LIBRARIANS AS TEACHING PARTNERS: IMPLEMENTING DIALOGIC READING AS AN EARLY LITERACY STRATEGY

by

Jodi Fischer

An Abstract
of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist in Human Services, Learning Resources in the School of Professional Education and Leadership University of Central Missouri

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Early childhood literacy development begins in the home, at a very young age for children. Literature suggests that children who have been exposed to early literacy development strategies are at an advantage upon entering school which can have lasting effects throughout school. Parents can be taught reading strategies to use with their children to prepare them for reading in school. The dialogic reading strategy is one early literacy intervention that can build vocabulary, print awareness, and provide engaging interaction for parent and child in the reading experience. This action research study implements the dialogic reading strategy with families and examines the growth in vocabulary, print awareness, and enjoyment of reading for early childhood students. Findings suggest that the intervention taught to families by the school librarian positively impacted the reading experience for both child and parent, and also improved the vocabulary development and print awareness in the child.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY ................................................................. 1

Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1
Purpose of the Study ...................................................................................................................... 2
Research Questions ..................................................................................................................... 2
Research Design .......................................................................................................................... 3
Limitations of the Study .............................................................................................................. 4
Definition of Terms ...................................................................................................................... 4
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 5

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ......................................................................................... 6

Early Literacy Education .............................................................................................................. 6
School Libraries and Early Literacy ............................................................................................. 13
The School Librarians Role in Promoting Early Literacy .......................................................... 18

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................. 22

Setting ......................................................................................................................................... 22
Participants .................................................................................................................................... 23
Research Design .......................................................................................................................... 24
Data Collection ............................................................................................................................ 24
Intervention .................................................................................................................................. 25
Data Analysis ............................................................................................................................... 26
Validity and Reliability ............................................................................................................... 27
Timeline ................................................................................................................................. 27

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS ............................................................................................................. 29

The Intervention ......................................................................................................................... 29

Vocabulary ................................................................................................................................. 30

Print Awareness .......................................................................................................................... 33

Reading Engagement ................................................................................................................. 36

Working with the School Librarian ............................................................................................ 38

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS .................................................................................................. 40

WORKS CITED ........................................................................................................................... 44

APPENDIX A PRE-ASSESSMENT SURVEY ........................................................................... 48

APPENDIX B POST-ASSESSMENT SURVEY ......................................................................... 51

APPENDIX C INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ..................................................................................... 54

APPENDIX D HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL ....................................................................... 55

APPENDIX E DIALOGIC READING HANDOUT ....................................................................... 56
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Vocabulary by Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Vocabulary by Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Print Awareness as a Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Print Awareness by Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Reading Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Reading Enjoyment by Child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Traditionally students begin school at age five, in a kindergarten classroom, and thus begin their first formal introduction to school and learning. These students enter the kindergarten classroom with a wide array of experiences and family situations: Students have extreme variances in their readiness for school. Teachers must teach the same reading curriculum to all students, regardless of their prior reading experiences, while also ensuring all students meet district standards and guidelines. This is a large task, and many children do not come to school with the early literacy experiences necessary to begin the rigorous instruction of the mandated curriculum.

The home learning environment is key to developing early literacy experiences that set the foundation for later reading success. Learning begins long before children enter formal school (Niklas et al., 419). As early as infancy, children are absorbing language and experiences that will later benefit them in literacy development (Goldstein 271). Children who begin school with a lack of these early learning experiences may start behind their peers and may also have a more difficult time catching up as the year’s progress. Early childhood teachers are then tasked with filling in the missing components of early literacy. Early childhood teachers interweave literacy instruction throughout the school day, working to develop children’s oral language skills, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and critical thinking skills. While early childhood teachers are trained in using literacy strategies to improve reading with their students, parents may be unaware of which strategies may benefit their child.
School librarians can help prepare children for schooling and ease the transition into early childhood programs. While there is a great deal of research on strategies for teaching literacy at the early childhood level (for example, see Marsh and Larson, Suggate and Puffke, or Whitehurst and Lonigan), there is a gap in original research located for this research that examines how the school librarian can use literacy strategies in early childhood library settings. One way that a school librarian can support literacy in the classroom is to provide training for parents who are interested in using literacy strategies with their children. This study incorporated action research to investigate the impact of a school librarian working with parents to teach them to use research-based literacy strategies with their own children, in their own homes. In particular, this study examined the strategy of dialogic reading and how parents can implement dialogic reading when reading with their child to improve oral language skills, vocabulary development, and increase their child’s interest and engagement while reading.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of dialogic reading on students’ language skills when delivered by parents who have been trained by a school librarian. This study explored the role of the school librarian to educate parents on the dialogic reading strategy and help them implement this shared reading strategy at home with their child to increase the child’s early literacy development. The school librarian was seen as a literacy instruction partner with parents to increase student’s early literacy skills.

**Research Questions**

This research explored the role of the school librarian in creating a literacy-rich environment for all students in the school. One strategy that librarians can use to reach students
is to support parents and their work with literacy at home. This research was guided by the following questions:

1. How does dialogic reading impact the vocabulary development of early childhood students?
2. How does dialogic reading build print awareness in early childhood students?
3. How does working with a school librarian equip parents to build early literacy in their child?

Research Design

This study implemented a time series, action research design called Two-Phase Design (Parsons and Brown 111). In phase one, baseline data were gathered by surveying the parents participating in the study on their current reading practices with their child, their child’s current vocabulary development, the child’s print awareness, and their child’s general enjoyment and enthusiasm for reading. The school librarian/researcher conducted an intervention of dialogic reading to parents by teaching and modeling dialogic reading for the parents. The parents then performed dialogic reading with the librarian observing. The parents then implemented dialogic reading as part of their reading ritual with their child at home. A post-assessment survey was conducted to compare the parents’ perceptions of the growth in their child’s vocabulary development, print awareness, and enjoyment of reading after participating in the strategy. Interviews were conducted with the parents to understand more about their experiences performing the dialogic reading strategy at home with their children and working with school librarians as literacy partners.
Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, there was limited literature on the role of the school librarian in working with parents to support reading. The literature for this study was drawn from areas of early childhood literacy, as well as the school librarian’s role as a literacy partner. These studies indicate that there is potential for a school librarian to support reading strategies with parents as well.

