parent in the United States will be their child's first teacher (Child Trends, 2001). The NEGP supports learning enrichment activities and training for parents to increase their skills and knowledge in their role as a child's first teacher. The NEGP supports parents devoting time every day to helping his or her preschool child to learn (Child Trends, 2001). Activities they encourage parents to do include reading daily to their child. According to the research on improving reading skills, experts recommend reading with or to a child at least 30 minutes a day (National Network for Child Care, 2002). According to President Clinton's America Reads Challenge, children who are read to at least 30 minutes a day significantly increase their reading ability (Read Write Now, 2002). Parent involvement has been an integral part of many National programs.

Head Start, Early Head Start, and Even Start make parent involvement a strong focus of their programs. According to the National Head Start Association, parent involvement contributes to the positive growth and upward mobility of the children that attend Head Start programs. Longitudinal studies done on Head Start children showed that although the more involved parents tended to be of higher social economic status, social sufficiency was present in all involved parents (National Head Start, 2002). Head Start strongly believes in partnering with parents and mandates that teachers make home visits to the children in their classrooms (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Working closely with parents allows teachers and school staff to support families who may be facing other socioeconomic barriers.

For children who are English language learners or who come from low-income families or who are at-risk for other reasons, parent involvement has been found to be a critical component in their ability to overcome obstacles in succeeding in school. Research has shown that students who have poor school attendance have lower the grades point averages and were more prone to receiving suspension in later years than students with high attendance records (Price, 2002). Parent involvement is often hindered by language barriers, limited schooling, different cultural norms, and/or lack of information. Parents need to develop effective knowledge, skills, and strategies in order to produce healthy, well-adjusted children who are capable of reaching their full social and educational potential (Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Goldberg, 1997). There are numerous barriers low-income non-English speaking families face when dealing with the school system.

Another issue facing parents may be that they do not have a clear understanding of the school system. They may have limited education themselves and feel intimidated by the system. There is also a lack of bilingual staff and faculty in schools. Spanish-speaking families have traditionally seen teachers as authority figures and have little involvement or

interaction with the teacher (Early Education, 2002). For some low-income families, schools may not be accessible for those parents dependent upon public transportation. Along with these obstacles, some school staff lack the empathy or knowledge concerning cultural diversity. They may also lack the knowledge regarding strategies working with non-English speaking families. Through training and community outreach efforts, schools and families working together can overcome these obstacles and build successful school partnerships.

Parents and teachers working in partnership can create environments that support one another, along with providing optimal learning interventions for each child. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was designed to bridge the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged children and non-disadvantaged children. It was created to enable schools with ways to provide opportunities for disadvantaged children to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b). The U.S. Department of Education (2001b) sponsored two national surveys: Family and School Partnership in Public Schools K-8 and the Parent/Family Involvement Component of the 1996 National Household Education survey. The findings from these two surveys found the following barriers to parent involvement in schools: overcoming time and resource constraints; providing information and training to parents and school staff; restructuring schools to support family involvement; bridging school-family differences; and tapping external supports for partnership (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b).

Finding time for teachers and parents to come together allows both partners to have many opportunities to understand one another. As parents and teachers build closer relationships and have a better understanding of one another, they join together with the common goal of helping the child succeed in school. GPA Educating teachers on strategies for involving parents as a child's first teacher is essential to a successful parent-school partnership. Teachers who allow time during the week to meet individually with parents have helped meet the individual needs and concerns of the children. Many schools have developed school-family partnerships by assigning bilingual parent advocates or community liaisons to work with parents and teachers in order to inform them of school activities, translate information, and help bridge the language and cultural barriers.

Parent advocates and community liaisons are beneficial in helping educate parents, especially those parents who are new to the K-12 school system. Without the information being communicated in a parent's native language, miscommunication and misperception occur. Through workshops and a variety of outreach activities such as informative newsletters, handouts, and home visits, parents and school staff across these programs are learning how to trust each other and work together to help children succeed in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b).

Parents who are taught strategies on how to create home environments that support learning and emergent literacy practices empower both children and parents (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b). Workshops that teach parents how children learn language and the importance of language in learning to read increase a child's readiness for school. Non-English speaking and non-literate parents can encourage their children by engaging them in activities with family or community members who are literate, more proficient in English, or both (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). When parents support children in increasing their English language skills through oral language activities, they help prepare their child for school.

One of the goals of parent involvement is to teach parents how they can provide opportunities at home to prepare their children for school. Many low-income, non-English speaking parents have a limited understanding of the goal of early childhood education. Since preschool programs are rarely available in most Latin American countries, many of the Spanish-speaking parents are encountering the concept of early childhood education for the first time. They are also learning about the important developmental learning that occurs in preschool programs. In many Latin American countries, books are expensive, and families arrive here with limited education and resources related to the importance of reading aloud to children. Some parents from Latin American countries have limited knowledge about how they can provide early education interventions to their children and have traditionally left educating their children solely to the school system (Early Education, 2002). Teachers can educate and model strategies for parents that will encourage language development. Teachers can also help build the confidence of parents in their ability, even if they are illiterate or have minimal education, to provide reading and oral language activities at home that will support their child's learning.

English Language Learners

Bridging the gap between home and school is an important strategy for helping non-English speaking children and their families. Teachers who speak the native language of parents and children have been found to be an effective tool in improving the communication between school and home. By investing time and effort, schools create strong bridges allowing not only the students but also the parents and teachers to improve communication effectively between the two most important worlds of children (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). A teacher can help parents recognize that many of the activities occurring during the course of a normal day, whether in their native language or English, builds literacy and reinforces the academic concepts children are learning in school (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). Activities parents do at home need not be expensive or elaborate. Family literacy activities such as storybook reading, listening to children read, and talking about books all support the child's emergent literacy skills. Family literacy activities that become part of a normal routine and include parent involvement in the classroom positively impact a child's education (Pomerantz, 2001). Family literacy building interventions that reinforce learning can not only help build the readiness skills of children but also emphasize the important role parents play in supporting the academic growth of their children. Literacy activities in a child's home language engage both the child and parent and set the stage for learning a second language.

No matter what language is spoken at home, children who are surrounded by print and exposed to language through reading and writing are more likely to be involved in the use of print themselves (Hand & Nourot, 1999). Although the language spoken at home may differ from house to house, the interest in language remains the same. Through activities using print and observing adults and older children, young children come to realize that print is used in helping people communicate and make decisions as they observe those around them interacting with print.

Low-income parents with limited education are encouraged to use print that naturally occurs in the home to reinforce print awareness. Children benefit from a variety of books and magazines read to them, songs sung, and nursery rhymes chanted which are all ways that increase a child's awareness of print (Hand & Nourot, 1999). Parents who have limited formal education can be empowered to use verbal skills in teaching language concepts. Children learn important concepts needed for literacy development through language-rich and print-rich activities (Hand & Nourot, 1999).

The meaning of print transfers across language perimeters. When a child understands a concept in their native language, they can then begin to understand it in a second language. The words may be spoken in a different language but the concepts or meaning of the work is similar. For example, if a child understands the concept words, “under and over” in Spanish, he or she will also understand them in English. This is not to say that there are many words that do not have translation from one language to another, but as young children are learning simple language skills in two languages, they are able to make the connections that will help them understand language and its connection to print.

In any language, children understand that written language has meaning, can be used for communication, and can create and transfer meaning from one language to another. This command of language allows children to understand that language, either their native language or a second language, usually English, is useful in communication. By making explicit how much students already know about how languages work, teachers assist students in making the connections between their ability to learn their native language and their ability to learn a second language (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). Children are capable of learning a second language when their native language is valued and used as a firm base upon which to build language (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). Children learn a second language when they are introduced to language and print in safe and supportive environments. \

The National Association for the Education of Young Children

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the International Reading Association joined together to guide teachers in early education programs including childcare centers, preschools, and family childcare providers on ways in which they can assist children in learning to speak, read, and write. It is their position that learning to speak, read, and write is critical to a child’s success in school and later life (National Association of the Education of Young Children, 1998). It is the NAEYC’s position that children learn as they attempt to understand the world through their own language and culture (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Building upon what children already know and assessing areas they need improvement, regardless of language, helps promote learning in all children. The NAEYC believes that children learn best when they acquire skills in safe and supportive settings where educators understand the cultural differences of children and respect the child’s home language and culture. The NAEYC encourages dialogue, play, and social interactions that promote second language acquisition in developmentally appropriate learning environments.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) are those classroom practices that enhance a child’s development, foster self-esteem, and promote learning and a child’s readiness for school. DAP classrooms address the social-emotional and cognitive development of young children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). DAP classroom experiences provide learning experiences that enhance language development. Meaningful conversations between teachers and students expand a child’s thinking about new subject areas and supply opportunities to learn new vocabulary. Children are likely to broaden their vocabulary through play in a naturalistic setting that allows both language and academic growth (Dickson & Tabors, 2001). Naturalistic settings that are low in stress and are developmentally appropriate are conducive to the language acquisition and academic growth of young children.

The NAEYC's original position statement discusses early studies on stress and young children and documented that children in didactic environments exhibited more stress than children in child-initiated environments (Dunn & Kontos, 1997). In 1990, the Hyson, Hirsh-Pasek, and Rescorla Study studied preschool children enrolled in child-initiated programs. The children in the study displayed lower levels of test anxiety than children enrolled in academic programs regardless of parental preferences for classroom approaches (Dunn & Kontos, 1997). The Hyson, Hirsh-Pasek, and Rescorla Study also found that children in child-initiated preschool classrooms scored higher on measures for creativity and divergent thinking than children in academically focused classrooms (Dunn & Kontos, 1997). Child-initiated developmentally appropriate practices that focus on language and print-rich activities increase language and cognitive development. The emergent literacy activities of print and language begin a child on the path toward becoming a strong reader.

Emergent Literacy

Children supported by home and school develop the skills necessary to learn how to read and write. Emergent literacy happens over time through language development, exposure to print-rich environments, and an awareness of phonemes and phonics. The process of teaching a child to read is a shared task between school and home. Children learn emergent literacy skills through a variety of learning activities. Schools, families, and communities provide children with the skills necessary for school entry. Among the tasks necessary for school entry are listening, speaking, social uses of language, vocabulary and meaning, questioning, all of which use language. Language is a domain that is tightly related to emergent literacy.

Language Development

Learning to read is a process that begins when a baby is born and starts to listen to the sound of the human voice (Poole, Miller, & Booth, 1998). The baby learns receptive language as he learns to listen and understand language. He begins to respond to the sound of a familiar voice which is usually that of his parent. He begins to track with his eyes and pay attention to the sounds and inflections of the voices he hears. Babies will later respond to the adult's voice by cooing and gurgling, which later turns into new sounds like "Da, da," which the parent then repeats back.

From the beginning, babies are capable of imitating the sounds that exist in all human languages. They stop, by seven to eight months, using the ones they do not hear on a daily basis and practice what they do hear (Poole, Miller, & Booth, 1998). When parents sing, speak, and read to their infant, they are setting the stage for the child's development of language. Beginning at age two, children will develop language at a rapid rate. They begin to use expressive language as they learn to speak recognizable words and use language for communication. When communication is open and listening is a two-way street, toddlers feel secure and capable (Poole, Miller, Booth, 1998). As a child grows older, he or she begins to discover that language can be used in play and they can master simple language through singing songs and repeating nursery rhymes. This allows the child to further develop his curiosity about words, sounds, and language.

Preschool children are naturally curious about language and are increasingly aware of the printed words found in their environment. Children are exposed to the print they find in their environment in many different forms. Children see print in the form of street signs, logos, clothing labels, cereal boxes, and advertisements. Young children can easily recognize the word and symbol for MacDonald's when driving past a MacDonald's restaurant. Children may not know how to identify the letters or read the words but they can make the connection that letters and symbols have meaning.

Building on children's natural curiosity and desire to learn provides opportunities for parents and teachers alike to teach children language skills. Parents can also use environmental print to teach and reinforce learning about colors, shapes, and letter recognition (Hand & Nourot, 1999). Parents can also create games where children recognize the letters of their name in a restaurant menu or learn about shapes and colors as they see traffic signs along the roadside. As children get older, these types of activities can help him or her learn to spell and write their name, learn the alphabet, and make letters into words all in a safe and supportive environment. Supportive environments at home and at school help a child develop primary and secondary expressive language competencies.

Children acquire language skills over time and within the context of their homes, school, and society. The normal interactions of the child provide opportunities for the child to relate language to their everyday experiences despite cultural surroundings. When the experiences of home are aligned with the curricular activities of school, children relate with the content information which facilitates towards greater school success (Neuman, Snow, & Canizares, 2000). Children in school and home environments that encourage expressive and receptive language development help build language and emergent literacy skills. The four areas essential for language development are listening, speaking, writing, and reading (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

Listening

Children learn literacy skills as they listen and interact with the world around them. As young children listen, they begin to discriminate and identify sounds, process sounds to formulate words and meanings, and learn to follow simple directions and commands. Listening to a child is critical at all stages of the child's development. In infancy, a child begins to make sounds and babble. As a parent echoes back and smiles at a child, the child learns that sounds elicit responses and are a way of communicating and interacting with others. Listening to a child sing his ABC's, telling him a story, or reading aloud to a child reinforces the importance of language and speech at home and at school.

Parents and teachers can reinforce language by giving children opportunities to play and explore their environment. Talking to children and asking them questions helps children learn that it is safe to inquire about the world and allows them to expand their oral language skills (Hand & Nourot, 1999). Listening to a child models the importance of language and provides children with the opportunity to exhibit their expanding language skills.

Many children love to hear themselves talk. As they begin to have mastery over language, they might tell story after story, pleased by their new mastery of language. To an adult, these stories might have little meaning or value but to a child, just the act alone of telling a story uses their imagination and cognitive skills in a way that engages them socially. Language allows children to have the opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings, sorrows, and joys. Adults that actively listen and speak with a child can help that child expand on his expressive language skills, become more proficient in language, and build a stronger bond between the adult and child.

Speaking

Children learn speech at home and at school. They learn that speech is made up of a broad range of sounds and inflections and that there are certain grammatical rules that apply to speech. Children learn that speech is used for communicating and self-expression. As a child's vocabulary increases, he or she learns that words are sequenced into sentences. He

learns to question his environment as he acquires new words. A child's natural curiosity triggers many questions like what, where, when, why, and how as he discovers his world and the power of language. Children, teachers, and parents can use language to creatively teach phonemic awareness through listening activities such as songs, stories, rhyming sounds and words, and developing and telling stories (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Speaking allows the child to see there is a connection between words, meaning, and the printed word.

Writing

Children learn to read as they learn to extract meaning from the printed word. In DAP print-rich environments, children are exposed to the written word. Everywhere they look, letters and words are written to reinforce the connection between words and language. Young children learn to write by first scribbling and drawing. As they develop fine motor skills, their written skills improve. School and home environments that provide the child with opportunities to be exposed to written words, practice writing, and identifying letters in print, help the child become a successful reader. Understanding and recognizing text depends heavily on the reader's oral language abilities. When children understand the meanings of words, it is easier for them to use proper syntax and semantics of language (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Another way adults can further improve language development in children is by reading aloud to them.

Reading

Reading aloud to children every day gives children an opportunity to use their imaginations, learn language, enjoy the sound of your voice, and build a strong bond between the parent and child. As a child listens to an adult read, the child is learning the power of narrative language (Canizares, 1998). A child's imagination comes alive as they learn to connect words with objects and discover that words are a way of expressing feelings, thoughts, and actions. As someone is reading to a child, the child will begin to understand the sense of the story and as favorite stories are read and reread, simple and repeated phrases become part of a child's vocabulary. The more children are read to, the more they begin to understand the plot structure, character development, and can follow the way a story develops (Canizares, 1998).

Reading aloud stimulates a child's interest, imagination, emotional development, and ability to see that words are a way of solving conflict. Literature is a way for a child to improve self expression and increase his or her language proficiency skills. Children model the language they hear. If children are reared on a heavy dose of television, videos, and rock music, then their language will reflect the language of the media. Good literature offers children the best opportunity to express themselves in a way that is precise, articulate, and further prepares them for school.