Another limitation of this study was that the population size of the study participants was small. The research represents the experiences of this population and may not be transferable to other school populations. However, findings from this research may provide other school librarians in similar situations with guidance on how this strategy may work in their populations.

Definition of Terms

Early Childhood: The period of development from birth to age eight is called “early childhood” (NAEYC 4).

Dialogic Reading: Whitehurst and Lonigan describe dialogic reading as a “shared reading practice that encourages the child to be the storyteller, with the adult listening and asking questions, prompting the child, and adding information when necessary throughout the reading of a book” (859). Strouse elaborates on this definition by describing dialogic reading as when “parents ask open-ended questions, encouraging the child to tell the story and understand its content” (9).

Emergent Literacy: Fiore describes emergent literacy as, “what children already know about reading and writing before they actually read or write” (3).
Print Awareness: Peterson describes print awareness as, “a child’s knowledge of how print is organized in various texts, directionality of print and the differences between a word and letter” (3).

Vocabulary Development: Peterson describes vocabulary development as “the understanding and use of a range of words in print and oral conversation in a wide range of contexts” (3).

Conclusion

As early childhood educators, school librarians want to lay a solid foundation for learning for students. This foundation is paramount to their future success in school. However, the research indicates that the foundation for early literacy begins in the home environment for all children. One strategy to improve this foundation may be for school librarians to provide training for parents of the early childhood students to read more effectively with their children and equip them with the tools to build vocabulary, print awareness, and their child’s love for reading to strengthen the foundation for young students as they enter school. This increased foundation may reap many educational rewards for students as they continue to learn and grow as readers.
CHAPTER 2  
LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature examined early literacy education components and the role of the school librarian in building early literacy skills in early childhood students. The literature located for this study demonstrates the need for early intervention of literacy skills with children, best practices for a librarian to teach early literacy skills, and the librarian’s role in promoting early literacy interventions.

Early Literacy Education

This review begins with an understanding of the definition of early childhood education. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is the leading advocate for early childhood education stating that, “NAEYC uses the child development research and evidence base to define the “early childhood” period as spanning the years from birth through age 8” (4). Children’s early educational programs establish a foundation for future school performance. Therefore, an investment in early childhood education (and specifically in literacy for early childhood students) can provide students with the strongest foundation for success in school and in life (Adedokun 466). This theme explored the foundations of early literacy and explains how early literacy is developed in young children.

Early literacy has been studied extensively for many years. Early literacy has several components at work that must develop in the child, beginning at birth. Priscilla L. Griffith et al. described the foundation for literacy as the child develops in three areas: physical-motor development, language and communication, and cognitive development (4). A child’s abilities in these three areas of development build upon each other in the child’s early literacy development.
The first part of Griffith et al.’s framework is to integrate physical-motor development into instruction. The physical-motor development involves the small, fine motor development that enables a child to eventually use writing tools and focus their eyes on printed materials. This stage begins at birth with a reflexive action when an infant is wrapping their finger around anything that brushes across their palm. The reflexive action begins to fade at around four months of age when the child can grasp objects on purpose. Eye-hand coordination develops slowly in the first year of life. Toddlers begin to pincer grasp objects but will hold a writing utensil in a fist grip. The rate that children continue to develop their fine motor skills varies greatly, but generally, they should have developed their eye-hand coordination enough by age four to begin to easily writing and drawing at age appropriate levels (Griffith et al. 5). Suggate, Pufke, and Stoeger’s recent work also found a connection between early literacy and grapho-motor skills. This study corroborates Griffith et al.’s work by stating that the cognitive skills associated with fine-motor development could also be related to early reading development (4).

Missouri’s Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) recognized that speaking and listening are part of the skills necessary for developing literacy (DESE 1) Griffith et al. agreed that the development of language and communication is paramount to literacy which also involves listening and speaking (5). At the very beginning, a baby communicates by crying, grunts, and facial expressions. Then as babies develop they coo, babble, and begin to add consonant sounds to their vowel-based cooing sounds. Babies will begin to put sounds together to make words such as “mama” and “dada.” This is a marker that the child is learning the sounds of the language system. As the child grows into a toddler, their speech will take on the rhythm of the language and facial expressions will further communicate the child’s
intent. Words may not be intelligible at first, but true language development is emerging. At this stage, it is important for the adults interacting with the child to respond as if the child is a communicating partner. This allows the child to view themselves as a speaker, reader, and writer (Griffith et al. 6). As the child learns that speech is the way to communicate meaning and messages, their skills will grow in understanding and production of the language. In the preschool years, the vocabulary growth explodes. Griffith et al. states that a preschool child may learn as many as ten new words per day. And finally, the child will begin to understand syntax in the language, combining words together to communicate their message. This is the stage of creating meaningful sentences (Griffith et al. 5-7).

Duff et al. studied the relationship between early language development and later success in literacy. They found a link between the number of words spoken by a child at 24 months and their later literacy development, especially if there was a family history of language/literacy difficulties (854). DESE addresses this important development as part of the Early Childhood Learning Standards where speaking and expressive language are one of the main standards for Early Childhood Education (7).

Language and cognitive development are very closely related. Theorist Vygotsky believed in the importance of a child’s ability to use symbols. Vygotsky placed importance on oral language as he believed this was the most important tool a child uses to interact and learn about the world and to solve problems. Vygotsky stated that oral language is a symbol system that uses words to represent actual objects and ideas (32). Therefore, print or written language is an even greater abstract symbol system because it creates another level of symbol system by adding the formation of letters and words to paper. This development of a symbolic systems and the child’s ability to create representational thinking is one of the most significant events in
literacy development. This ability allows the marks on a paper to have meaning in both reading and writing (Griffith et al. 8).

Early childhood programs must understand this development of the child’s early literacy skills in order to build upon their developmental levels and expand their vocabulary. Howard Goldstein (270) shares what Grover J. Whitehurst and Christopher J. Lonigan believe and that is that early childhood educators should provide a foundation for learning to read by focusing on code-based and meaning-focused skills. The code-based skills focus on two key components: Alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness. The meaning-focused skills target oral language skills, vocabulary, and grammar. Both of these foundations for early literacy build a child’s readiness to read (Goldstein 271). Goldstein, et al. (89) conducted more recent work to examine the impact of phonetic awareness curriculum on improving reading scores for students are at risk for reading difficulties. They found that supplementing the curriculum with instruction targeted to phenome development was positive for both students and teachers (101).

As stated, children often learn to read and write long before they start school. Emergent literacy is the term used to describe what children already know about reading and writing before they actually read or write. Research suggests children who have parents that read to them become better readers and perform better in school overall. Reading to children is important, but this is not the only activity that parents can do to encourage emergent literacy skills. Engaging in storytelling and singing songs can also benefit children in acquiring emergent literacy (Fiore 3-4).

Parents and caregivers are the first teachers of the child and begin to lay the foundation for those early literacy experiences. Daniel T. Willingham suggested for parents to aid in
building early literacy experiences with their child. Willingham began with a suggestion that many parents may do with their infant baby: Speaking to the child in “motherese.” This term is used to refer to a distinct way that adults speak to infants. It is usually in a higher tone of voice and slower speech. When speaking in motherese, adults use simpler grammar and a more melodic tone in the voice (31). Fernald (193) found that infants from multiple cultures preferred to listen to motherese and speculated that the different intonations, exaggerated pitch and use of simple lexicon may be what makes infants respond more to motherese than regular conversation.

Others speculate that infants are drawn to motherese because they recognize that the conversation is directed for them. Hindman, Skibbe, and Foster (287) examined the shared reading experience as another way of talking with children and found that those who talked to children specifically about the meaning of the story showed advanced language acquisition (310). Willingham also recommended that parents actively engage in wordplay with their child. This method highlights individual sounds in words. Some suggested word play activities include rhyme songs like The Name Game or Apples and Bananas, nursery rhymes, singing familiar songs but replacing the first letter of each word with a letter sound of your choice, and finding opportunities of alliteration (32-33). Willingham also suggested that parents concentrate on exposing children to letters within their environment, versus explicit teaching of the alphabet. Find opportunities to point out to the child how the parent is using words in the everyday tasks. His suggestions included pointing out the highway signs to tell us where we are driving, make letters in the dirt with a stick, or make pancakes of the child’s first letter in their name. These interactions will hopefully prompt interest in letters for the child (35).

Schools also play a role in developing literacy by working with parents once children begin a formal school setting. Parents as Teachers is a national public school program that
“Promotes the optimal early development, learning, and health of children by supporting and engaging their parents and caregivers” (Parents as Teachers 2). The Parents as Teachers program originated in Missouri in 1984 and currently serves over 170,000 children nationally. Parents as Teachers has numerous programs to serve and promote early childhood development, and one such program is the Baby FACE program. This program targets high needs Native American families to promote literacy, social-emotional, and cognitive development. The Parents as Teachers program provides home visits to families, provides books for the home library, and education to parents. The results of the program showed an increase in home literacy activities, doubled the number of books in the home, and increased the number of hours parents read to their children.

In addition, Jackie Marsh and Joanne Larson edited the Sage Handbook of Early Childhood Literacy that shares research-based best practices for creating school environments and teaching practices that foster literacy. One author in the handbook, Eithne Kennedy suggests when positive literacy environments are created in the school, the energy for learning to read and write exudes from the teacher and the students. The integration of literacy is interwoven to all aspects of the learning day and even goes beyond the walls of the school into the home environment as well (541). Kennedy shares concrete ways to develop a strong literacy environment in the school. She believes schools should have a library filled with an abundance of quality books that are of interest and stage of development of the children. The library space should be inviting and comfortable for children and teachers to foster engagement of literacy discussions about books (543).

It is also important for the school to have constructed areas for play for the early childhood students. Through play, children foster their oral language skills, imaginations, and
learn to problem solve. Adult interaction within the play environment is equally important. The adult interaction should scaffold and elevate the child’s learning through the play experience.

In Missouri, the Early Learning Standards establish standards for early childhood educators when working with literacy development in preschool age children. The Missouri Early Learning Standards for Literacy (DESE 9-11) provide process standards in reading for teachers that include indicators for reading aloud daily, using predictable books repeatedly, encouraging children to respond to stories by asking open-ended questions and/or engaging them in conversations about the story. The Early Learning Standards also include a section on involving parents and families in the child’s early literacy development. “Encouraging parents/family members to read daily to their children, and to converse about what they read, is an obvious place to start” (DESE 13). These standards recommend various strategies for working with children to help meet the standards.

Dialogic reading is one strategy used in early childhood to encourage children to interact with the story. Dialogic reading of books with children is paramount to developing early literacy in school. In dialogic reading, the adult asks questions, relates the story to the child’s experiences, introduces new vocabulary, and models thinking and questioning with the child. Dialogic reading also focuses on multiple readings of a story to enhance vocabulary development. These multiple readings give children the opportunity to learn new words in context (Strouse 5). Emergent writing experiences should also be included in the early literacy instruction for children. Allowing children to express themselves with painting, drawing, and other forms of writing will foster the idea that marks on a paper have meaning and communicate to others your message (Kennedy 548).
School Libraries and Early Literacy

While early childhood programs provide early literacy development, the school library also supports early literacy through programming and teaching. This section examines a study conducted in public libraries aiming to provide early literacy skills to preschoolers, several strategies used in school libraries that are appropriate for improving literacy, story time methods, and the importance of the read aloud to early childhood students.