Research states that parents should begin reading aloud to a child immediately after birth. Although infants and toddlers cannot understand the plot or story, they become accustomed to the rhythmic sound of their parent's voice and associate it as a peaceful and secure time of the day (Trelease, 1995). As a child grows older, he begins to associate words with objects and begins to memorize sounds and rhymes in his head. At a young age, children begin to listen and practice saying nursery rhymes. One of the reasons Mother Goose rhymes have been popular for so long and are read so often to children is that the rhymes are rhythmic (Trelease, 1995). Mother Goose rhymes utilize both singing and rhythm, which reinforces language learning. Rhymes, chants, songs, and word games are ways of playing with

language that help shape literacy development. As children recite rhymes, they are learning the sounds of the words and are beginning phonemic awareness (Hand & Nourot, 1999).

Children naturally show interest in various forms of literature from books on letters, shapes, and colors to books on animals and nature. Literature activities increase a child's interest in the world as well as their sense of print from one book to the next. As they recall familiar stories, children gain a sense of permanency about the printed word (Schickedanz, 1999). Print awareness is their ability to see that the stories do not change from one reading to the next. In emergent literacy, children become aware that stories have a set sequence of beginning, middle, and end. They also become aware of the connection between the text and the story. Children learn to assign sounds to letters and that combinations of letters make different sounds. As a child is exposed to print, he increases his ability to learn the letters of the alphabet and recognize his own name in print. Teachers bring print and literature alive for children through literacy activities. The role teachers play in a child's emergent literacy skills and language acquisition is critical.

Role of the Teacher

The role of teacher in a childcare program is to carefully plan and implement curriculum that is child-initiated and teacher-directed. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) believes that early childhood educators must have structured programs that are based on sound early childhood education principles (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997). The structure and framework for good early education comes from the teacher's knowledge of early childhood development, culture, language, curriculum, and assessment (Hyson, 2001). The NAEYC is in favor of a classroom ratio of two adults per 17 children. The NAEYC supports teachers who understand the developmental needs of each child and provide classrooms that teach through differentiated learning. Understanding the individual needs of each child and providing differentiated instruction requires teachers to be well-trained.

Professional development and teacher training increases the quality, expertise, and effectiveness of early childhood educational programs. The training of teachers has always been supported by the NAEYC, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Parent Teacher Association. The California Department of Education has adopted standards for teacher training and provides opportunities for teachers to increase their teaching skills through local trainings and workshops. In order for early childhood programs to be effective in teaching emergent literacy skills, preschool teachers must be prepared with the current trends in language development and reading readiness. Due to the growing number of English language learners, teachers will need to be trained in cultural diversity and methods of building second language skills in children.

Training provides teachers with new theories and rationale for implementing new ideas, methodology, and curriculum into the classroom. Professional development is a necessary component for school, home, and community partnerships. Information that a teacher learns through training can be imparted to parents, which strengthens the resolve of supporting children both at school and at home. Teachers who improve their knowledge of early childhood education help create environments and activities that stimulate learning.

Trained early childhood educators provide differentiated learning centers that stimulate curiosity and scaffolding to deepen and extend learning. Activities that allow children to prepare and serve snacks provide children with opportunities to learn about mathematics,

science, nutrition, language development, and social interactions. Incorporating activities that allow a child to learn through the use of their hands, bodies, senses, and minds makes the learning process fun. Play, in turn, is viewed as a critical component to any preschool childcare program.

Children learn through play. John Dewey recognized the value of play in young children's development. He believed that children learn best by doing and continually experiencing their world through play (Scholastic, 2000). To many untrained observers, preschool is just a time when children are playing. Child development specialists such as Sue Bredekamp and Carol Copple (1997), know that children learn and discover their world through play. Play is serious business to a child. During play, a child is engaging both his mind and body. He integrates emotions and cognitions, learns to socialize, solves problems, learns language, and uses his imagination. Preschool classrooms that enhance development and relationships through play allow children to have many opportunities to explore, become creative, and to develop academic and social skills (Greene, 1993).

Developmentally appropriate preschool classrooms provide a variety of learning activities for children. Children learn how to solve problems and take turns as they work in small groups. For example, a station set up for art allows a child to share art materials such as colored markers, scissors, and brushes, while at the same time teaching the child how to take turns while interacting socially in a small table activity. Children learn spatial relationships, numbers, and shapes as they figure out how to balance and stack building blocks. Language is developed during play as a child interacts with others through imaginative behavior, sharing, and the differentiation and integration of ideas and concepts. In a child-initiated learning environment, children are free to explore the room. Stimulated by words, symbols, and print, a child's imagination can unfold. Children learn through the use of their imagination. Imagination is important in learning to love to read. Curriculum that stimulates imagination equips children with critical skills necessary for becoming successful readers and students.

Curriculum

According to the *Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines* (California Department of Education, 2000), effective preschool curriculum provides children with a variety of learning opportunities. The *Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines* suggest that children should be offered instruction through thematic units that offer meaning and purpose. Thematic instruction allows second language learners opportunities to integrate prior learning through a variety of relevant and interesting topics (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Both L1 and L2 children should also have choices and be provided with time for leisurely exploration and for trying out new activities and ideas. Therefore, there is a balance of teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities for all learners. Children need to be regularly involved in initiating, planning, and implementing activities and then reflecting on what they have learned.

The *Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines* state that curriculum should reflect children's diverse cultures and communities, accommodate many learning styles and abilities, and offer many ways to be successful. Curriculum should also provide alternating periods of active and quiet activities; offer activities in individual, small group, as well as large-group formats; and involve staff in regular cycles of planning, implementing, reflecting, and revising curricula (California Department of Education, 2000). Teachers should structure the classroom through the materials they select, the order and rhythm of the day, and the

questions they ask to challenge the children. They also need to provide activities that scaffold learning (Hyson, 2001).

Respect for the students native or home language and culture is another important element when determining the classroom structure. Teachers who integrate cultural diversity into the classroom curriculum help children, especially ELLs, feel respected and valued. Children and parents are encouraged to share their culture's uniqueness as well as the commonalities among the different languages and cultures in the classroom. Children become personally involved in their own education when teachers incorporate cultural and linguistic characteristics into their curriculum. They become motivated and active in the learning process when they are able to create linkages between home and school environments.

Print-rich Environments

Children exposed at an early age to home and school environments rich in print materials have a greater opportunity to extract meaning from printed symbols and decode printed words. The use of language by listening to stories, songs, and playing with rhyming sounds and words help develop a child's awareness of how oral language translates into literacy. Language allows the child to communicate and to participate in verbal discussions as well as actively explore his world through inquiry. Understanding language gives children the ability to interpret and express new knowledge of the world. They can also exchange information that is increasingly more explicit, complex, and abstract. The acts of expression and interpretation of thought are necessary for reading, writing, solving problems, relating to others, and synthesizing prior information. Language ability provides the foundation for actively engaging in activities and is the beginning of emergent literacy. The ability to take language and transfer it into written symbols is necessary for literacy to occur. A child must have a solid command of spoken language in order to become a competent reader (Canizares, 1998).

Parents can influence their children to become competent readers. When parents read books or the newspaper they model reading to their child. Having a variety of books for a child to explore fosters literacy development. Reading before bed can calm a child down and set a routine of bedtime reading. Reading books aloud to a child offers intellectual opportunities to hear vocabulary and phrasing that may be new to a child. Children will be drawn into the strange and familiar characteristics in books, as well as unconsciously playing out his own wishes, fears, and feelings (Canizares, 1998). Children benefit from hearing their favorite stories read over and over again. By honoring a child through the reading of his favorite story, an adult supports and encourages a child's love for reading. As children are read to and exposed to books, they are developing an understanding of phonemes and phonics.

Phonemic Awareness

Parents and schools that integrate oral language activities, which include phonemic awareness and phonics, provide children with the emergent literacy skills needed to become fluent readers. *Phonemic awareness* is the conscious awareness that words are composed of separate sounds and the ability to identify and manipulate those sounds (Saddleback Valley Unified School District, 2001). Sensitivity to small units of sound heard in oral language is essential in learning how to read and write an alphabetic script. The alphabetic language uses small units of sound. These units of sound, which are smaller than a syllable, are coded with alphabetic letters. These small units of sound are called phonemes (Schickedanz, 1999). Phonemes represent each letter of the alphabet with the exception of some letters such as /a/, /c/, and /e/ representing more than one phoneme. Additionally, some phonemes are grouped

together to form other phonemes as in the case of /th/ and /ch/ which represent a different phoneme. Phonemes are blended together to form words. For example, a child may be able to say the word “cat” but is unaware it is made up of the phonemes, /k/, /a/, and /t/. The understanding that speech is composed of a series of individual sounds is called phonemic awareness. Most children enter kindergarten with command of their home language and a sufficient understanding of phonemes but lack phonemic awareness (Yopp, 1992). There are certain phonemic activities that allow children opportunities to break words down into phonemes.

Phonemic awareness activities help foster positive feelings about learning in a playful and fun way that engages children’s normal curiosity. Teachers that provide opportunities to let children manipulate language through play and social interactions make learning positive and rewarding to a child. Children learn to manipulate sounds at individual rates. Some children easily understand the relationship between the sounds in language activities and their use of speech, while for others this is an emerging process. Phonemic activities and phonemic awareness are generally introduced into the kindergarten curriculum and are viewed as being essential to the successful application of phonics.

Phonological Awareness

The purpose of phonics instruction is to teach kindergarteners and first graders systematically and explicitly how to decode and spell. Teaching children how to associate letters and letter patterns with sounds and blend letters into words (Hand & Nourot, 1999). Phonics is the connection between the phonological (sounds) system of the English language and the letter system. Successful phonics instruction follows a plan of action, which usually starts with consonants and then vowels, and instruction progresses from simple to the more complex (Saddleback Valley Unified School District, 2001). Children learn not merely to decode printed words but they learn that printed words bring significance and meaning. They also learn that words are a form of communication. Being a successful reader and writer depends greatly upon mastery of phonics (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Students who have mastered the alphabetic principles through sound and symbol relationships and the sequencing of sounds are able to grasp the principles of phonemes and phonics. Phonemic awareness has been identified as the most important predictor of success in learning to read. Leading reading specialist Keith Stanovich states that phonemic awareness is more highly related to learning to read than test scores of general intelligence, reading readiness, listening, and comprehension (Sensenbaugh, 2002).

Parent Activities that Encourage Language Development

How do schools and families build a bridge that supports children’s literacy development and oral language acquisition? Educating parents to use what naturally occurs at home and in the environment is one of the easiest and best strategies for language development. By using what is normally found in the home, children can expand their language and understanding that the written language has meaning. This can occur without spending large amounts of money on commercially produced educational materials (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994).

Activities such as story telling, cooking, puppets, outdoor activities, and reading all enhance oral language proficiency and phonemic and phonic awareness. Simple strategies parents can do to create strong readers include reading to a child at least thirty minutes each day (Read Write Now, 2002). When reading to a young child, read a book where the print is large and point word by word as you read. This will help the child learn that reading goes from left to right and begin to correlate the words he hears with the words he sees. Read a

child's favorite book over and over again and introduce books on a variety of topics that interest the child. Read stories with rhyming and lines that repeat. Invite the child to join you in the rhymes. Stop throughout the story to encourage the child to think about the story and explore what might happen next in the plot. Read from a variety of children's books, including fairy tales, song books, poems, and information books (U.S. Department of Education, 2001a).

Activities such as cooking and grocery shopping expose children to the world of print that also engages concepts of math as well as the sense of smell and taste. Children can help decide what is purchased at the grocery store by locating a certain item. Parents can use these opportunities to have the child identify the shape of the item, color, and the letters in the product's name. Concept words such as bigger or smaller, heavy or light can also be practiced while shopping or cooking meals. Older children can practice writing skills by making grocery lists. Children can match coupons with store items as well as learn how certain grocery items are grouped together. Oral language can also be expanded as a parent explains the names of fruits and vegetables or other items in the market that are new to the child.

Children participating in grocery shopping use a number of thinking skills that facilitate literacy development. They make direct connections between what is said and what is written, they recognize print on packages and logos, and learn to categorize items such as fruit, vegetables, soups, and cereal. They can help predict and anticipate what foods will be needed later and figure out what is currently missing. Children have a strong relationship to food and grocery shopping, which creates a meaningful environment for learning (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). Other activities that expand language might be looking at newspapers, magazines, or books where exposure and a discussion of print can take place.

Storytelling

Storytelling allows the parent and child to have opportunities to develop language together. Through storytelling, a child's native culture is preserved. Storytelling is a way that a child's native culture can be valued and integrated into the child's self awareness. Connecting culture and content allows children from diverse backgrounds to see the world through a multicultural perspective. Storytelling gives children opportunities to share expressive language where they make a connection between content and language. Involving parents in their own literacy development also sets a positive premise for children. By modeling their own learning through English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, parents, as the child's first teacher, model and send positive messages about the value of learning.

Parents who have limited education or are illiterate can help promote reading through creative storytelling. They can help children learn about the story by looking at the pictures and creating a dialog about what they see. Hearing stories in their native language allows children a chance to hear and connect to their native language. Creating a story through picture telling encourages creativity. Creative storytelling can be enhanced when children create their own books through the use of art materials and animation. There is no one way to expand language development but exposure to print-rich activities and oral language activities all provide opportunities for children to learn.

An enriched environment consists of programs that provide stimulation of the child's senses, opportunities for a child to choose between developmentally appropriate activities, and settings where children can interact with other children and adults in an emotionally

supportive setting. Further enriched environments are ones that are free of undue stress where children are encouraged to actively discover, explore, and play. As children grow and learn, assessments become a necessary tool for teachers and parents.

Assessment

The assessment process provides useful information on a child's level of mastery and directs teachers in instructional and curricular decision making (Neuman, Snow, & Canizares, 1998). Assessments determine developmental progress and can ascertain if a child may have a learning or language disability. By detecting if children have learning disabilities or speech delays, interventions can begin at an earlier age. Assessments are useful in making school placement and as a way of reporting a child's progress to his parents. Assessing oral language acquisition allows teachers opportunities to determine the level of language competencies a child has mastered.

Assessing the level of competency of English language skills is useful for teachers in developing effective teaching strategies, predicting future progress in language acquisition, and classroom placement decisions. Language assessment determines the level of language competencies with the following designations: NES, LES, FES, NSS, LSS, and FSS. The Pre-IPT Oral assessment tool is a normalized test that has been approved by the State of California for assessing language proficiency. The Pre-IPT Oral is designed for assessing children three through five years of age, is theme based, and uses a story board for testing. There is both a Spanish and English version of the Pre-IPT Oral, which are both designed to be culturally sensitive (Ballard & Tighe, 1999a). The Pre-IPT Oral assesses the performance of preschool children in response to items represented in the English and Spanish-speaking culture. Several other language acquisition tools are commonly for testing young children. The Pre-IPT Oral was selected because its format can be easily used in an early childhood classroom, the time needed for testing is generally between 15 to 20 minutes, and it is a valid and reliable test (Ballard & Tighe, 1999a). The children participating in this study were four to five years of age and were participating in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District's Children and Families Commission grant. This competitive grant was awarded to the Saddleback Valley Unified School District in October 2000.

Funding

The California Children and Families Commission began when California voters, in November 1998, passed a statewide initiative, Proposition 10. Proposition 10 added a 50-cent sales tax to tobacco products sold in California. The collected funds are intended to fund new education, health, and childcare programs that promote early childhood development for all children from the prenatal stage to age five. Children learning and ready for school is part of the Children and Families Commission's First Strategic Plan. They also support programs that provide early care and education opportunities for all children to maximize their potential and succeed in school (California Children and Families Commission, 2001). In October 2000, Saddleback Valley Unified School District, located in Orange County, California, received a competitive grant for \$300,000 to implement an interagency collaborative approach to school readiness for one year. Additional funding of \$460,000 was awarded the District through June 2003. The funds were used to establish the School Readiness and Resource Center (SRRC) project. The SRRC project established three preschool programs in portables at Ralph Gates, Olivewood, and Lomarena Elementary Schools in the cities of Lake Forest and Mission Viejo, California.

This study was inspired by the need for children participating in the SRRC project to acquire the school readiness skills necessary for successful entry into kindergarten. Most of the preschool children attending the three SRRC schools come from low-income homes, are English language learners, and are entering kindergarten with limited or no English language skills. Along with limited English language skills, many of these children have no prior preschool experience and lack the emergent literacy and school readiness skills necessary for kindergarten.