Peterson et al. (2) conducted a study that examined preschool students in a library program to measure specific categories that led to students’ success in early literacy. These categories included: Print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary development, narrative awareness, and print awareness. The ten library programs observed offered services to three to five-year-old children and the programs ranged from five to eight weeks long. Each program had a 30-minute session for each week of programming that included engaging activities such as songs, fingerplay, rhymes, gross motor movement, and portrayals of stories using puppets, felt boards, or chanting and chiming of the story by the children. They found that the library program did improve these categories and that students were more prepared for school and more engaged with the books read (3-4). Peterson et al. (5) studied the data through specific categories for early literacy: print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary development, and narrative awareness. Print awareness is defined as the openness to learning to read. Children who value reading and work through the challenges of learning to read may have greater success than those who do not. Phonological awareness is defined by Peterson et al. (2) as the recognition of sounds that make up words. Phonological awareness includes rhyming, syllable recognition, blending sounds to make words and segmenting sounds into words. This awareness is an important predictor of later reading and writing success. Vocabulary development is
understanding and using words in both print and orally in a variety of contexts. Vocabulary development is a predictor of a five-year-old’s later success in literacy and reading comprehension. Narrative awareness is the ability to recount activities of the day or to retell stories showing an understanding of the connections and relationships of events. As of 2018, this area of literacy development was in the early stages of research, but it is believed to be a fundamental skill for early literacy and cognitive development (3).

There are many methods that librarians can use to develop early literacy skills through library programming. In an early childhood setting, like a school or preschool, the librarian can provide a structured story time to increase early literacy skills in preschool students. Kathy Barclay stated in her article that children enter the classroom with a variety of backgrounds, language, and literacy experiences (139). Barclay specifically suggested strategies for adult readers like pointing to the pictures in books as they read to focus attention and help with comprehension in the story (139). Children’s introduction to the familiar routines of story time can be the beginning of a child’s literacy journey. Librarians must develop story time methods that effectively develop early literacy in children, develop strategies for quality read-alouds to children, and follow the five practices to develop reading readiness.

*Storytime Methods.* Heather McNeil stated that “Storytime should be an effective presentation of early literacy skills and activities, it should be entertaining and heart-warming, and it should promote interaction between adult and child” (13). McNeil also believed this time should include quality literature that helps develop vocabulary, creativity, an awareness of self and others, and knowledge in the child. McNeil believed the story time structure should include a welcome to the children. One example could be to begin with an opening that includes a song. This can be one made up by the librarian, be prerecorded, or just a simple rhyme. Before each
story, McNeil suggested a short “story song.” This cues the children that it is time to look and listen. When choosing stories to read to the children, McNeil suggested choosing stories that you love, can expand vocabulary or imagination in the children, show diversity, are fun, invite their participation, or introduce math or science concepts (14). McNeil believed that in between each story, there should be an activity that allows the children to move. And to end the story time the librarian should have a song or rhyme that is repeated every time you meet with the children.

Diamant-Cohen and Hetrick referenced the program Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library (ECRR) and this program’s *Five Practices to Develop Reading Readiness*. These five practices can be utilized in the story time program to help develop the children’s early literacy skills. The five practices include talking, singing, reading, writing, and playing. Each of these practices aids in the development of the child’s early literacy skills. Talking with children about books expands their understanding of the story. Singing during story time develops their phonological awareness, creates community, and if the song includes movements, can strengthen fine and gross motor skills. All positive reading experiences increase the child’s desire to read. While preschool children are not fluent writers, the finger plays and actions in a story time help to develop their fine motor skills which will be used in writing. And lastly, the story time should be playful. Present books in a lively manner that engages the children (12-13).

**Read Alouds.** Authors Martha Schwindt and Julie Tegeler recognized that more elementary schools were including preschool children in their schools. In turn, school librarians must provide programs that emphasize early literacy experiences for these students. One type of programming that librarians use to connect students with literature is the read aloud, a process of reading aloud to children in a group setting. Choosing books for read alouds is an important
component for the story time experience. They suggested that the librarian choose books that young children enjoy. Stories with predictability and repetition are favored. Children like books that allow them to guess what might happen next or rhythmic language that allows them to become readers of the story too (14). Schwindt and Tegeler have suggestions for librarians that are doing read-alouds to preschool children. When reading aloud to children of this age, it may be necessary to provide visual cues for unfamiliar vocabulary. For example, in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, the librarian may want to show the children what it might look like when the goats “trip-trap” over the bridge. The librarian can also point to the text as it is being read to children. This can help develop the understanding of the print on the page and the words being read. It is important to read with expression. This keeps the children interested in the story and provides context clues through the reader’s voice inflections. The librarian can also ask questions of the children while reading to aid in comprehension of the story and to keep their attention. Children should be allowed to make predictions about what might happen next in the story (15).

Librarians also recognize that parents play a role in literacy development. As described earlier by Willingham, parents are the first models of early literacy in the home. Jodi Streelasky agreed, and shared that the family provides the most important contexts for early literacy learning. The experiences that occur in the home will largely influence a child’s early literacy development. Streelasky described an action research project called “Literacy Boxes” where parents of young children were trained on how to teach their children from the Literacy Box materials and provided with all materials to experience this early literacy development process in the home by using the Literacy Box materials.

A librarian can model for caregivers the appropriate early literacy experiences to enable those caregivers to extend these strategies into daily experiences with the children. Albright (15)
conducted a historical survey of story times and found that parents have historically played a role in the story time. Albright specifically recommended:

“Most simply, the person in charge of the story time can talk about what skills are being used every time they read. This repetition will allow caregivers to see that incorporating early literacy skills at home does not need to be a labor-intensive endeavor” (15).

Albright also noted that the use of visual materials is also helpful for caregivers. This could be a bulletin board highlighting early literacy skills, books appropriate for the early childhood children, and ideas of activities to do at home (15).

**Book Ownership to Increase Reading Enjoyment.** In Tadesse and Washington’s article, they stated the importance of book ownership in the development of literacy. Book ownership and shared reading experiences are known to increase literacy outcomes for children, but unfortunately, many children are in homes and go to schools that have a limited availability of books or even none at all (166). The study conducted with one teacher’s classroom of underserved students, examined if book ownership could increase the students’ learning. The outcomes of the study provided results that parents became more involved in their child’s home-literacy activities and the children showed an increase in interest in reading (167-169).

Another study conducted by Susan B. Neuman and Donna Celano also supported this to be true (9-24). Their three-year study analyzed four neighborhoods in Philadelphia for the impact of community institutions on early literacy development. Two of the communities were low-income and two were middle-class income. They examined many factors in the community but ultimately found a large discrepancy in the available resources and the quality of resources in the low-income versus middle-income communities. Neuman and Celano believed this lack of resources contributed to lower-income children beginning school with a lack of early literacy.
development (23). The school librarian plays an instrumental role in filling in this lack of resources for children once they enter school by providing quality literature to students through the school library.

**Integrating Technology into Early Literacy.** The use of technology by both adults and children must be considered as we examine early literacy. Shayna Cook explained that digital media can be viewed as a deterrent to early literacy experiences for children. However, young children use interactive media daily, and the use of digital tools increases as parents and caregivers use them for all forms of basic communication. Cook conducted a study to examine early learning programs that are experimenting with digital tools and how these tools help support children’s early language and literacy development. This study investigated 37 programs across the country that included a technology component for developing early literacy skills in children. The programs utilized technology tools such as phone or tablet apps, mobile text messaging, video conferencing, websites, and other tools. At the conclusion of the study, the programs were rated as strong, promising, emerging, or developing. One in three of the programs were rated as “developing,” and 75% of the programs that were rated “strong” began over seven years ago. On the other side, 80% of the programs rated emerging or developing began in the last four years. One important outcome of the study implied that the technology used should always come second to the positive engagement and interaction of adults and children (11-15).

**The School Librarians Role in Promoting Early Literacy**

A school librarian can be the first influence on an early childhood student in regard to literacy and an enjoyment of books. Not all students come to school with a strong background in early literacy experiences or have even visited a public library before. Marilyn Brinkley and
Trevor William stated that according to the International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement (IEA) Literacy Study of 1996, as much as 61% of children coming from low-income households have no books in the home for children. A school librarian can introduce these early childhood students to books and reading and expand on the experiences of children coming to school with previous early literacy experiences in the home.

Part of the mission of the school librarian is to encourage reading. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has released revised standards for learners. Standard Four from AASL for learners is to curate. This is defined as to “make meaning for oneself and others by collecting, organizing, and sharing resources of personal relevance” (AASL). According to Martha Schwindt and Julie Tegeler in *School Library Monthly*, the main objective for a school library and the librarian is to promote literacy and encourage reading. School librarians can guide and influence the youngest students in order to foster the early literacy skills needed for later reading and writing success. Many children begin school today at a disadvantage. They may not have been read to on a regular basis, and many have never been to a library. School librarians can make books fun for these students and introduce them to a whole new world ahead of them (14). Donna Shannon stated it best when she described that the school librarian is to the leader of all things literacy in the school (1).

School librarians play an integral role in the literacy environment of the school. In her article, *The School Library Media Specialist and Early Literacy Programs*, Shannon (15) shared how school librarians can have a positive impact on the literacy program in the school. She suggested that the librarian should provide an attractive and interactive environment for students, provide access to varied, quality resources that are developmentally appropriate, and for the
school librarian to provide lessons, activities, and experiences that support literacy development and reinforce classroom teacher-led instruction (16-19).

Within these suggestions for school librarians, Shannon suggested that the library be attractive in its physical appearance to children and that the interactions the children have with the librarian, the clerk, and each other are also critical for them. She suggested “literacy-related play centers” as described by Owocki in *Literacy Through Play*. Shannon stated that the research shows that retelling and dramatizing stories improves a child’s development of language and literacy. These types of centers could include costumes, puppets, props, or anything that might encourage dramatic play and story retelling for children.

Shannon also explained that the school librarian must work to provide a wide range of books and resources that are appropriate to early childhood students. Selection of resources for the library must be age-appropriate and on subjects of interest to early childhood students. Shannon also suggested that school librarians must also remember that the practice of reading aloud to children is teaching them. The school librarian is teaching how to read a text for understanding and will allow the children to develop their skills as readers and writers. Shannon suggested some important hints for effective read-alouds for librarians: choose books you like and read them ahead of time, read from a variety of genres, use expression in your voice, give children time to understand the reading and respond appropriately, let children make comments and connections to the story, and avoid recall type questions. Instead, ask open-ended questions to further enhance the learning.

Librarians and their role as the lead literacy advocator can provide many program elements to support literacy in the school. Elizabeth Marcoux and David Loertscher compiled a large list of considerations for school librarians to promote literacy. Librarians should make
considerations for providing access to teachers and staff professional resources that support reading instruction. Access to books and resources should be unlimited, within areas of interest and level, cover all genres, and be available in multiple modes. The school librarian should serve on literacy teams and serve as the main communicator of literacy initiatives and promotions within the school. The school librarian should promote ample reading time within the school day and encourage reading aloud to children for the literacy development.

**Conclusion**

The school librarian is pivotal in providing resources and implementing programming to reinforce early literacy skills and provide authentic reading experiences and resources in the library to equalize the potential for success in literacy development for all students. The research demonstrates early literacy development is vital to children’s future success in school. The librarian, while implementing research-based best practices, can offer support to classroom teachers, offer story times that enrich literacy development, and work to involve parents and technology into the literacy development practices too.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This study examined dialogic reading as an early literacy strategy and its effectiveness when used by parents to improve a child’s early literacy skills, such as oral language skills, vocabulary, and interest in reading. The guiding questions of the research study were: How does dialogic reading effect vocabulary development and print awareness? And how does the guidance of a school librarian equip parents to increase their child’s early literacy skills?

An action research method was used for this research study. Parsons and Brown (6) stated that action research is a research model that is focused on improving the practice of the researcher. This research model guides teachers in improving their teaching strategies. This method was chosen for this study because of its effectiveness at examining practice to improve the practice of the teacher. Because the researcher is also a teacher and librarian, this method was ideal for librarians that want to improve their teaching.