Conclusion

Early childhood education programs help prepare children for entry into kindergarten. Preparing children for school is a growing concern at both the state and federal level. The National Education Goals Panel appropriates resources to address the concern that all children will start school ready to learn. Programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, and Even Start School have studied the effect of preschool education on academic success. The findings from these programs have demonstrated the effectiveness of early childhood education programs on school readiness and school success. The California Department of Education has taken steps to address the issues surrounding school readiness.

The California Department of Education has established several guidelines to prepare children for kindergarten. The California Department of Education/ Child Development Division developed the *Desired Results for Children and Families* which established developmental standards for childcare providers to improve the conditions and well-being of families and children (California Department of Education, 2000). The *Desired Results for Children and Families* standards include language, social-emotional, and physical domains which help prepare preschool children for kindergarten. The *Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines* also set a standard for educators and childcare providers who work with young children. The *Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines* provide guidance on how to build high-quality preschool programs and best practices in education for children entering kindergarten in California (California Department of Education, 2000). The guidelines included developmentally appropriate practices for early childhood programs.

Developmentally appropriate practices that are child-directed allow the child to discover and learn in a safe naturalistic setting. The NAEYC believes that young children learn best in environments that address the developmental and cultural needs of each child. It recommends that appropriate practices integrate principles of child development and that children learn best in the context of a community where they feel safe and are valued (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Curriculum that supports developmentally appropriate practices encourages learning using thematic units. Early childhood environments that provide book and print awareness, letter and early word recognition, listening and reading activities, phonemic and phonic awareness, and language development also promote children's reading success (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999). Learning how to read is a process that begins with oral language development.

The National Education Goals Panel addresses language development as one of its major goals (Child Trends, 2001). Oral language development is necessary for emergent literacy and the ability of children to decode print. Many children enter kindergarten lacking oral language proficiency due to limited exposure to oral language activities. Oral language activities that include songs, rhymes, chants, stories, and word games help foster phonemic awareness in young children (California Department of Education, 1999). Phonemic awareness activities increase the child's ability to hear and recognize sounds. Research has

established that phonemic awareness is the highest predictor in learning to read (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Young children build a foundation for learning to read and write through oral language development and phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness and emergent literacy skills can be increased through parental involvement.

Parents, as a child's first teacher, play a critical role in their child's education and how they transition to the school setting. Parents that take an active role in talking and reading with their children help establish a foundation for learning. Reading aloud has been found to be the single most important activity for building the concepts and skills necessary for learning to read (Neuman, Snow, & Canizares, 2000). Research has shown that parents who read at least 30 minutes a day to a child raise strong readers (National Network for Child Care, 2002). Research has also shown that children whose parents are involved in their education have greater academic success (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b). Parents who make reading and reading-like activities a part of a daily routine set the stage for children learning how to read.

Reading and language-rich activities assist English language learners in acquiring the skills necessary for school success. The Interactionist theory of first and second language acquisition focuses on the importance of parent and teacher partnerships. The Interactionist theory encourages language development through communication between students, teachers, and children. Both first and second language is developed through social interactions in developmentally appropriate settings. The natural give and take between native and non-native speakers is crucial for second language acquisition (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). Learning environments that support the home language of students assists them in building second language competencies. Both first and second languages are learned over time and are influenced by both language-rich and print-rich activities at home and at school.

Language-rich and print-rich activities help encourage oral language development. Integrating reading with writing, speaking, and listening creates a balanced emergent literacy program for young children. Early childhood education preschool programs supported by parent involvement help promote oral language proficiency and second language acquisition. The findings from this research study will add to the field of early childhood education and second language acquisition.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology for this research study: the population; the design of the study; how data was collected; data analysis and techniques; treatments; the instrument used in testing the students; protection of human subjects; and validity and reliability of the instrument. This study sought to answer the five research questions defined in Chapter 1. The purpose of this research study was to identify if attendance in a language-rich and print-rich preschool environment, supported by parent involvement and teacher training, increased oral language proficiency in preschool children. This study was designed to explore how parent involvement and teacher training support children's oral language development. Based on the Interactionist theory of language acquisition, teachers and parents provided children with opportunities to expand language both at school and at home.

Population

Participants in this study were children four to five years of age who met at least one of the following criteria: are English language learners; come from low-income families; have no prior preschool experience; or lack the ability to pay for attendance in a preschool program. Seventy-two preschool children and their parents were enrolled in the study and agreed to participate. Each child had one consistent adult participating, usually their mother, in the parent/child Bridge program. Three elementary schools were selected to participate in this study. These three elementary schools have the largest number of ELL students enrolled in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District. Each of the three elementary schools currently operates a School Readiness and Resource Center (SRRC) preschool. The three preschools are funded through a grant from the Children and Families Commission of Orange County, California. The focus of the grant is on school readiness, parent education, and teacher training. There were three preschool teachers participating in the study. The three preschool teachers have varying educational backgrounds and differing degrees of prior preschool teaching experience. See Table 21. In each of the classrooms, the preschool teachers were assisted by a bilingual instructional assistant.

Design

This research study was conducted at the three SRRC preschool sites for 36 weeks. During the 36 weeks, children attending the SRRC preschool program received curricular interventions for oral language development. The curriculum used in the study was *Building Language for Literacy*. Parents received instruction, during the parent Bridge program, on activities they could do at home to improve emergent literacy skills in their children. During the Bridge program, parents participated in the table top activities, circle time, and reading activities with their children. The teacher's treatment was 101 training hours. Parents completed a registration form for their child, which included appropriate emergency information and current immunization information. Each parent signed an Agreement to Participate in the study (Appendix A). Parents completed a Parent Survey (Appendix B). The Parent Survey collected demographic information such as income level, marital status, language spoken at home, and the parent's highest level of education. The Parent Survey was written in English and in Spanish. Classroom teachers assisted parents who needed assistance in completing the Parent Survey.

The study was designed to provide developmentally appropriate curricular activities to children and to encourage parent participation. The children and the participating adults were divided into two groups: Group A and B. All preschool classes were 2.5 hours in length. Group A children attended the SRRC preschool programs three days a week for nine weeks. Group B children and their parents together attended a parent/child preschool program called Bridge. The Bridge program was two and a half-hours long one day a week for nine weeks. After the nine week session, Groups A and B rotated and Group B children attended the three day a week preschool program and Group A participated in the parent/child enrichment Bridge program. The parents and children, Groups A and B, rotated sessions for a total of 18 weeks in each of the two programs. This rotating program was designed to maximize the number of children who participated in the SRRC program rather than to be part of the research design. By rotating the two groups, 24 children were served at each site rather than 12. One parent, relative or consistent caregiver was required to attend the Bridge preschool class with their child as a condition of participation. The classroom materials selected were developmentally appropriate to support language-rich and print-rich preschool activities. The three bilingual instructional assistants aided the teacher in preparing curricular activities and supported both the children and the parents in the classroom.

The classroom ratio was six children per one adult, which is under the recommended ratio set by the National Association of Education of Young Children. The three bilingual instructional assistants have a minimum of two years teaching experience with young children. Each bilingual instructor was fluent in English and Spanish and provided primary language support to the children. They assisted the teacher in signing children in and out of class each day and help collect daily attendance. The staff also collected the Oral Language Activity Sheet and answered any questions parents might have about the program.

Each of the three sites also had a community liaison. Gates Elementary School also had a parent advocate. The preschool teachers and bilingual instructional assistants met bimonthly with the Gates Elementary School parent advocate and the three community liaisons from each site. These meetings provided program consistency, opportunities to provide curriculum continuity, and resolve any concerns that individual children or parents had during the study. The researcher facilitated the bimonthly staff meetings.

The Pre-IPT Oral test was administered by two bilingual instructional assistants, one of the preschool teachers, and the community liaison from Gates Elementary School. The researcher provided training for the four School Readiness and Resource Center staff who administered the pre/post Pre-IPT Oral test. The administrators were trained in the procedure of scoring and administering the test. The pre/post Pre-IPT Oral test was administered in the SRRC classroom, as part of the normal classroom activity centers. This allowed the child to feel comfortable in the testing environment and lessen any test anxiety. The testing took approximately 15-20 minutes to administer. According to the IPT testing procedure, the test was stopped after a child has missed five questions in any given section. The more competency skills a child has mastered the longer a child will need to be tested. The test takes approximately 5-10 minutes longer for children who have higher language competency skills (Ballard & Tighe, 1999a). The pre Pre-IPT Oral was given to each child within the first two weeks of attendance in the preschool program. Each parent completed the parent inventory survey upon enrollment into the program. Children were tested again at the end of the 36 week program.

During the 36 week study, parents were instructed to involve their children in oral activities outside of school. All oral activities were logged on the Oral Language Activity Sheet (Appendix C). The activity sheet was divided into the following activities: puppetry; story telling; cooking; shopping; and other. The Oral Language Activity Sheet also had illustrations of the oral activities for easier tracking for parents with limited reading skills. Activities were tracked in 30 minute increments. The Oral Language Activity Sheets were given to parents in either English or in Spanish. The Oral Language Activity Sheet was submitted to the preschool teacher weekly. In addition to oral language activities, parents were asked to read daily with their child. The names of the books read to the children at home were logged and turned in weekly to the teachers. The three preschool teachers worked individually with each adult and child to encourage emergent literacy and oral activities at home. Teachers kept a notebook containing the activity logs and attendance for each child and parent participating in their preschool and Bridge program (Appendix D). The teachers kept information submitted by the parents on a weekly basis. Each of the three preschool teachers contacted the kindergarten teachers at their school site. The preschool teachers reported if parents continued to be involved in their child's kindergarten classroom. All information was reviewed by the researcher on a monthly basis. Each school site submitted their tracking information in a notebook to the researcher at the end of the study.

Data Collection

Data was collected and maintained by the researcher. Each student, teacher, and school site was identified by an identification number to insure confidentiality. The variables included in the study were the child's gender, primary language, school site, teacher, level of teacher education, prior teaching experience, Pre-IPT Oral score, post Pre-IPT Oral score, days of attendance in Bridge, days of attendance in preschool, books read at home, marital status of parent, level of income, ethnicity, level of parent education, and home oral activities. Data was coded according to the variables used (Appendix E).

The researcher also collected data through the use of field notes. The data for the preschool site observations was collected by the researcher on a weekly basis using field notes (Appendix F). The observations were recorded in three categories: curriculum implementation; child teacher interactions; and parent teacher interactions. The data for the Bridge program was collected through bi-monthly observations. Each teacher submitted lesson plans once a month (Appendix G). The researcher met monthly with the teachers. The monthly teacher meeting was included in the field notes. At the monthly staff meetings, the teachers discussed the preschool curriculum, attendance, record keeping, parent participation, and teacher training. Data was collected, reviewed, and analyzed according to the research questions.

Data Analysis and Analytical Techniques

Pre-IPT Oral English and Pre-IPT Oral Spanish was entered into the IPT software program. The IPT software computed raw scores assigning designation scores. The designation scores were computed for the Pre-IPT Oral English and the Pre-IPT Oral Spanish, Second Edition. The IPT Software gave students a raw score level and a designation score. These were based on the child's age and their Pre-IPT Oral scores. The IPT Software was designed by Ballard and Tighe for designation and redesignation for the following normative tests: Pre-IPT Oral English; Pre-IPT Oral Spanish, Second Edition; IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test I (IPT I) for grades K-6; and IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test II (IPT II) for grades 7-12. The data from the pre and posttest scores, attendance records, teacher information data from the parent survey, and Oral Language Sheets were entered into NCSS 2000 software for analysis. Data was then entered into Microsoft Excel. A professional statistician was used to analyze the data. The use of a professional insured the integrity of the data, as well as reduced researcher bias, and provided additional insight into the analysis. A phone interview was conducted with Ballard and Tighe Publishers to discuss designation levels.

Initially, the data was tabulated using the standard summary statistics of means, standard deviations, and percentages. The primary dependent variable was the difference in the student's IPT Oral raw scores from September to May. The number of IPT Oral bands/levels was also calculated. For comparisons of the different scores with categorical, dichotomous independent variables such as student gender or marital status descriptive statistics were used. When the independent variables were categorical with several categories such as school attended or ethnic background descriptive statistics were used. When this dependent variable was compared to continuous variables such as days of school attendance, home language activities, books read at home, and parent education, Person correlations was used.

Description of Treatments

The study had three treatments: classroom curricular activities; parent involvement; and teacher training. The three treatments were consistent at each school site.

Classroom Curricular Activities

The classroom curricular activities were based on the Interactionist theory of learning. The curriculum used was *Building Language for Literacy*. The curriculum instruction is thematic in the content areas of home, restaurant, store, firehouse, farm, aquarium, supermarket, construction site, airport, museum, garden, and zoo. The framework of the curriculum was designed for children to apply what is learned at school to their home experiences. The curriculum encourages multicultural awareness and builds upon the child's own life experiences. It encourages parent involvement and teaches ways for schools and families to work together and build language for literacy.

The curricular activities include story time that builds language and opportunities to share. Activities that allow for singing songs, chanting, rhyming, and storytelling are included in the curriculum. Children have opportunities to discover print through play and social interactions. The children were given opportunities to explore print and phonemic awareness through puzzles, games, small group activities, and story time. The classroom was designed with a circle time, science/listening center, kitchen area, dramatic play area, reading corner, and four small activity tables for games, puzzles, art, and other print-rich activities.

Parent Involvement

Participating parents were introduced to early childhood education principles and ways that they can be their child's first teacher. The parents attending the parent/child enrichment rotation were given instruction each week on the principles of child development. The *Building Language for Literacy* curriculum incorporated parent activities throughout each unit. It covered ways in which parents can help prepare their children for school and tools they can use to increase oral language skills at home. Parents learned what is developmentally appropriate for children four to five years of age. They were instructed on emergent literacy skills such as how to hold a book when reading to a young child, how to read from left to right, and methods of expanding literature and print awareness at home. Teachers reinforced literacy concepts and ways parents can use literature to help children develop social awareness, problem solving techniques, and cultural awareness. Each week that the parent and child attended the Bridge program, they worked on emergent literacy tool/activities. Teachers, parents, and children created a "learning kit" throughout the study period. Weekly emergent literacy tools were added to the "learning kit." The "learning kit" included activities that provide the child opportunities to practice school readiness skills such as counting, sorting, matching, as well as letter, color, number and name recognition. The "learning kits" also included literature, books, pencils, crayons, rulers, colored markers and emergent literacy activities provided by the SRRC project which the parent and child can use at home to increase language skills.

Teacher Training

The three preschool teachers received 101 hours of training throughout the study. The three early childhood teachers attended a four-hour curriculum training on *Building Language for Literacy*. This curriculum, developed by Scholastic Publishing Inc., uses Interactionist theory as it builds on the child's own experiences in the community, fosters multicultural awareness and understanding, connects school to home life and encourages parent involvement. The curricular goals are: oral language development; phonological awareness; letter knowledge; and creating language skills through concepts of print (Neuman, Snow, & Canizares, 2000). The curriculum contains four hours of staff development training within each unit. The staff development is integrated into the units to emphasize different

content areas. It provided teachers with best practices developed by Scholastic, Inc. The teachers also completed a 44-hour Early Steps to Reading Success training provided by the California Department of Education. This training prepared teachers in best practices with English language learners and teaching emergent literacy. They also attended an additional 25 hours of training through the following workshops: Keeping the Peace on conflict resolution in the classroom; Bev Boss Workshop on art and expressive language development; Much More Than ABC's on emergent literacy; Pre-Kindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines which addressed the current trends in child development, the role of the teacher, cultural diversity in the classroom, and school readiness; Little Learners which addressed language acquisition and phonemic awareness; Between the Lions on ways adults can increase literacy at home; and Sesame Street Prep on media literacy.

Instrument

The Pre-IPT Oral English and the Pre-IPT Oral Spanish, Second Edition, are normative instruments approved by the State of California for listening, speaking and comprehending. The Pre-IPT Oral tests are normative instruments used to assist schools in identifying non-English and limited English preschool children. The Pre-IPT Oral instrument was designed to determine a child's level of oral language proficiency. One increase in designation level is expected during a nine month school year in both English and Spanish.