Setting

This action research study was conducted at the Harrisonville Early Childhood Center in Harrisonville, Missouri. As of 2018, the Harrisonville Early Childhood Center was a public school with a population that is entirely early childhood students: Approximately 170 kindergarten students and 70 preschool students. This school was also home to the school district Parents as Teachers program which served approximately 45 families within the community during the 2017 school year. The Parents as Teachers program served families by providing parental education to demonstrate age-appropriate activities parents can do to support their child’s development. The school librarian at the Harrisonville Early Childhood Center implemented an early childhood reading program, called the 1000 Book Club in approximately
2015 to provide books, on loan, to families within the community to encourage families to read on a regular basis with their child. As of 2018, this program has had an average of 125 children per year enrolled in the program since 2015.

**Participants**

The participants in this action research study included parents and children either enrolled in the preschool program or in the *Parents as Teachers* program. The researcher received recommendations from the *Parents as Teachers* educator and Preschool teacher of families that they believed would be good participants in this study. These recommended families were contacted by the researcher to request their participation in the research study. Five parent participants attended the informational session to learn full details of the study and all five chose to participate and completed the consent form at the session. These parent participants all had a child in the age range of three to five years old. The ages of children in the study included three three-year-olds, one four-year-old, and one five-year-old.

The participants received a packet of materials to use to implement the dialogic reading strategy. The packet included a handout on the dialogic reading strategy, four paperback books to be used to implement the dialogic reading strategy for the study, their copies of the pre- and post-assessment surveys and self-addressed stamped envelopes to return the assessment surveys to the researcher. All these materials were placed in a bag for the participants to take home and keep at the conclusion of the study. The books were purchased with Scholastic Dollars from the school’s account as an agreement with the principal of the Early Childhood Center to be given to the participants as a benefit for their participation. The researcher, who was also the librarian at the school at the time the study began, implemented the research, conducted the intervention, analyzed the data, and wrote about the study’s findings.
Research Design

The design of this study uses a time series, action research design called Two Phase Design (Parsons and Brown 111). This design was chosen for its simplicity in gathering data when the researcher is investigating the effectiveness of a new strategy, as well as its focus on collecting data in intervals to evaluate progress (111). In phase one of this research study, the participants in the study completed a pre-survey which asked the participants to report about their typical reading habits with their child, their assessment of their child’s language and vocabulary development, and their child’s print awareness. Phase two began with a group intervention with the researcher (who is also the librarian) instructing the participants on how to conduct dialogic reading with their child, modeling it for the participants, and observing the participants practicing the dialogic reading strategy with their child. The participants were instructed to practice this strategy at home, when reading with their child, four times per week (with the books provided to them). Follow up individual interviews were conducted by the researcher to support the participants as they implement the strategy. In the final phase, the participants were given a post-survey to report their child’s language and vocabulary development, print awareness, and reading enjoyment since the implementation of the dialogic reading strategy.

Data Collection

The researcher collected participant-reported data on the vocabulary development, print awareness, and reading enjoyment of the early childhood children. The researcher used the Concepts About Print Assessment (Teachers College Reading and Writing project) as a guide for the pre-assessment survey (see Appendix A) and post-assessment survey (see Appendix B) to participants about print awareness. This assessment is used at the Harrisonville Early Childhood
Center by the classroom teachers as an official assessment of their standards. The researcher then designed a vocabulary assessment based on the *Pre-Test Knowledge of Specific Vocabulary Words* described in Strouse’s research on dialogic reading. Both of these assessments were given to the participants by the researcher. Interview questions were based on the outcomes the researcher intended to gain from the study. The researcher developed the questions by thinking about the research on dialogic reading and the outcomes the strategy is designed to produce and to generate responses on how the role the school librarian took in the study aided the participants in implementing the strategy (see Appendix C).

**Intervention**

The dialogic reading strategy intervention is an interactive shared reading strategy that was developed to increase a young child’s vocabulary and early literacy skills. Key components of dialogic reading are that it is child-centered, interactive, can be used with both narrative and expository texts by using questioning and discussion throughout the reading, requires planning for the parent, and is an effective strategy for all ages (What Works Clearinghouse 1). To be successful, the dialogic reading strategy is dependent on quality questioning by the parent. One method for developing quality questions for the children uses the CROWD acronym: C equals completion questions (a parent will read a repetitive or familiar line from the book and leave off the final phrase or word and allow the child to fill it in); R equals recall questions (asking the child to recall an event from the story); O equals open-ended questions (the parent will ask a question that might ask for the child’s opinion or ideas about a key event in the story); W equals “Wh” questions (who, what, when, where questions about events or characters in the story); D equals distancing questions (these questions ask the child think like a character from the story...
and explain how they might have felt or why they might have done something that took place in the story).

In order to increase language and vocabulary development, the participant should look for vocabulary used in the story that might not be familiar for the child and introduce that word and its meaning prior to reading the story. Jessica Folsom explains that this method allows for the new vocabulary word to not interfere with the child’s comprehension of the story as it is being read to them (5th section). In the intervention for this study, the librarian (who was also the researcher in this study) taught and modeled this method to participants in a group setting. An in-depth description of the intervention is provided in Chapter 4: Results. Reflections from the researcher describe how the intervention was effective and guided the participants in working with their children.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics by the researcher. The descriptive statistics describe the differences in the baseline data gathered at the beginning of the study, compared with the post-intervention data gathered at the end of the study. Interpretations by the researcher will be made based on the data on the effectiveness of the dialogic reading strategy to increase early literacy skills.

Interviews were also analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods (Creswell, 2005). Follow-up interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the research. The interviews were completed by phone or email and asked the participants to elaborate on their feelings about the strategy and working with the librarian. These interviews helped the librarian (also the researcher) analyze the effectiveness of the dialogic reading strategy and the librarian’s role in
supporting the participants with the strategy. The interview responses were categorized according to two themes: Working with the strategy and working with the librarian.

Validity and Reliability

Parsons and Brown (114) described several threats to validity that may occur in an action research study that uses a time series design. All reasonable measures were taken by the researcher to control threats to the validity of the analysis results. Due to the short duration of the study period, maturation was not a concern for this research period. Selection remained the same throughout the research period. A threat to validity was that the participants were not in a lab setting while implementing the strategy. This could have allowed for discrepancies in implementation of the strategy. History was also a possible threat to validity which is inherent in a time-series design. These early childhood students could have also been preschoolers, receiving early literacy skills and strategies from their teachers. This could factor into results of their growth over the study period.

Timeline

This research took place in the Fall of 2018. The research was approved by the Human Subjects Committee at the University of Central Missouri in September, 2018 (see Appendix D). The Human Subjects Committee of the University required that the researcher have the study completely planned out. They required documentation of the approval from the Harrisonville Early Childhood Center principal to conduct the study on their property. They required the researcher to submit the Consent Form to be approved (see Appendix D). They required verbage the researcher would use to recruit participants and all assessments the researcher would use for approval.
When the Human Subjects Committee gave their final approval of the study on Sept. 14, 2018, the research began by recruiting parents to participate in the research study. Consenting participants completed the pre-assessment survey about their child’s reading skills and engagement and scheduled a time with the researcher to complete the pre-assessments for vocabulary and print awareness. Following this baseline data collection, the participants attended a dialogic reading intervention education night. Participants learned how to conduct dialogic reading with their child, observed the researcher modeling the dialogic reading strategy, and practiced the strategy with their own child as the researcher observed. The participants were asked to implement the dialogic reading strategy for the following four weeks, at least three times per week when reading with their child. After two weeks, the researcher contacted each participant to answer any questions they had, clarified the study expectations, and offered any support the participants may have needed to complete the dialogic reading strategy intervention. At the end of the four-week period, participants submitted a post-assessment on vocabulary, print awareness, and reading engagement. They also participated in an email or telephone interview with the researcher.
The Intervention

The findings of this study provide insight into how effective the librarian can be at teaching parents to use reading strategies at home with their children. This study began with an intervention where the librarian taught the dialogic reading strategy to five study participants from *Parents as Teachers* at an in-person group session. The session consisted of direct instruction from the librarian on key points of the dialogic reading strategy, a modeled demonstration with a picture book, and a handout for participants to refer to for reinforcement of the dialogic reading strategy (see Appendix E).

Participants were instructed to begin the study by completing a pre-assessment survey on their child that focused on vocabulary words that would be in the picture books provided, print awareness items related to general book and reading concepts, and questions about their child’s current enjoyment of reading. Once the pre-assessment survey was completed, participants were instructed to begin reading one of the four books given to them for the study. The choice and order of which book to read was the participant’s decision. All four books were to be read by the completion of the study, and the order of the books was not important to the study. The participants were instructed to read each of the books three times within a one-week time span. At each reading of the book, they were to implement the dialogic reading strategy to engage their child in the reading.

At the conclusion of reading all four books, the participants were to complete a post-assessment survey on their child. This assessment had the same vocabulary, print awareness, and reading enjoyment questions as the pre-assessment survey. In addition, the researcher
conducted an interview with the participants to gain qualitative data on their experience administering the dialogic reading strategy and how it helped the early literacy experience for their child.

At the initial in-person, group session study participants showed an interest in the materials provided to them. They began looking at the books and the handout provided immediately. They were attentive to the librarian as she explained the strategy. Several took notes on their handout as information was shared. Several questions were asked, like, “Which book should we start with, or does it matter?”, “Can we read the books as many times as we want?” and “Can we immediately start the next book after we do the three readings with the first one?” Before leaving, participants demonstrated their knowledge of the strategy by looking through a book of their choice, reading the book to themselves and thinking about questions they might ask of their child at the first reading of the book. They selected the vocabulary words to focus on and shared ideas for open-ended questions to ask their child. The librarian (who is also the researcher) felt like participants left with a good understanding of the strategy, the assessments, and the timeline and were eager to begin and participate in the study. The greatest concern the librarian had was the participants following through with the study due to the 4-week commitment and the demand of everyday life. The librarian worried that other priorities might get in the way of the participants following through with the commitment. However, the participants were engaged with the strategy and followed through on their commitments to complete the pre-assessment survey, implement the strategy, and complete the post-assessment survey.
Vocabulary

Once the participants were working with their children, their first task was to identify which words they believed their child already knew. The researcher chose three to four words from each of the picture books selected for the study participants for a total of 14 vocabulary words. These words were selected because they are considered advanced for a typical three to five-year old’s vocabulary. In the pre-survey assessment, the participants were instructed to ask their child each word and see if their child could describe what that word meant. The participant then marked “Yes they know what this means” or “No they do not know what this means.”

The pre-assessment survey indicated that the children in this study knew an average of nine of the words (64%). In particular, the children knew words that are commonly used in today’s language: roof, teacup, sip, slobber, hedgehog, violin, emptied, somersault. However, the children were less familiar with words that are uncommon in today’s language (i.e. cupboard (0%), stockings (40%), floorboard (40%), prance (20%)).

The post-assessment survey indicated that after dialogic reading, the children knew an average of 13 of the words (93%), which is an increase of five words (29%). In particular, the uncommon words were mastered at a higher level than the pre-assessment survey: cupboard (increased by 100%), stockings (increased by 40%), floorboard (increased 40%), and prance (increased by 40%). Two of the students increased their vocabulary by five words, and one student by four words. These students’ parents (the participant) indicated that the direct focus on the vocabulary words in the text had a direct impact on the vocabulary development of their child.

The data suggested that overall the students showed improvement in their vocabulary development after the dialogic reading strategy was implemented with their parents, also the
participant (see Table 1). Every student improved their individual score for the vocabulary overall (average of 29% growth). In particular, child #3 and child #5 made the most significant growth (see Table 2). Child #3 went from knowing 57% of the words to mastering 93%, a growth of 36%. Child #5 went from knowing 50% of the words to mastering 100% of the words, a growth of 100%. These two children were in the younger age of the group, four and three years old respectively. The contributing factor to their larger percent of growth, as compared to the other children, may be due to their pre-assessment survey score starting lower. They had the most room for growth based on their pre-assessment survey score.