The instrument was designed in English and Spanish and is also used as a diagnostic tool. It was designed to assess the general areas of Vocabulary, Comprehension, Grammar, Syntax, and Verbal Expression, which included the child's ability to use oral language in an expressive manner. Children whose home language is Spanish were administered both the Pre-IPT Oral English and the Pre-IPT Oral Spanish, Second Edition. Children whose home language is other than Spanish were given only the English version of the Pre-IPT test.

The pilot test version was finalized and distributed to districts, child development centers, preschools including Head Start and Even Start throughout the United States. The Pre-IPT Oral English requires the students to respond to controlled stimuli, both verbal and visual. Children's responses are then assessed as to correctness, appropriateness, and completeness (Ballard & Tighe, 1999a). The Pre-IPT Oral English is designed with careful consideration for primary and secondary language acquisition. The test takes into account each child's uniqueness and that preschool children are not accustomed to taking tests (Ballard & Tighe, 1999a).

A story board was used in the testing process and it uses a story to de-emphasize the test per se, which lessens the child's anxiety. The story engages the child and tester in a here and now context in a comfortable non-threatening situation. Both the Pre-IPT Oral English and the Pre-IPT Oral Spanish, Second Edition were designed for children three through five years of age to provide initial designation as Non, Limited, Fluent English Speaking or Fluent Spanish Speaking. Raw scores range for Non designation from 0 to 12, Limited designation 13 to 26, and Fluent designation are 27 to 40. The designations assigned to the child are based on the raw scores for the pre Pre-IPT Oral and the post Pre-IPT Oral exam.

The Pre-IPT Oral Spanish, Second Edition, serves as an accurate, age appropriate assessment tool that has been designed along a story line that provides opportunities for discrete and integrative type items in a natural, dyadic, and conversational mode of testing (Ballard & Tighe, 1999b). The intent of the Pre-IPT Oral is to assess the performance of students in response to items representative of common Spanish language speech patterns.

The test was designed to reflect the different socio-cultural backgrounds of the Spanish-speaking children taking the test.

Protection of Human Subjects

The subjects in this study participated on a volunteer basis. Parents completed an Agreement to Participate (Appendix A). This agreement covered both the parent and child's participation in the study. The SRRC staff completed a Participation Authorization Letter (Appendix H). Parents, teachers, instructional assistants, and children participating in the study were given an identification number and all data collected were treated in an ethical and confidential manner.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of the instrument was tested by Ballard and Tighe. Validity of the Pre-IPT Oral test examines content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity. Content validity measured the areas of vocabulary, comprehension, grammar/syntax, and verbal expression. Criterion related validity indicating that the direct and independent measure of vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, syntax, and verbal expression was predicted. Teachers were asked to predict where each of the students would score on the Pre-IPT Oral test. According to Ballard & Tighe (1999c), the Pearson's *R* correlation coefficient was .54, which indicates a moderate, positive relationship between the teacher's predicted scores or the students actual score level on the Pre-IPT Oral Spanish and English. The correlation is highly significant at $p < .001$ for Spanish Pre-IPT Oral. The construct validity shows a direct correlation between age and oral language ability. The Pearson's *R* .30 and significance of $p < .001$ indicates a weak to moderate relationship between children three through six who were tested. In the internal consistency reliability study of 756 students, results showed a very high reliability. There was a Cronbach's Alpha of .97 and the standard error of measurement (SEM) was 2.08. The SEM of 2.08 means that 67% of the time students scores were within plus or minus of his or her observed score. The results of the test/retest and inter-rater reliability of 93 students, which was administered twice after a two week period, showed .63 on the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient indicating reasonably good test/retest reliability (Ballard & Tighe, 1999c). A report of the data examining the validation/norming for validity and reliability for the Spanish and English Pre-IPT Oral shows the Pre-IPT Oral test to be valid and reliable.

Limitations

The following study was limited to the children attending the three preschool sites, their parents, and teachers. Findings cannot be generalized beyond the population selected but other schools may apply the findings as they apply to their situation.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, findings related to the research questions are reported. The population will be presented first followed by a narrative for each research question and a summary of field notes. Finally, a summary of the findings will be reviewed. The purpose of this study was to determine if preschool children would increase their oral language proficiency levels through participation in a language-rich and print-rich preschool environment that included parent directed oral language activities.

Research Question One

Research Question One asked “What are the demographic characteristics of the students for gender, primary language, and ethnicity?” Sixty children participated in this research study. The group consisted of 32 boys (53.3%) and 28 girls (46.7%). Out of the 60 students, 54 of the children were identified by the mother as primary Spanish-speaking and 6 were identified as primary English-speaking. See Table 4. In addition, 3 spoke another language at home, namely Romanian, Tagalong and Mandarin. The characteristics were identified by the mothers who reported 54 (90%) as Hispanic, 3 (5.0%) as Caucasian, 2 (3.3%) as African American, and 1 student (1.7%) as Chinese.

Research Question Two

Research Question Two asked, “What were the demographic characteristics of the parents for family income, marital status and mother’s education level?” Mothers reported that income for the child’s family ranged from less than \$14,000/year (36.7%) to over \$38,000/year (5.0%). Ninety-five percent of the student families reported an annual income of less than the mean income for California residents. See Table 5. Fifty-eight (96.7%) of the mothers responded that they were married and living with the children’s father. Two indicated that they were single. Parent educational level ranged from fifth grade through college graduate. Thirty-three had not graduated from high school, 18 (30%) had graduated from high school, and 9 (15.0%) had attended some college.

Table 4: Student Demographic Data for Gender, Primary Language, and Ethnicity (N=60)

	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	32	53.3
Female	28	46.7
<i>Primary Language</i>		
English	3	5.0
Spanish	54	90.0
<i>Other</i>		
Romanian	1	1.7
Tagalong	1	1.7
Mandarin	1	1.7
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Hispanic	54	90.0
Caucasian	3	5.0
African American	2	3.3
Chinese	1	1.7

Table 5: Parent Demographic Data for Income, Marital Status and Education Level (N=60)

	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Family Income</i>		
Less than \$14,000	22	36.7
\$14,000 to \$25,000	29	48.3
\$25,000 to \$38,000	6	10.0
Over \$38,000	3	5.0
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	58	96.7
Single	2	3.3
<i>Mother’s Educational Level</i>		
Less than 7 years	3	5.0
7 to 9 years	30	50.0

High School Graduate	18	30.0
Some College	8	13.3
College Graduate	1	1.7

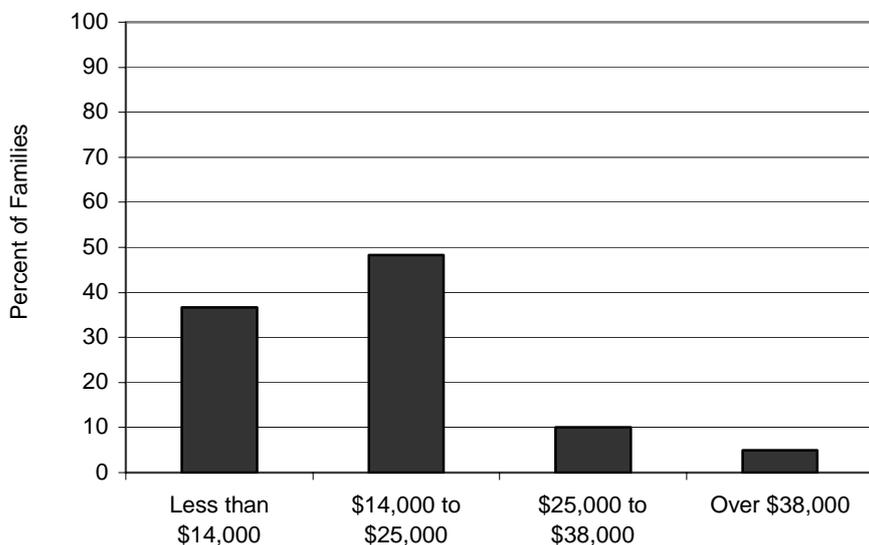


Figure 2: Annual income of students families

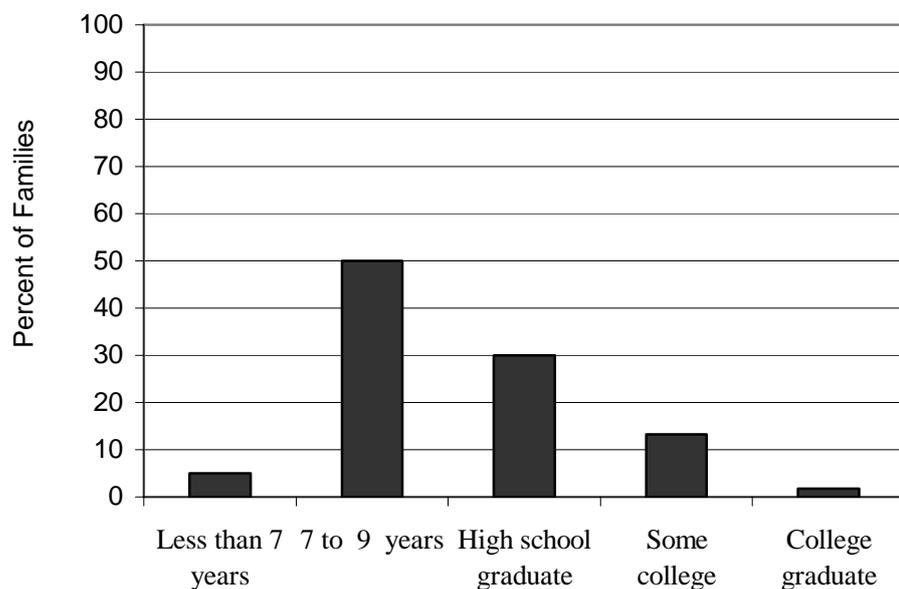


Figure 3: Parent education level

Research Question Three

Research Question Three asked, “What were the student’s gain in designation level for English and Spanish from the beginning of the program (pretest) and the end of the program (posttest) according to the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) Oral test?” Analysis of the data displayed a percentage of gain in English and Spanish-IPT designations (See Table 6). At the pretest, only nine students (15.0%) were Fluent English Speakers (FES) but at posttest, an additional 22 students achieved FES for a total of 31 FES (51.7%) in the study. Similar gains

were noted for students speaking in Spanish. At pretest, only nine (16.7%) were Fluent Spanish Speakers (FSS) while at the posttest, 38 students (70.0%) achieved FSS (See Table 6). Out of 60 students, 56.7 % of the students increased at least one English designation level.

Two students (3.3 %) gained two designation levels. These two students had a pretest score one point from LES designation. Their posttest scores were two points within the FES designation level. Fifty-four students took the Spanish Pre and Post Pre-IPT Oral exam, 59.3 % of the students increased at least one Spanish designation level. According to a phone interview with Ballard and Tighe Publishers, a gain in one designation level is typical for the testing period.

One student scored Non Spanish Speaking and Non English Speaking at the end of the study, this student was identified as having language delay and was referred to Special Education Department for speech and language therapy. Two other students scored Non English Speaking at the end of the study. These students had low raw scores on the pretest and higher scores on the posttest. However, the higher raw scores did not permit a redesignation of Limited English Speaking.

Table 6: Number of Students by English Designation Level on Pre and Post IPT (N=60)

	<i>n</i>	%
Pre English Designation		
1-NES	19	31.7
2-LES	32	53.3
3-FES	9	15.0
Post English Designation		
1-NES	3	5.0
2-LES	26	43.3
3-FES	31	51.7
Gain in English Designation Level		
No gain	24	40.0
One level	34	56.7
Two levels	2	3.3

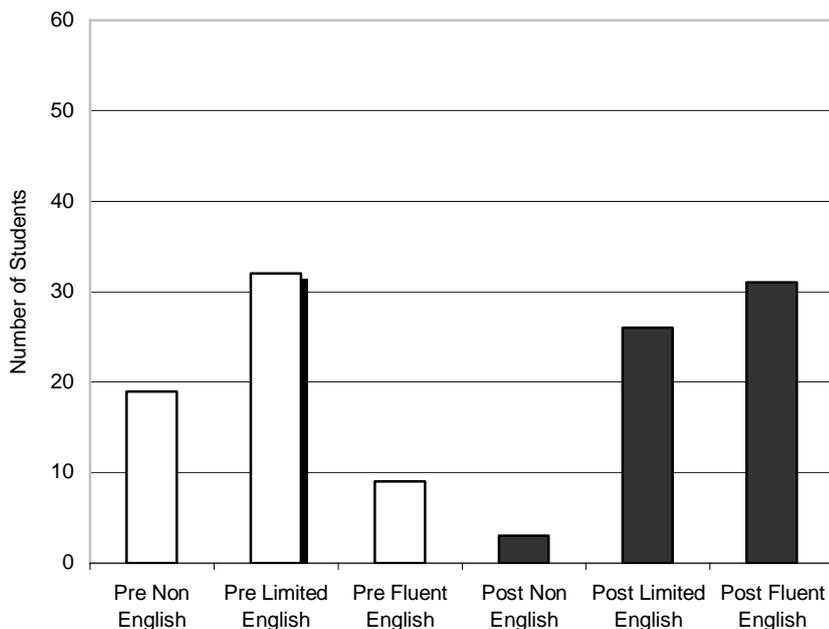


Figure 4: *Distribution of number of students pre and post IPT English designation levels*

Table 7: *Number of Students by Spanish Designation Level for Pre and Post IPT (N=60^a)*

	<i>n</i>	%
Pre Spanish Designation		
1-NSS	4	7.4
2-LSS	41	75.9
3-FSS	9	16.7
Other ^a	6 ^a	
Post Spanish Designation		
1-NSS	1	1.9
2-LSS	15	27.8
3-FSS	38	70.0
Other ^a	6 ^a	
Gain in Spanish Designation Level		
No gain	22	40.7
One level	32	59.3
Other ^a	6 ^a	

^a There were 6 English only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

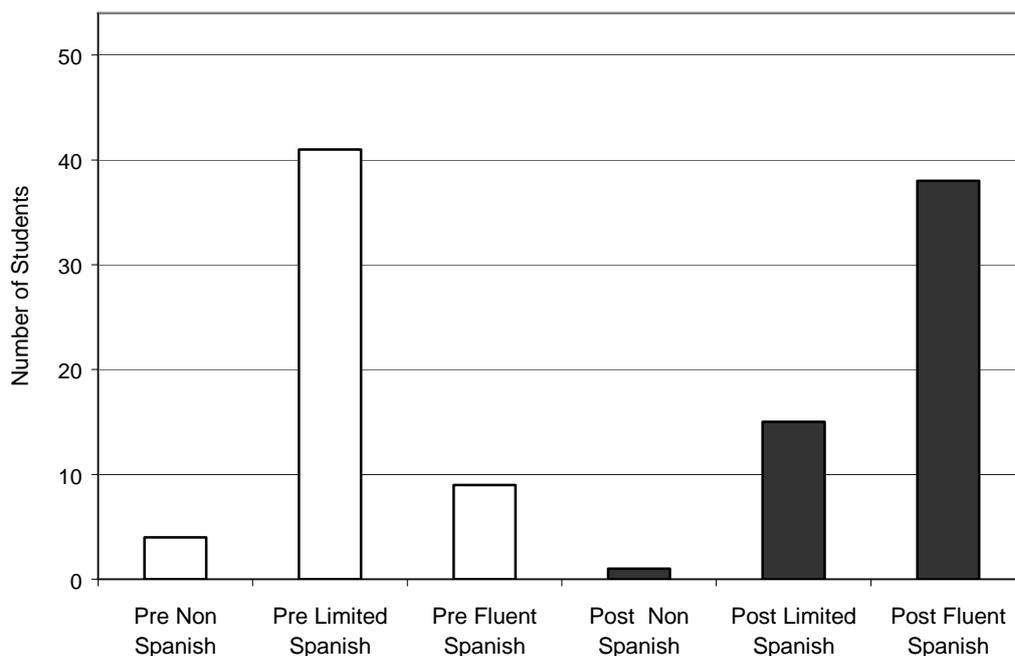


Figure 5: *Distribution of number of students pre and post IPT Spanish designation levels*

The means and standard deviations for selected variables include the pretest, posttest and gain in IPT scores for both English and Spanish (Appendix J). The Pre English Raw scores ranged from .00 to 39.00 with a mean of 12.40 and a standard deviation of 11.20. The Post English Raw scores ranged from 1.00 to 42.00 with a mean of 22.75 and a standard deviation of 12.37. Pre Spanish Raw scores ranged from .00 to 40.00 with a mean of 17.04 and the Post IPT scores ranged from .00 to 40.00 with a mean score of 28.78. The standard deviation for the Pre Spanish was 9.21 and the Post Spanish was 8.03. The gains in English Raw scores ranged from .00 to 34.00 with the mean of 10.35 and a standard deviation of 7.37. The gain in Spanish Raw scores ranged from .00 to 28.00 with a mean of 11.74 and a standard deviation of 8.03.

Research Question Four

Research Question Four asked, “What is the difference in the Pre Pre-IPT Oral and Post Pre-IPT Oral test scores and the following children’s variables: gender; ethnicity; days of attendance in preschool; home oral language activities; and books read to the children? Gains were made in English and Spanish for each of the variables. Home oral language activities and books read to the children at home demonstrated that increased parent involvement showed the greatest gains in oral language.

The comparisons for gender and gain in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores for boys and girls were made (See Table 8 and 9). The mean gains in English Raw scores were 11.56 for boys and 8.96 for girls. The percentage of IPT-English Raw gain for boys and girls was 196.27% and 174.08% respectively. The mean gains in Spanish Raw scores were 12.32 for boys and 11.12 for girls. The percentage of IPT-Spanish Raw gain for boys was 131.40% and for girls it was 79.34%. As stated previously, 56% of the 60 students increased at least on English designation level and 3.3% gained two levels (See Table 8). Fifty-four students took the IPT-Spanish which showed 59.3% of the students increased at least one Spanish designation level (See Table 9).

Table 8: *Differences in IPT Raw Score and English Designation Level Based on Gender (N=60)*

	Boys n=32		Girls n=28	
	M	SD	M	SD
Pre IPT English Raw Score	12.09	9.99	12.75	12.62
Post IPT English Raw Score	23.66	12.02	21.71	12.90
Gain in English IPT Raw Score	11.56	8.18	8.96	6.17
Percent of Gain in English IPT Raw Score	196.27	327.45	174.08	274.63
Gain in English Designation Level	.69	.54	.57	.57

Table 9: *Differences in IPT Raw Score and Spanish Designation Level Based on Gender (N=60^a)*

	Boys n=32		Girls n=28	
	M	SD	M	SD
Pre IPT Spanish Raw Score	15.54	7.93	18.65	10.33
Post IPT Spanish Raw Score	27.86	10.78	29.77	11.00
Gain in Spanish Raw Score	12.32	8.23	11.12	7.92
Gain in Spanish Designation Level	.61	.50	.58	.50
Percent of Gain in Spanish Raw Score	131.40	268.04	79.34	65.49

^aThere were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

The students were predominately Hispanic (90.0%). Only 54 of the 60 students took both the English and Spanish-IPT test. One mother identified her child as Caucasian with a primary language of Spanish. This child was given both the English and the Spanish-IPT tests. The comparison for ethnicity and mean gain in English-IPT Raw for Hispanic students was 10.34, Caucasian 10.33, African American 11.00, and Chinese 10.00 (See Table 10). The percentage of gain in IPT English Raw was 203.20 % for Hispanic students, Caucasian 47.57%, African American 122.60 %, and 70.85% for Chinese. The mean gain for Spanish-IPT raw was 11.91 for Hispanic students and 14.00 for Caucasians. The gain in percentage in IPT Spanish Raw was 104.45% for Hispanic students and 27.27% for Caucasians. See Table 11.

Table 10: *Differences in IPT Score and English Designation Level Based on Ethnicity (N=60)*

		<i>Hispanic</i> n=53		<i>Caucasian</i> n=3		<i>African American</i> n=2		<i>Chinese</i> n=1		<u>S</u> <u>I</u>
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<i>M</i>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>		
Pre	IPT	11.25	10.88	23.00	6.08	23.50	21.92	16.00	–	
English										
Raw Score										
Post	IPT	21.58	12.44	33.33	8.96	34.50	10.61	26.00	–	
English										
Raw Score										
Gain	in	10.34	7.47	10.33	7.77	11.00	11.31	10.00	–	
English IPT										
Raw Score										
Percent	of	203.20	–	47.57	–	122.60	–	70.85	–	
Gain	in									
English IPT										
Raw Score										
Gain	in	.66	.55	.33	.56	.50	.71	.50	–	
English										
Designation										
Level										

Table 11: Differences in IPT Score and Spanish Designation Level Based on Ethnicity (N=60^a)

		<i>Hispanic</i> n=53		<i>Caucasian</i> n=1		<i>African American</i> n=0		<i>Chinese</i> n=0	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<i>M</i>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre	IPT	17.15	9.26	11.00	–	–	–	–	–
Spanish									
Raw Score									
Post	IPT	29.06	10.42	14.00	–	–	–	–	–
Spanish									
Raw Score									
Gain	in	11.91	8.01	14.00	–	–	–	–	–
Spanish									
IPT Raw									
Score									
Percent	of	107.45	–	27.27	–	–	–	–	–
Gain	in								
Spanish									
IPT Raw									
Score									
Gain	in	.60	.49	.00	–	–	–	–	–

Spanish
Designation
Level

^aThere were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

The comparison was made for days of attendance in preschool. The total number of days of attendance was 44. Days of attendance ranged from 8.00 to 42.00. Each class session was 2.5 hours in length. Thirty children attended 24 days or less of preschool and 30 children attend 25 days or more. Gains in English-IPT Raw scores are displayed (See Table 12).

Students who attended less than 24 days had a mean gain in English-IPT Raw of 9.93 and those with 25 days or more had a mean gain of 10.77. The percentage of IPT-English for students who attended less than 24 days was 242.32% and those with 25 days or more gained 129.74%. Students who attended less than 24 days had a mean gain in Spanish-IPT Raw of 12.17 and those with 25 days or more had a mean gain of 11.21 (See Table 13). The percentage of IPT-Spanish Raw gain for students who attended less than 24 days was 133.91% and those with 25 days or more was 71.76%.

Table 12: *Differences in IPT Score and English Designation Level Based on Attendance in Preschool (N=60)*

		<i>24 days of less n=30</i>		<i>25 days or more n=30</i>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<i>M</i>	<u>SD</u>
Pre	IPT	11.07	11.33	13.73	11.10
English Raw Score					
Post	IPT	21.00	13.63	24.50	10.93
English Raw Score					
Gain	in	9.93	7.74	10.77	7.08
English IPT Raw Score					
Percent	of	242.32	–	129.74	–
Gain in English IPT Raw Score					
Gain	in	.67	.61	.60	.50
English Designation Level					

Table 13: *Differences in IPT Score and Spanish Designation Level Based on Attendance in Preschool (N=60^a)*

		<i>24 days of less n=30</i>		<i>25 days or more n=30</i>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<i>M</i>	<u>SD</u>
Pre	IPT	17.03	9.90	17.04	8.48
Spanish Raw Score					
Post	IPT	29.20	10.53	28.25	10.73
Spanish Raw Score					
Gain	in	12.17	8.36	11.21	7.74
Spanish IPT Raw Score					
Percent	of	133.91	–	71.76	–
Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score					
Gain	in	.60	.50	.58	.50
Spanish Designation Level					

^aThere were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

Oral language home activities and gains in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores were compared (See Table 14 and 15). Oral language home activities were tracked in 30 minute increments. Oral language home activities ranged from .00 to 148.00. Twenty-nine students had less than 26 home activities and 31 students had 27 or more activities. Students with less than 26 oral home activities had a mean gain in English-IPT Raw score of 9.79 and those with 27 home activities or more had a mean gain of 10.87. See Table 14. The percentage of IPT-English Raw gain for students with less than 26 activities was 170.60% and those with 27 or more home activities gained 200.32%. Students who had less than 26 home activities had a mean gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score of 11.50 and those with 27 or more oral home activities had a mean gain of 11.96. The percentage of IPT-Spanish Raw gain for students who had less than 26 home activities was 81.49% and those with 27 or more home activities gained 129.35% (See Table 15).

Table 14: *Differences in IPT Score and English Designation Level Based on Oral Language Home Activities (N=60)*

		<i>26 or less n=29</i>		<i>27 or more n=31</i>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<i>M</i>	<u>SD</u>

Pre IPT English Raw Score	<u>11.48</u>	<u>9.45</u>	13.26	12.72
Post IPT English Raw Score	21.28	11.30	24.13	13.34
Gain in English IPT Raw Score	9.79	6.84	10.87	7.90
Percent of Gain in English IPT Raw Score	170.60	—	200.32	—
Gain in English Designation Level	.62	.56	.65	.55

Table 15: Differences in IPT Score and Spanish Designation Level Based on Oral Language Home Activities (N=60^a)

	<i>26 or less</i> n=29		<i>27 or more</i> n=31	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre IPT Spanish Raw Score	16.34	7.14	17.50	10.90
Post IPT Spanish Raw Score	28.04	10.34	29.46	10.83
Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score	11.50	7.91	11.96	8.28
Percent of Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score	81.49	—	129.35	—

Gain in Spanish Designation Level	.62	.50	.57	.50
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^aThere were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

The comparison of books read at home and gain in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores were made (See Table 16 and 17). Books read at home ranged from .00 to 190.00. Thirty students had seven or less books read and 30 had more than eight books read to them at home. Students who had seven or less books read at home had a mean gain in English-IPT Raw score of 9.10 and those with eight or more had a mean gain of 11.60. See Table 16. The percentage of gain in English-IPT Raw score was 180.25% for seven or less books read and 191.81% for eight or more books read at home. Mean gains in Spanish-IPT Raw score for seven or less books was 10.68 and 12.88 for eight or more books read at home. The percentage of gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score was 79.46% for seven or less books read and 135.60% for eight or more books read at home (See Table 17).

Table 16: *Differences in IPT Score and English Designation Level Based on Books Read at Home (N=60)*

	7 or less n=30		8 or more n=30	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre IPT English Raw Score	10.90	10.53	13.90	11.82
Post IPT English Raw Score	20.00	12.51	25.50	11.80
Gain in English IPT Raw Score	9.10	7.19	11.60	7.45
Percent of Gain in English IPT Raw Score	180.25	—	191.81	—
Gain in English Designation Level	.70	.53	.57	.57

Table 17: *Differences in IPT Score and Spanish Designation Level Based on Books Read at Home (N=60^a)*

		7 or less n=30		8 or more n=30	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre IPT Spanish Raw Score		16.86	8.26	17.23	10.30
Post IPT Spanish Raw Score		27.54	10.31	30.12	10.79
Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score		10.68	8.21	12.88	7.82
Percent of Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score		79.46	–	135.60	–
Gain in Spanish Designation Level		.57	.50	.62	.50

^a There were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

There were 30 days of the Bridge program. The days of attendance in the Bridge program ranged from 2 to 17. Each class session was 2.5 hours in length. Correlation coefficients were calibrated between gains in English and Spanish-IPT Raw score and designation level for days of attendance in preschool, home language activities, and books read at home (See Table 18).

Table 18: *Correlation Coefficients (r) Between Gains in English and Spanish Raw Score and Designation Level and Attendance, Home Language Activities, Books Read (N=60^a)*

		Gain in English Raw Scores	Gain in English Designation Level	Gain in Spanish Raw Scores	Gain in Spanish Designation Level
Attendance in Preschool	0.09		-0.02	-0.02	0.06
Home Language Activities	0.21		0.06	-0.13	-0.09
Books Read at	0.23		0.12	0.20	0.08

Home

^aThere were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

Research Question Five

Research Question Five asked, “What is the difference in the Pre Pre-IPT Oral and Post Pre-IPT Oral test scores as related to selected parent variables of level of education and attendance in the parent Bridge program?” Parents had varying degrees of education. As stated previously, 55% of the parents had not graduated from high school and nine (15.0%) reported having had attended some college. Students whose parents had seven to nine years of education had the greatest gain in English. Parents with the highest level of education had the highest gain in Spanish Raw score and percentage of gain. Parents with under seven years of education had students who gained one designation level in English. The parent with a college degree also had a student with one designation level in English.

Comparisons were made between parent education and the gain in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores. Students whose parents had less than seven years of school had a mean gain in English-IPT Raw score of 9.00 with 287.50 % gain in English-IPT Raw score. Students whose parents had seven to nine years of school had a mean gain in English-IPT Raw score of 11.40 with 197.29% gain in English-IPT Raw score. Parents who were high school graduates had students who had a mean gain in English-IPT Raw score of 9.83 with 215.67% gain in English-IPT Raw score. Parents with some college had students with a mean gain in English Raw score of 8.88 and a percentage score of 55.00%. One parent was a college graduate and had a student with a mean gain in English Raw score of 4.00 and a percentage of gain in English Raw score of 133.00%. See Table 19.

Table 19: *Differences in IPT Score and English Designation Level Based on Parent Education (N=60)*

	<u>Les</u> <u>s</u> <u>tha</u> <u>n 7</u> <u>yea</u> <u>rs</u> <u>n=</u> <u>3</u> <u>M</u>		7 to 9 years n=30		<u>High</u> <u>School</u> <u>Graduate</u> <u>n=18</u> <u>M</u> <u>SD</u>		Some College n=8		College Graduate n=1
Pre IPT English Raw Score	2.00	2.00	10.63	8.85	14.06	13.01	20.38	13.0	3.00
Post IPT English Raw Score	11.00	3.61	22.03	11.80	23.89	12.39	29.25	13.7	7.00
Gain in English IPT Raw Score	9.00	5.57	11.40	8.62	9.83	5.72	8.88	6.83	4.00
Percent of Gain in	287.50	—	197.29	—	215.67	—	55.00	—	133.33

English IPT Raw Score										
Gain in English Designation Level	1.00	.00	.67	.55	.67	.59	.25	.46	1.00	

Comparisons for students in Spanish showed students whose parents had less than seven years of school had a mean gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score of 6.33 with 67.46 % gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score (See Table 20). Students whose parents had seven to nine years of school had a mean gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score of 11.13 with 73.36% gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score. Parents who were high school graduates had students who had a mean gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score of 12.07 with 170.13% gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score. Parents with some college had students with a mean gain in Spanish Raw score of 15.20 and a percentage score of 100.96%. One parent was a college graduate and had a student with a mean gain in Spanish Raw score of 24.00, a percentage of gain Spanish Raw score of 160.00%, and gained one designation level gain in Spanish.

Table 20: Differences in IPT Score and Spanish Designation Level Based on Parent Education (N=60^a)

		<u>L</u>		7 to 9		<u>High</u>		Some		College
		<u>e</u>		years		<u>School</u>		College		Graduate
		<u>s</u>		n=30		<u>Gradua</u>		n=8		n=1
		<u>t</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>te n=18</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>S</u>
		<u>h</u>								<u>D</u>
		<u>a</u>								<u>M</u>
		<u>n</u>								
		<u>Z</u>								
		<u>y</u>								
		<u>e</u>								
		<u>a</u>								
		<u>r</u>								
		<u>s</u>								
		<u>n</u>								
		<u>=</u>								
		<u>3</u>								
		<u>M</u>								
Pre Spanish Score	IPT Raw Score	11.00	3.61	16.10	8.62	20.73	11.47	15.60	5.46	15.00
Post Spanish Score	IPT Raw Score	17.33	4.16	27.23	11.41	32.80	7.27	30.80	11.08	39.00
Gain in Spanish Raw Score	IPT Raw Score	6.33	3.79	11.13	8.40	12.07	7.09	15.20	8.79	24.00
Percent Gain in Spanish Raw Score	in IPT Raw Score	67.46	—	73.36	—	170.13	—	100.96	—	160.00

Gain in Spanish Designation Level	.33	.58	.57	.50	.67	.49	.60	.55	1.00
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^aThere were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

Correlation coefficients were calibrated between gains in English and Spanish Raw score and designation level for days of attendance in the Bridge program. Gain in English Raw scores were 0.05 and designation were -0.02. Gain in Spanish Raw scores were 0.06 and gain in Spanish designation level was -0.02.

Research Question Six

Research Question Six asked, “What is the difference in the Pre Pre-IPT Oral and Post Pre-IPT Oral test scores and the teacher’s level of education and prior preschool teaching experience?” The teachers had varying degrees of education and prior teaching experience. The teachers completed the 101 hours of training described in Chapter III. The researcher made weekly observations of the preschools to assure that training was implemented into the classroom interventions. The data for the preschool site observations was collected by the researcher on a weekly basis using journal notes. Each teacher was given an identification number which corresponded with their school site, years of education, and prior teaching experience (See Table 21). All three teachers had student gains in English and Spanish Raw scores. Teacher I at School Site A had the greatest gain in student scores in English and Spanish.

The three school sites, teacher education, and years of teaching experience were displayed in Table 21. Classroom size ranged from 17 to 22 students and the three teachers had varying amounts of formal education and prior teaching experience. Teacher education ranged from less than an AA degree to a four year degree. The teachers ranged from under three years of teaching to over six years of prior teaching experience.

Table 21: *Description of the Three Classes by Site (N=60)*

School ID	Teacher ID	Class Size	Teacher Education	Years of Experience
School A	I	17	Less than AA degree	3-5 years
School B	II	21	AA degree	Under 3 years
School C	III	22	Four year degree	6 or more years

The comparison was made for teacher’s level of education and gains in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores (See Table 22 and Table 23). Teacher I with less than an AA degree had the largest gain in English. She had students with mean gains in English-IPT Raw of 10.82 and percentage gain in English of 225.04%. See Table 22. Teacher II with an AA degree had students with mean gain in English-IPT Raw score of 10.52 and percentage gain in English of 203.00%. Teacher III with a four year degree had the least amount of English gain. She had students with mean gain in English-IPT Raw score of 9.82 and a percentage of gain in English of 124.43%.

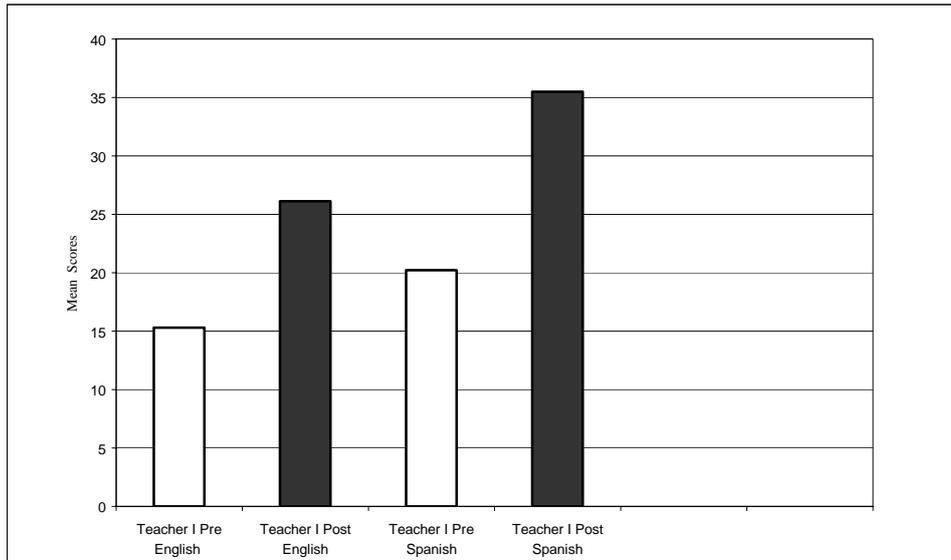


Figure 6. Schools site A teacher I pre and post English and Spanish-IPT raw scores

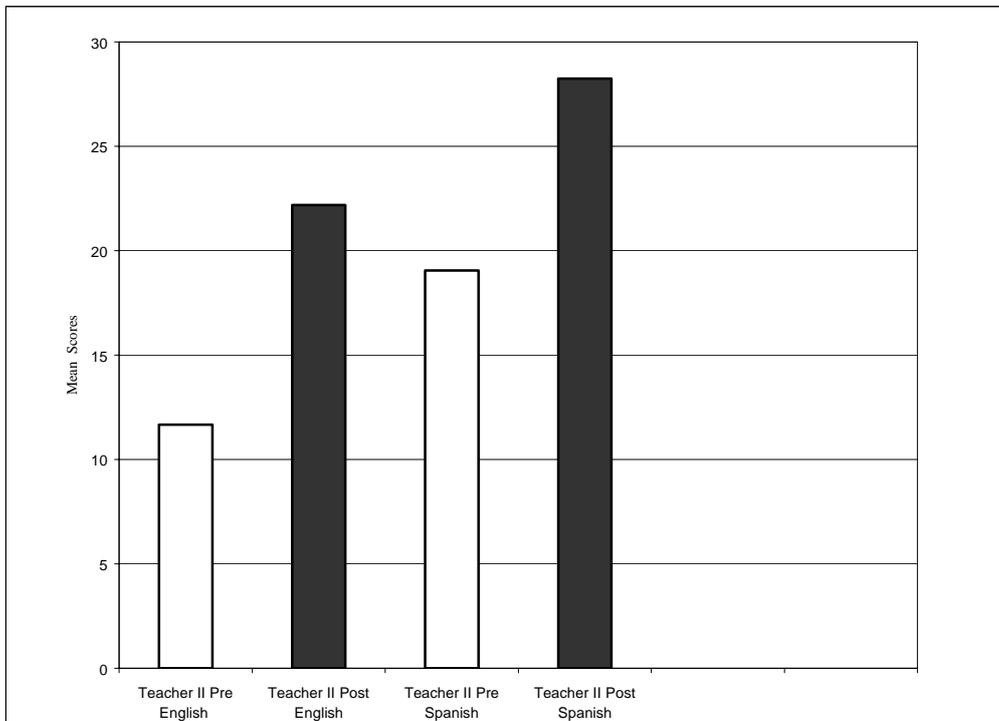


Figure 7. Schools site B teacher II pre and post English and Spanish-IPT raw scores

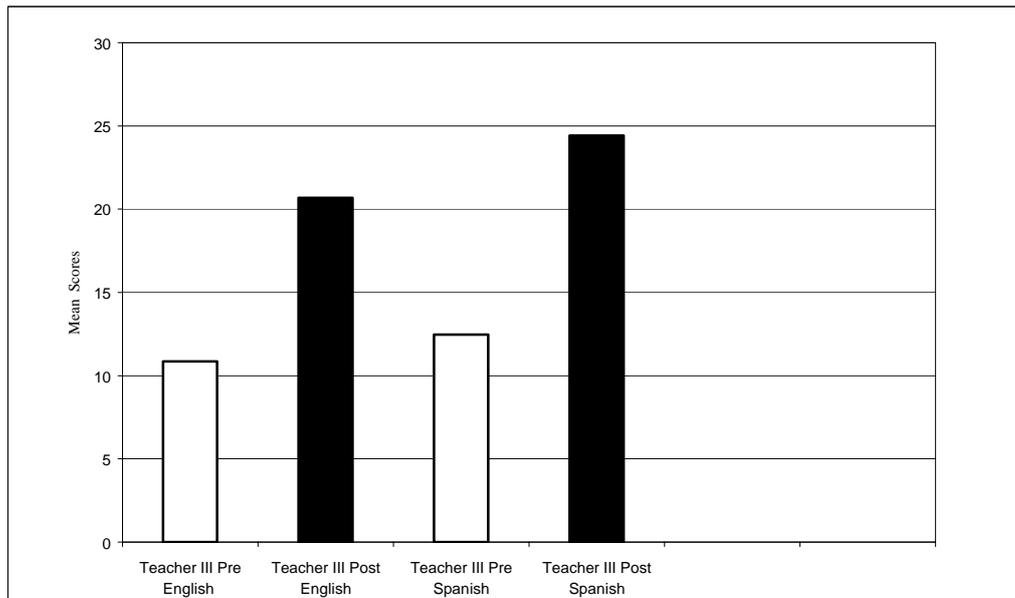


Figure 8. *Schools site C teacher III pre and post English and Spanish-IPT raw scores*

Table 22: Differences in IPT Score and English Designation Level Based on Teacher Education (N=60)

Teacher I Less than AA n=17		Teacher II AA Degree n=21		Teacher III Four Year Degree n=22		
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Pre English Raw Score	15.29	13.15	11.67	9.96	10.86	10.79
Post English Raw Score	26.12	13.89	22.19	12.19	20.68	11.30
Gain in English IPT Raw Score	10.82	8.41	10.52	7.73	9.82	6.41
Percent of Gain in English IPT Raw Score	225.04	—	203.00	—	124.43	—
Gain in English Designation Level	.59	.62	.67	.48	.64	.58

Comparisons in Spanish were made with Teacher I with less than an AA degree having students with a mean gain score of 15.29 for gain in Spanish-IPT Raw and a percentage gain of 194.57%. See Table 23. Teacher II with an AA degree had student mean gain in Spanish-IPT Raw of 9.19 and a percentage gain in Spanish of 59.38%. Teacher III with a four year degree had students with mean gain of 11.95 and a percentage gain 89.31%.

Table 23: Differences in IPT Score and Spanish Designation Level Based on Teacher Education (N=60^a)

Teacher I Less than AA n=17		Teacher II AA Degree n=21		Teacher III Four Year Degree n=22		
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Pre IPT Spanish Raw Score	20.21	11.03	19.05	8.26	12.47	7.18
Post IPT Spanish Raw Score	35.50	7.29	28.24	9.37	24.42	11.60
Gain in IPT Spanish Raw Score	15.29	8.59	9.19	7.62	11.95	7.39
Percent of Gain in IPT Spanish Raw Score	194.57	—	59.38	—	89.31	—
Gain in Spanish Designation Level	.64	.50	.48	.51	.68	.48

^aThere were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

Gains in English were made for years of prior teaching experience. See Table 24. The percentage of gain was similar for the three teachers. Teacher II had less than two years of teaching experience and had student mean gain of 10.52 and a percentage gain of 203.00%. Teacher I had the largest mean gain of 10.82 and a percentage gain of 225.04%. The teacher with the least amount of gain was Teacher III. Her mean gain in English raw was 9.82 with a percentage of gain of 124.43%.

Table 24: Differences in IPT Score and English Designation Level Based on Teacher Years of Experience (N=60)

Teacher II Less than 2 years n=17		Teacher I 3 to 5 years n=21		Teacher III 6 or more years n=22		
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Pre IPT	11.67	9.96	15.29	13.15	10.86	10.79
English Raw Score						
Post IPT	22.19	12.19	26.12	13.89	20.68	11.30
English Raw Score						
Gain in English IPT Raw Score	10.52	7.73	10.82	8.41	9.82	6.41
Percent of Gain in English IPT Raw Score	203.00	—	225.04	—	124.43	—
Gain in English Designation Level	.67	.48	.59	.62	.64	.58

The highest gains in Spanish raw scores were by students of Teacher I. Teacher II had less than two years prior teaching experience and had the least amount of Spanish gain. Teacher II had a mean gain in Spanish of 9.19 and percentage of gain of 59.38%. See Table 25. Teacher I had three to five years teaching experience and had the largest amount of gain. Student Spanish mean gain for Teacher I was 15.29 and percentage gain of 194.57%. Teacher III had student mean gain of 11.95 and percentage of gain of 89.31%.

Table 25: Differences in IPT Score and Spanish Designation Level Based on Teacher Years of Experience (N=60^a)

Teacher II Less than 2 years n=17		Teacher I 3 to 5 years n=21		Teacher III 6 or more years n=22		
M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Pre IPT	19.05	8.26	20.21	11.03	12.47	7.18
Spanish Raw Score						
Post IPT	28.24	9.37	35.50	7.29	24.42	11.60
Spanish Raw Score						

Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score	9.19	7.62	15.29	8.59	11.95	7.39
Percent of Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score	59.38	–	194.57	–	89.31	–
Gain in Spanish Designation Level	.48	.51	.64	.50	.68	.48

^aThere were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

Research Question Seven

Research Question Seven asked, “What is the difference in the Pre-IPT Oral and Post Pre-IPT Oral test scores between the individual school sites?” School Site A had the greatest gain in both English and Spanish Raw scores and percentage of gain.

The comparison was made for school sites and gains in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores. School Site A showed the largest gain in English and Spanish. School Site A had students with mean gain in English-IPT Raw of 10.82 and percentage gain in English of 225.04%. See Table 26. School Site B had student mean gain in English-IPT Raw score of 10.52 and percentage gain in English of 203.00%. School Site C had the least mean gain in English Raw score of 9.82 and a percentage of gain in English of 124.43%.

Table 26: *Differences in IPT Score and English Designation Level Based on School Site (N=60)*

	School A n=17		School B n=21		School C n=22	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre English Raw Score	15.29	13.15	11.67	9.96	10.86	10.79
Post English Raw Score	26.12	13.89	22.19	12.19	20.68	11.30
Gain in English IPT Raw Score	10.82	8.41	10.52	7.73	9.82	6.41
Percent of Gain in English IPT	225.04	–	203.00	–	124.43	–

Raw Score

Gain in English Designation Level	.59	.62	.67	48	.64	.58
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Comparisons in Spanish were made with School Site A having students with the highest mean gain with a score of 15.29 for gain in Spanish-IPT Raw and a percentage gain of 194.57%. See Table 27. School Site B had the least mean gain in Spanish-IPT Raw of 9.19 and a percentage gain in Spanish of 59.38%. School Site C had students with a mean gain of 11.95 and a percentage gain 89.31%. See Table 27.

Table 27: Differences in IPT Score and Spanish Designation Level Based on School Site (N=60^a)

		<i>School A</i> n=17		<i>School B</i> n=21		<i>School C</i> n=22	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<i>M</i>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre	IPT	20.21	11.03	19.05	8.26	12.47	7.18
Spanish Raw Score							
Post	IPT	35.50	7.29	28.24	9.37	24.42	11.60
Spanish Raw Score							
Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score		15.29	8.59	9.19	7.62	11.95	7.39
Percent Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score	of Gain in Spanish IPT Raw Score	194.57	—	59.38	—	89.31	—
Gain in Spanish Designation Level		.64	.50	.48	.51	.68	.48

^aThere were 6 English-only students who did not take the Pre IPT Spanish Oral test

Research Question Eight

Research Question Eight asked, “Do parents who participated in the Bridge program continue to be involved by volunteering in their children’s kindergarten classroom?” Parents, at each of the three schools, continued to be involved in their children’s classroom following the end of the study.

Within the first eight weeks of the following school year, the three preschool teachers met with the kindergarten teachers at their schools. They discussed with the kindergarten teachers the degree of parent involvement. The kindergarten teachers reported that in the past no Spanish-speaking parents volunteered in the classroom. The preschool teachers asked if parents that participated in the study volunteered to work in their children's classroom. The preschool teachers reported that nine parents (15%) continued to support classroom activities by volunteering in the classroom.

School Site A reported that five parents volunteered to work in their child's classroom on a weekly basis. School A reported that several of the parents have volunteered on special occasions like field trips and holiday parties. One parent from School Site A volunteered to be the room mother for the year. The teachers from School Site B and C each reported two parents volunteered to help on a weekly basis. School Site C teacher reported two parents volunteer in the kindergarten classroom on a weekly basis.

Summary of Field Notes

School Site Observations

The data for the preschool site observations was collected by the researcher on a weekly basis using journal notes. The data for the Bridge program was collected through bi-monthly observations. The observations were recorded in three categories: curriculum implementation; child teacher interactions; and parent teacher interactions. Analysis of the data from the field notes collected during the 54 observations revealed the following for each of the three categories.

Curriculum implementation. It was observed that each preschool implemented the curriculum consistently throughout the study. Of the 36 week program, lesson plans were thematic and followed the guidelines of the *Building Language for Literacy* curriculum. All classrooms were child-directed and developmentally appropriate with language-rich and print-rich activities. The classrooms allowed opportunities for children to explore the learning environment and expand their expressive language skills. Each teacher kept a journal of the children's class work. The journals were presented to the parents the last day of school. All three teachers consistently incorporated SDAIE teaching strategies.

Teacher A used SDAIE techniques and teaching strategies in her classroom. During the first eight weeks, she used simple language and spoke slowly to the children. She spoke in English first and would repeat the sentence in Spanish for her Spanish-speaking students. When children appeared confused with the English portion, she would repeat it again slowly and follow up with a clarifying statement in Spanish. She would prepare and provide focus questions before she started to teach a lesson. Her classroom strongly emphasized reading and math activities. Teacher I used many visual aids to teach language, expand vocabulary, and scaffold learning. When reading to the children, she would read the book slowly and ask higher-level critical thinking questions. After week 15, she spoke only in English to the children. The Instructional Assistant would provide primary language support to the Spanish-speaking children as needed. Teacher I identified three children needing further evaluation to special education for speech and language delay and other pervasive developmental disorder characteristics.

School Site B Teacher II implemented the curriculum and thematic instruction. Teacher II also used SDAIE techniques and teaching strategies. She gave students numerous opportunities to draw and label objects allowing the children to expand their vocabulary. She

worked with the children in small groups, asking higher-level questions and encouraged expressive language.

Site B classroom was less structured and had more classroom disruptions. It was observed that Teacher II did not follow her lesson plans as closely as Teacher I and Teacher III. Her teaching philosophy and classroom structure was more experiential than the other two classrooms. She allowed the daily lesson plans to be modified depending on the interests of the children. This site had more interruptions during the instructional period. During the instructional period, the Community Liaison and Parent Advocate met with school staff and other families in the preschool classroom. Meeting with school staff and families is part of the Community Liaison and Parent Advocate's job. These meetings were often noisy and disruptive to the teacher and the students. Teacher II presented instruction in both English and Spanish through week 14 and transitioned into an English-only classroom by week 18. Through her observations, one child was referred to the Special Education Department for evaluation.

Site C Teacher III followed the curriculum closely and integrated SDAIE learning strategies into her classroom. She presented new words and concepts using a variety of learning modalities. Many hands-on activities were planned and children learned through scaffolding. Children had many opportunities to use expressive language skills during story time, dramatic play, and table top activities. Children were encouraged to bring books to school, which the teacher read during story time. At story time, higher-level thinking skills were developed through interactions between the teacher and the students. Teacher III presented instruction in English and Spanish during the first 12 weeks of class and transitioned into an English-only classroom by week 18. Through the teacher's observations, three children were evaluated by the Special Education Department staff for speech and language delays.

Child teacher interactions. Teacher I demonstrated strong interpersonal skills with both children and parents. Children were personally welcomed each morning. The teacher spoke with each parent and answered questions pertaining to their child. Teacher I was open in her discussions with parents regarding the child's school readiness progress. Teacher I interacted with each child during the day, finding time to speak one-on-one with each child.

Teacher II greeted children personally each morning. She was respectful of the children's ideas and allowed the children many opportunities to express themselves through dramatic play, music, and songs. Teacher II had an underlying theme focused on cultural sensitivity and teaching tolerance in the classroom. Each child was given an opportunity to share about his or her family and their cultural and religious background.

Teacher III demonstrated a genuine interest in each parent and child. She greeted children each day and made calls to their home when children had prolonged absences. She encouraged parent involvement and allowed parents to help with the preschool's lending library. She sewed bags at home to use in the "learning kits." She brought numerous items from home, including her family rabbit to share with the children.

Parent teacher interactions. Teacher I interacted with parents at each session. During the Bridge, Teacher I presented materials and lessons in a manner that was respectful of the educational backgrounds of the parents. She allowed parents many opportunities to ask questions during the Bridge program. She provided instruction to parents about child

development and emergent literacy. She met individually with parents to discuss their child's progress. She encouraged parents to share books and take advantage of the preschool's lending library. Each week she would reinforce the parent's role in the child's education, encourage oral languages activities at home, and the importance of reading daily to their child.

Teacher II greeted parents individually each day. It was observed that she needed to provide more instruction to parents about the lessons she was presenting during the Bridge program. It was observed that Teacher II needed to repeat the lessons on child development several times. Many of the parents had trouble understanding the lessons due primarily to their limited education. Parents were very enthusiastic about creating the "learning kits" and having materials they could use at home to help their children. The families at Site B reported having the lowest annual income and were provided with materials such as crayons, scissors, and paper to use for their home activities.

Similar to the other three school sites, parents had trouble arranging child care for younger siblings, which negatively impacted their attendance in the Bridge program. Teacher II worked with parents to help arrange child care so they could attend class. Parents took advantage of the lending library but had trouble remembering to return books on time. Parents in Site B had to be reminded more often than the other sites to turn in Home Literacy Tracking Forms.

Teacher III worked with parents to strengthen parent involvement. Throughout the study, Teacher III met with each parent to discuss their child's progress. Parents were very involved in making the "learning kits." Each week parents were encouraged to read books daily to their children and to participate in the oral language activities at home. The parents were eager to share with the teacher and other parents the activities they did at home with their children. Site C tracked the number of books read at home by having parents write the name of the book on a small piece of paper. The colored pieces of paper were shaped like a book. The individual pieces of paper were taped on a wall. Each week when the parent returned their log sheets, the parent and child placed another book on the wall. This visual representation of books read at home became the focal point of the classroom. Both parents and children were very excited to place more papers on the wall. Parents were encouraged to borrow books from other parents. Parents took advantage of the preschool's lending library.

Weekly Meeting

At the monthly staff meetings, the three teachers discussed the preschool curriculum, attendance, record keeping, parent participation, and teacher training. The *Building Language for Literacy* curriculum was discussed and the teachers agreed that it was appropriate for the program. Since there was not a set curriculum for the Bridge program, it was agreed that a curriculum for the parent Bridge program would be useful. The three teachers discussed the "learning kits." They felt that the parents enjoyed making the parent child activities and that they used them at home. The teachers reported that the parents took a great deal of pride in the activities they made in class and at home. The teachers agreed that parents were very willing to participate in activities but needed more information on child development.

Attendance, especially attendance in the Bridge program, was a concern throughout the study. The teachers strongly encouraged regular attendance and parent involvement. Lack of child care for younger siblings during the Bridge program and family illness were the most common reason for lack of attendance. The teachers reported that lack of knowledge regarding the parent's role in their child's education was the largest obstacle to overcome.

Encouraging parent participation in reading at home and oral language home activities was ongoing. The teachers reported that many parents would forget to turn in their log sheets and needed to be reminded each week. It was discussed that parents had positive attitudes toward the school and increased their participation after the study in the kindergarten classroom. The teachers agreed that having children attend Monday, Wednesday, and Friday would be beneficial and increase language proficiency. The teachers shared that the training they received was useful and recommended further training in emergent literacy and special education would strengthen the program.

Summary of the Findings

Sixty students and their parents participated in the 36 week study. The preschool program was 44 days in length and each session was 2.5 hours long. There were 30 parent Bridge sessions each 2.5 hours in length. Parent involvement also included home oral language activities and reading books to their child. Teachers were given 101 hours of training and worked with both the children and the parents providing emergent literacy interventions.

Major findings revealed that 90 % of the students were Hispanic, whose primary language was Spanish. The majority of families had an annual income of less than \$25,000. All but two of the children had married parents. More than half (55%) of the mother's had not graduated from high school and one parent had a college degree.

Gains were made in both English and Spanish designation levels. Out of 60 students, 56.7 % of the students increased at least one English designation level and 3.3 % gained two levels. Making gains in two levels is considered above normal by Ballard and Tighe Publishers for a nine month school year. Fifty-four students took the Spanish Pre and Post Pre-IPT Oral exam, 59.3 % of the students increased at least one Spanish designation level and 38 students scored as Fluent Spanish Speaking at the end of the study.

Boys gained more in both English and Spanish. The mean gain in English Raw scores was 11.56 for boys and 8.96 for girls. The mean gain in Spanish Raw scores was 12.32 for boys and 11.12 for girls. The mean gain in English-IPT Raw scores was similar between Hispanic, Caucasian, African American, and Chinese students.

There was a slight increase in mean gain in English-IPT Raw scores based on days of attendance with students who attended more than 25 days gaining 10.77 and students with less than 24 days with a mean gain of 9.93. Students with less than 24 days of attendance had a higher gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score.

There was a moderate increase in gain in English-IPT Raw score for those students with more than 27 oral language home activities compared with students with less than 26 activities. Students who had eight or more books read to them at home had a greater mean gain in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores compared with those students with less than seven books read at home. The days of attendance in the Bridge program ranged from 2 to 17. However, correlation coefficients were calibrated between gains in English and Spanish Raw score and designation level for days of attendance in the Bridge program which showed no significance.

Students whose parents had seven to nine years of education had the largest mean gain in English Raw score. Parents with less than seven years of education and parents who were

high school graduates had a high percentage of gain in English Raw score. Interestingly, the largest student gain in Spanish Raw scores were from the eight parents who had some college and the one parent who was a college graduate.

The teacher's level of education, prior preschool teaching experience, and school site showed mean gains in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores. The School Site A Teacher I had less than an AA degree and had three to five years of teaching experience. School Site A had students with the largest gain in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores. School Site B Teacher II had an AA degree and had less than two years of teaching experience. She had the second most student gain in English and the lowest gain in Spanish. School Site C Teacher III, with a four year degree, showed the least amount of gain in English and the second highest gain in Spanish-IPT Raw scores.

Parents at each of the three schools continued to be involved in their children's classroom following the end of the study. The preschool teachers reported that out of 60 parents 15 % continued to support classroom activities by volunteering in their child's classroom. In prior years, none of the Spanish-speaking parents had volunteered at any of the three sites. School Site A reported that five parents volunteered to work in their child's classroom on a weekly basis. School Site A reported that several of the parents have volunteered on special occasions like field trips and holiday parties. One parent from School Site A volunteered to be the room mother for the school year. The teachers from School Site B and C each reported that parents continued to be involved in the classroom following the end of the study. Two parents volunteered to help on a weekly basis at School Sites B and C.

The data for the preschool site observations was collected by the researcher on a weekly basis using journal notes. The data for the Bridge program was collected through bi-monthly observations. Monthly meetings were held with the teachers to discuss concerns about curriculum, attendance, record keeping, parent participation, and teacher training. Observations of the preschools were recorded in three categories: curriculum implementation; child teacher interactions; and parent teacher interactions. Analysis of the data from the field notes, reported that teachers used SDAIE teaching strategies, implemented curriculum, and showed positive interactions with children and parents. All three teachers made referrals to the Special Education Department. The monthly meeting gave teachers an opportunity to discuss the preschool curriculum, attendance, record keeping, parent participation, and teacher training. Through these monthly meetings, the three teachers were able to strategize ways to improve the program.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the research study, the conclusions that were drawn from the data collected, and recommendations for further use of the research findings.

Problem and Purpose

This study addressed the issue of oral language development in a language-rich and print-rich environment and parent involvement. Oral language development, reading, and writing are complex skills that are developed during the early years of a child's life. Oral language proficiency is necessary for emergent literacy and the ability of children to decode print, which is a condition necessary for learning how to read. Many children enter kindergarten lacking oral language proficiency due to limited exposure to oral language activities at home. Many children also lack preschool experience or limited exposure to phonemic activities such

as songs, stories, rhymes, and word play. It is believed that early childhood education preschool programs that promote language-rich and print-rich environments, supported by parent involvement, will help promote oral language proficiency and second language acquisition, yet research is lacking that demonstrates the relationship between teachers, parents, and children in language acquisition.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not preschool children would increase their oral language proficiency levels through participation in a language-rich and print-rich early childhood environment that includes parent directed oral language activities. The children participating in this study were enrolled in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District's School Readiness and Resource Center project. This project was funded by a grant from the Children and Families Commission of Orange County, California. The grant focused on school readiness, parent education, and teacher training.

Review of the Literature

Children are entering kindergarten with varying degrees of school readiness. In order to prepare children for the rigors of today's classroom, parents and teachers must work together. Parent and teacher partnerships assist children in developing the necessary emergent literacy skills needed for learning how to read and write. Longitudinal research from Head Start, Even Start, and Early Head Start has shown that low-income preschool children have higher academic success and social responsibility through early preschool interventions. Additional longitudinal studies by Carolina Abecedarian and High/Scope Perry Preschool Project demonstrate the importance of early preschool interventions for a child's school readiness and success in school. These studies also report the important role parents play in their child's education. Parents, as a child's first teacher, play a critical role in children's academic performance.

Partnerships between parents and teachers help children increase both first and second language acquisition. Increased oral language activities and exposure to language-rich and print-rich activities help prepare children for the task of learning to read. Activities at home, such as reading aloud, help a child learn to decode print and increase phonemic awareness. This study was designed to provide interventions to the children, parents, and teachers involved in the School Readiness and Resource Center project in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District.

Methodology

In order to determine if participation in a language-rich and print-rich early education environment increased oral language proficiency, 60 preschool children and their parents were studied and analyzed. The research methodology was designed to determine whether or not children would make gains in oral language proficiency levels. The variables in this study were as follows: gender; ethnicity; days of attendance in preschool; days of attendance in Bridge; oral language home activities; number of books read to the children; and the teacher's level of education and prior teaching experience. Parent involvement in both school and home activities were measured as part of the research design. Participating parents were introduced to early childhood education principles and ways they could help prepare their child for school. Teachers received training on a variety of topics relating to early childhood education and emergent literacy.

Findings

Sixty students and their parents participated in the 36 week study. The preschool program was 44 days in length and each session was 2.5 hours long. There were 30 parent Bridge sessions each 2.5 hours in length. Parent involvement also included home oral language activities and reading books to their child. Teachers were given 101 hours of training and worked with both the children and the parents providing emergent literacy interventions.

Major findings revealed that 90 % of the students were Hispanic, whose primary language was Spanish. The majority of families had an annual income of less than \$25,000. All but two of the children had married parents. More than half (55%) of the mother's had not graduated from high school and one parent had a college degree.

Gains were made in both English and Spanish designation levels. Out of 60 students, 56.7 % of the students increased at least one English designation level and 3.3 % gained two levels. Making gains in two levels is considered above normal by Ballard and Tighe Publishers for a nine month school year. Fifty-four students took the Spanish Pre and Post Pre-IPT Oral exam, 59.3 % of the students increased at least one Spanish designation level and 38 students scored as Fluent Spanish Speaking at the end of the study.

Boys gained more in both English and Spanish. The mean gain in English Raw scores was 11.56 for boys and 8.96 for girls. The mean gain in Spanish Raw scores was 12.32 for boys and 11.12 for girls. The mean gain in English-IPT Raw scores was similar between Hispanic, Caucasian, African American, and Chinese students.

There was a slight increase in mean gain in English-IPT Raw scores based on days of attendance with students who attended more than 25 days gaining 10.77 and students with less than 24 days with a mean gain of 9.93. Students with less than 24 days of attendance had a higher gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score.

There was a moderate increase in gain in English-IPT Raw score for those students with more than 27 oral language home activities compared with students with less than 26 activities. Students who had eight or more books read to them at home had a greater mean gain in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores compared with those students with less than seven books read at home. The days of attendance in the Bridge program ranged from 2 to 17. However, correlation coefficients were calibrated between gains in English and Spanish Raw score and designation level for days of attendance in the Bridge program which showed no significance.

Students whose parents had seven to nine years of education had the largest mean gain in English Raw score. Parents with less than seven years of education and parents who were high school graduates had a high percentage of gain in English Raw score. Interestingly, the largest student gain in Spanish Raw scores were from the eight parents who had some college and the one parent who was a college graduate.

The teacher's level of education, prior preschool teaching experience, and school site showed mean gains in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores. The School Site A Teacher I had less than an AA degree and had three to five years of teaching experience. School Site A had students with the largest gain in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores. School Site B Teacher II had an AA degree and had less than two years of teaching experience. She had the second most student gain in English and the lowest gain in Spanish. School Site C Teacher III, with a

four year degree, showed the least amount of gain in English and the second highest gain in Spanish-IPT Raw scores.

Parents at each of the three schools continued to be involved in their children's classroom following the end of the study. The preschool teachers reported that out of 60 parents 15 % continued to support classroom activities by volunteering in their child's classroom. In prior years, none of the Spanish-speaking parents had volunteered at any of the three sites. School Site A reported that five parents volunteered to work in their child's classroom on a weekly basis. School Site A reported that several of the parents have volunteered on special occasions like field trips and holiday parties. One parent from School Site A volunteered to be the room mother for the school year. The teachers from School Site B and C each reported that parents continued to be involved in the classroom following the end of the study. Two parents volunteered to help on a weekly basis at School Sites B and C.

The data for the preschool site observations was collected by the researcher on a weekly basis using journal notes. The data for the Bridge program was collected through bi-monthly observations. Monthly meetings were held with the teachers to discuss concerns about curriculum, attendance, record keeping, parent participation, and teacher training. Observations of the preschools were recorded in three categories: curriculum implementation; child teacher interactions; and parent teacher interactions. Analysis of the data from the field notes, reported that teachers used SDAIE teaching strategies, implemented curriculum, and showed positive interactions with children and parents. All three teachers made referrals to the Special Education Department. The monthly meeting gave teachers an opportunity to discuss the preschool curriculum, attendance, record keeping, parent participation, and teacher training. Through these monthly meetings, the three teachers were able to strategize ways to improve the program.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based upon the findings of this research study, the following conclusions and recommendations were drawn.

Conclusion 1

Children in the three School Readiness and Resource Center preschool programs made outcome level gains in both raw scores, percentage of gain, and increased designation levels in both English and Spanish. A vast majority of the families in the study live near or below the California poverty level. The high cost of preschool education and the lack of affordable child care in Orange County, California preclude many low-income families from accessing early childhood education programs. This study's findings revealed that by providing a no-cost preschool to the most at-risk children in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District, these children primarily from Spanish-speaking homes will increase their English language proficiency levels. This study also revealed that parent directed activities helped eliminate the school readiness gap often experienced by many children from Spanish-speaking families.

The families participating in this study came from low socio-economic neighborhoods in SVUSD. The data reported that 55% of the parents had not completed high school and that 5% had less than a seventh grade education. The data also indicated that 85% of the families reported annual incomes of less than \$25,000. In California, the poverty level is \$16,459 or less for a family of four (CalWORKS, 2001). Thirty-seven percent of the families in our program fall below the poverty level for California.

Analysis of the data indicates that all three School Readiness and Resource Center preschools showed language gains in both English and Spanish. Out of 60 students, 56.7 % of the students increased at least one English designation level and two students (3.3 %) gained two designation levels. Fifty-four students took the Spanish Pre and Post Pre-IPT Oral exam, 15 students increased at least one Spanish designation level and 38 students scored as Fluent Spanish Speaking. According to the authors of the test, Ballard and Tighe Publishers, one gain in designation level is expected for a student that attended a five day a week nine month school year. This study demonstrated designation level gains for students who attended a two day a week 2.5 hour a day program for nine months.

The Head Start program has found that in a study comparing matched groups of low-income children attending Head Start, other preschool, or no preschool, the Head Start children scored higher in school readiness skills. The Carolina Abecedarian Project (2002) and the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project (2002a), also studied the long-term benefits of a preschool education for children living in poverty and children from low-income families. These longitudinal studies have shown that participation in quality early childhood education programs lead to gains in cognitive test scores, better kindergarten achievement, lower rates of grade retention and special education placement, and higher rates of high school graduation.

In a supportive environment, a child's language proficiency, vocabulary, and understanding of the meaning of words are increased. Language proficiency includes vocabulary, comprehension, pronunciation, grammar, and syntax. Through regular attendance, children received curricular instruction in English and opportunities to listen to stories, music, and other phonemic activities that helped increase their oral language proficiency and emergent literacy skills. It can be concluded that these skills will be beneficial to the children as they enter kindergarten and learn to read and write.

Recommendation 1. It is recommended looking for further funding opportunities. Further funding would provide additional resources and preschool programs for low-income at-risk families in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District.

Recommendation 2. It is recommended that the preschool program, including the parent Bridge program, continue to be offered.

Recommendation 3. It is recommended that the days of the week be changed. Children in this study had preschool Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, which allowed four days in a row of no formal preschool instruction. This was not part of the study design but rather due to limited classroom space. This recommendation was supported by the researcher's field notes. Changing the days of preschool to Monday, Wednesday, and Friday will bring more consistency to the children and increase language proficiency. With more days of instruction and less days in a row off, children will have fewer lapses in instruction time.

Conclusion 2

Parent involvement, especially reading to children in English and Spanish, promoted student gains in English and Spanish scores. Children who had higher oral home language activities had the greatest gain. Additionally, children with the most books read to them at home had the greatest gain in both English and Spanish. It can be concluded that children whose parents actively read and talk to them will have increased oral language proficiency levels.

The findings reported an increase in gain in English and Spanish-IPT Raw scores through parent involvement. Students who had more than 27 oral language home activities showed a higher percentage of gain in both English (200.32%) and Spanish (129.35%) than students with less than 26 home language activities. The percent of gain in English was greater (334.39%) for students who read eight or more books at home. The percentage of gain in Spanish-IPT Raw score was greatest (135.60%) for eight or more books read at home than for seven or less books read (79.46%). Parent participation increased throughout the study.

The field notes and monthly staff meetings indicated that parents had a positive attitude toward the program and were eager to learn about what they could do to help their children in school. For many of the parents, this was their first introduction to preschool and early childhood education. At the beginning of the study, the parents did not have a clear understanding of the program's expectations and participation was limited. The field notes reported that during the first few weeks, parents felt intimidated by the activities and the expectations of parent involvement. Spanish-speaking families have traditionally seen teachers as authority figures and have little involvement or interaction with the teacher (Early Education, 2002). The home activity logs reported that the books read at home were primarily in the child's native language. Both oral language home activities and the number of books read at home increased throughout the study.

The NEGP supports parents devoting time every day to helping his or her preschool child to learn (Child Trends, 2001). Research supports the concept that parents motivate and model for their children attitudes and behavior that strongly influence a child's attitude. When parents and teachers support each other and encourage emergent literacy activities at home and at school, the child will learn to value it as well. For thirty years, research has confirmed that parent involvement has a powerful influence on a child's achievement in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b). Joyce Epstein's framework of involvement that influences learning includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating (Simon & Epstein, 2001). Communication between school and home is a critical component in a child's academic success. Continual communication between home and school strengthens a child's readiness for school and the ability to succeed academically. Parents who actively read and communicate with their children are establishing a strong framework for academic success.

Recommendation 1. It is recommended that the child's preschool teacher make at least one home visit to the child's home at the beginning of the program. Parents and teachers will bond and form interpersonal relationships that will strengthen the parent teacher partnership. Parents will demonstrate authentic home practices which teachers can build upon through curricular instruction. Hiatt-Michael (2001b) states that home visits give the teacher, parent, and child an opportunity to learn more about each other in the home setting. Home visits allow teachers and parents to build rapport and trust which is critical to school and parent partnerships. Communication between school and home is also an essential component in a child's school success. During the home visit, the teacher could educate the parents about the importance of regular attendance and the parent's role as a child's first teacher.

Recommendation 2. Teachers should continue to encourage parents to read daily to their children and expose their children to a variety of print material. It is recommended that teachers plan field trips to the local library and that a lending library be available to parents at each school site.

Recommendation 3. Children in school and home environments that encourage expressive and receptive language development help build language and emergent literacy skills. Research clearly supports home and school partnerships and academic success. When the experiences of home are aligned with the curricular activities of school, children relate with the content information which facilitates toward greater school success (Neuman, Snow, & Canizares, 2000). It is recommended that oral language activities at home continue to be encouraged by teachers.

Recommendation 4. It is recommended that parents attend additional workshops that teach them activities they can do at home to increase listening, speaking, writing, and reading. These activities will help children expand vocabulary and increase their language and school readiness skills.

Recommendation 5. It is recommended that parents attend workshops on child development. Epstein (2001) states that workshops that teach parents about child development help create home conditions that strongly support a child in his or her learning process.

Conclusion 3

The program led to positive parent attitudes toward the school. Some parents in the study continued to be involved by volunteering in their child's kindergarten classroom. Therefore, it can be predicted that these children will continue to improve their academic skills based on research from Head Start and Even Start.

Field notes and interviews with the kindergarten staff support that parent involvement increased after the study. Additionally, the teachers reported, during monthly meetings, that parents had positive attitudes toward the school. From interviews with the kindergarten teachers, nine parents (15%) continued to support classroom activities by volunteering in the classroom. School Site A reported that five parents volunteered to work in their child's classroom on a weekly basis. School Site A reported that several of the parents have volunteered on special occasions like field trips and holiday parties. One parent from School Site A volunteered to be the room mother for the school year. The teachers from School Site B and C each reported that two parents volunteered to help on a weekly basis.

Based on the review of literature, providing opportunities for parents to volunteer in their child's classroom increases a student academic success, attendance rates, and lowers suspension rates (Safe and Responsive Schools, 2002). When parents volunteer in the classroom, they assist teachers, work one-on-one with children, and begin to see the importance of the school parent partnership.

Parent involvement helps bridge the gap between school and home. Schools can teach parents ways that they can influence and guide their children with their schoolwork. Parents can become involved in schools through activities such as the Parent Teacher Association. Many parents of second language learners are encouraged to become involved in the English Language Advisory Committee. One of the responsibilities of the English Language Advisory Committee is to encourage parents on ways they can support their children through volunteering in their child's classroom.

Parents who were involved in Head Start demonstrated more positive growth and were found to have a greater quality of life, satisfaction, increased confidence in coping abilities, and decreased feelings of anxiety and depression (National Head Start Association, 2001). The Even Start Program (2002) encourages parents to become active in the education of their children and to learn ways to assist their children in reaching their full potential. Research also reports students whose parents are more involved in school have more accurate diagnosis for educational placement in classes, reduced number of negative behavior reports, and higher achievement scores on reading and math tests (Hiatt-Michael, 2001b). It is concluded that supporting parent involvement will assist the child in reaching academic success.

Recommendation 1. It is recommended that parents be encouraged to continue volunteering in their children's classroom and become active in the school community. For thirty years, research has confirmed that parent involvement has a powerful influence on a child's achievement in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2001b). Joyce Epstein's framework of involvement that influences learning includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating (Simon & Epstein, 2001).

Recommendation 2. It is recommended that Community Liaisons encourage parents of second language learners to become involved in English Language Advisory Committee. This involvement gives parents opportunities to become active leaders in their community and influence the decisions that are affecting their children.

Conclusion 4

Children whose parents had the least amount of education had one designation level gain in English. The parent with a college degree had a student who had one designation level gain in English and Spanish. The largest student gain in Spanish Raw scores were from parents who had some college (100.96%) or were a college graduate (160.00%). School Site A indicated the highest gain of the three schools and reported parents having completed more years of school. Since the majority of the parents participating in the program had not graduated from high school, it would be concluded that parent education, both formal and informal, will assist children in increasing their oral language proficiency.

The literature reviewed in Chapter II supports the finding that parent education influences a child's academic performance. II. It is widely known that children growing up in middle-class families have more opportunities at home to learn letters and sounds as well as handling books, making lists, writing notes, and other uses of literacy (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Parents who have higher educational and income levels understand the value of early childhood education and have the resources to send their young children to preschool programs. On the average, these children tend to have more emergent literacy materials in their homes and are read to more often (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). In general, children from families with higher incomes and children of more highly educated mothers have larger vocabularies at school entry than children from low-income families (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). It can be concluded that providing opportunities for parents to increase their knowledge on ways they can support their child's education will be important. Further, educating parents on their role as a child's first teacher will assist the child in succeeding in school.

Recommendation 1. It is recommended that parent education classes be offered in both English and Spanish. Parent education classes will provide parents with additional tools that can assist them in their role as a child's first teacher. Parent education classes can also

provide tools on positive discipline and to referrals to social service agencies for additional family assistance.

Recommendation 2. It is recommended that the community liaisons and parent advocates meet informally with parents to offer referrals and assistance for low-cost health insurance, medical, dental assistance, and to Adult Education programs.

Conclusion 5

Although there was variation among teachers and variation among student scores, all but three students showed significant gain in oral proficiency. It is concluded that training early childhood educators to increase their knowledge and skills will assist preschool children in school readiness and language acquisition. The researcher observed the preschool teachers and their classroom instruction on a weekly basis. According to research field notes, each preschool teacher demonstrated SDAIE teaching strategies, and the classroom techniques taught in the training.

Professional development and teacher training increases the quality, expertise, and effectiveness of early childhood educational programs. In order for early childhood programs to be effective in teaching emergent literacy skills, preschool teachers must be prepared with the current trends in language development and reading readiness. Therefore, continual training of teachers is important. The training of teachers has always been supported by the NAEYC, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Parent Teacher Association. Trained early childhood educators provide differentiated learning centers that stimulate curiosity and scaffolding to deepen and extend learning.

The curriculum used in the study, *Building Language for Literacy*, emphasized oral language development, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and creating language skills through the use of print (Neuman, Snow, & Canizares, 2000). The National Educational Goals Panel addressed language development as one of its goals of children's readiness for school (Goals 2000, 2002). Language development is critical to understanding print and acquiring the skills necessary in learning how to read. Preschool children who are English language learners need emergent literacy interventions in order to increase their English language skills and help prepare them for the high academic standards of today's English academe.

Recommendation 1. It is recommended that teachers receive continual training. The training of teachers has always been supported by the NAEYC, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Parent Teacher Association. The California Department of Education has adopted standards for teacher training and provides opportunities for teachers to increase their teaching skills through local trainings and workshops. Professional development and teacher training increase the quality, expertise, and effectiveness of early childhood education programs. It is recommended that teachers receive training in the areas of emergent literacy, curriculum development, and working with cultural diverse students.

Recommendation 2. It is recommended that teachers have a set curriculum for working with parents in the parent/child Bridge program. This recommendation is supported by the researcher's field notes. A set curriculum that teaches parents about the four areas essential for language development are listening, speaking, writing, and reading will help teachers have consistency between school sites.

Conclusion 6

Through regular attendance, teachers were able to observe the children and make informal assessments of their developmental progress. The field notes reported that the program provided an opportunity for appropriate intervention for six children. It is concluded that through regular attendance, children's developmental progress can be evaluated and referrals for further professional evaluation be made.

Four children were observed to have mild delays in speech and language. The children with speech and language delays were referred to the District's Special Education Department. The children began receiving speech and language therapy once a week. One child demonstrated characteristics of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and another exhibited mild autistic symptoms. According to the District's policy, these children could be assessed when they entered kindergarten. The preschool teachers spoke to the children's kindergarten teachers the first week of school and shared their observations. The two children were assessed within the first two weeks of kindergarten by the Special Education Department. The National Association of School Psychologists (2002) believes that early intervention of children with developmental and learning disorders is essential to planning and designing successful interventions. It is concluded that one of the benefits of regular attendance is the ability for teachers to observe a child's behavior over time and make referrals to the appropriate specialists.

Recommendation 1. It is recommended that teachers provide developmental assessments throughout the year. Although this research study measured gains in language acquisition, there are other development milestones that could be evaluated. These assessments would be shared with the kindergarten staff in order to meet the individual needs of the children entering kindergarten.

Recommendation 2. It is recommended that teachers learn more about the District's Special Education Department. Visiting the District's Special Education classrooms would educate the staff about the services available to families. This effort would allow teachers the ability to better direct parents who have special needs children.

Recommendation 3. It is recommended that the Special Education Department meet with the preschool teachers to discuss the progress of the children attending speech and language therapy. Through this articulation, teachers could adapt curriculum and activities to further support efforts to increase the speech and language development of these children.

Recommendation 4. A further recommendation is that teachers receive training on the identifying characteristics of special needs children and inclusion strategies. High/Scope Perry Project (2002a) findings found that teachers who received continual training felt empowered and that training made a dramatic difference in the lives of the children. The National Association of School Psychologists recommend that special needs children work well in a naturalist setting where parents partners with teachers. They recommend a multidisciplinary approach to serving the needs of young children (National Association of School Psychologists, 2002).

Concluding Comments

The conclusions of the study are limited to the teachers, parents, and students participating in the School Readiness and Resource Center project in Saddleback Valley Unified School District. Thus, careful consideration must be made in generalizing the results

of this study to other early childhood programs. However, the results can provide insights into the importance of early interventions in preparing children, including second language preschool children, with emergent literacy skills and beginning English language competencies. This study supports the findings that partnership between school and home is a critical component in a child's academic success. The findings can also be useful in generating further funding for early childhood intervention programs.

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