The interviews indicated that improving knowledge of the word may be partially due to participants understanding the gaps in their children’s vocabulary. During the interview process, the participants noted that through the dialogic reading strategy, they became more aware of the individual vocabulary words in the text that their child might not know and was able to focus on these during the reading.
Table 1

Vocabulary by Word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Post-Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cupboard</td>
<td>0/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emptied</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>floorboard</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roof</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacup</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sip</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slobber</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stockings</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hedgehog</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothesline</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crooked</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prance</td>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violin</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>somersault</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Vocabulary by Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Post-Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>12/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>12/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>8/14</td>
<td>13/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>14/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>7/14</td>
<td>14/14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Print Awareness

Participants completed the Print Awareness section of the pre-assessment survey by holding a copy of the picture book and asking their child questions. The assessment consisted of 11 concepts about print that assessed the child’s level of print awareness. First, they asked their child about various parts of the book, for example, the front and back cover, the spine, the correct way to hold a book. Once the book was opened the participant asked the child to show
them where the picture was, where the words were, how to turn the pages, where to start reading, to differentiate between one word and one letter, and finally to be able to track the words as the participant reads a sentence of the text. Again, the participants marked on the assessment sheet if “Yes they know this” or “No they do not.”

This pre-assessment survey average indicated that the children in the study averaged knowledge of 7.2 out of 11 (65%) of the eleven concepts (see Table 3). In particular, participants indicated that they knew the front and back covers of the book, the correct way to hold the book, how to turn the page, the difference between the picture and the words, and where to start reading. The concepts the students did not understand were the differences between one word and one letter and how to track the words as they are read, and where the spine of the book was.

The post-assessment survey average improved to 9.2 of 11 (84%) concepts about print per child. Child #1 made the largest improvement in their concepts about print, improving four points (36%) from pre- to post-assessment survey. All other children improved by either one or two points from pre- to post-assessment survey. In particular, children seemed to understand more about the concept of one word and one letter on the page and where the spine was. The most difficult concept for the children was tracking the words as the participant read. Children of this age group that are not in formal school yet, often don’t have a knowledge of letters and reading independently yet. The concepts of individual letters, words and tracking would be expected to be a difficult concept for this age.

Overall the data suggested a marginal improvement in each child’s print awareness (see Table 4). In every concept about print, there was either an improvement from the pre-assessment survey to the post-assessment survey or no change. Three of the concepts were already mastered
by all the children (how to hold the book, how to turn the page, and where is the picture) and three more were mastered by all but one child (front cover, back cover, and where are the words). The concepts with the largest amount of growth from pre-assessment survey to post-assessment survey were on “the spine of the book” and “where to start reading.” Both of these concepts were only mastered by one child at the pre-assessment survey but were eventually mastered by all five children at the post-assessment survey.

During the interview, none of participants specifically mentioned the Print Awareness or the concepts about print in their discussion of the dialogic reading strategy.

Table 3
Print Awareness as a Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept About Print</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Post-Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front Cover</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Cover</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spine</td>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Hold the Book</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is a picture</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are the words</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Turn the Page</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to start reading</td>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is just one word</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is just one letter</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point to each word as parent reads</td>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4

Print Awareness by Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Post-Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>5/11</td>
<td>9/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>7/11</td>
<td>8/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>7/11</td>
<td>9/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>11/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>7/11</td>
<td>9/11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reading Engagement

The researcher asked the participants about how they perceived their child’s engagement with reading. The questions focused on if the child initiates reading daily, do they stay engaged, do they ask questions and discuss the story and then asked very similar questions of the participant. These questions were asked to assess if the dialogic reading strategy could improve the reading experience for both the child and the participant. A total of nine questions were asked on the pre- and post-assessment survey related to reading enjoyment. Participants could respond with an answer of “Yes,” “No,” or “Sometimes” to each question. For the purposes of the data collection tables below, the response did not count as reading enjoyment if the participant responded “No” or “Sometimes.”

The pre-assessment survey indicated that all participants enjoyed reading with their child (see Table 5). The participants initiated reading with their child (80%) more than the child initiates reading (40%). Only 40% of the participants indicated that they ask questions while reading with their child and only 60% initiate talking about the pictures in the story.

The post-assessment survey indicated that after implementing the dialogic reading strategy 100% of the participants now initiate asking questions while reading and talking about the pictures in the story. The participants initiating reading with the child did not change, but the
child initiating the reading increased by 20%. One item, in particular, was interesting in the study’s findings. At the pre-assessment survey four out of five participants indicated that their child-initiated discussion about the pictures, but at the post-assessment survey this number went down to only three out of the five. One reason that could attribute to this is that during the strategy, the participant was asking questions and the child was responding more to those questions versus asking their own questions while reading.

The data from the reading enjoyment portion of the assessments suggested an improvement in the enjoyment in reading for both the child and the parent participant. Each question showed an overall improvement from the pre-assessment survey to the post-assessment survey from the group except the question asking about the child asking questions. When examining each individual participant and their child, the average score of those who said “yes” (their child did enjoy reading), was 5.2 (58%). This improved to 7.8 (87%) on the post-assessment for the reading enjoyment of participants overall. Child #4 had the largest increase in reading enjoyment, going from 44% to 89% (see Table 6). This participant shared numerous times how much the child enjoyed this study and would remind the participant that they needed to read the books in the child’s bag.

Reading enjoyment was the area that most participants discussed in the interviews. Participants shared that their children looked forward to reading the books from the study each day and reminded the participant that they needed to read their books. Another participant shared that their child enjoyed rereading the books because they knew information about the story from the discussion they had while reading the previous day. One participant noticed that their child talked more about the story than previous reading experiences with their child.
Table 5

Reading Enjoyment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Post – Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does child initiates reading daily</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does child stay engaged until end of story</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does child ask questions</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does child enjoy reading</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does parent initiate reading daily</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does parent ask questions</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does parent initiate talking about pictures</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does parent enjoy reading with child</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

Reading Enjoyment by Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre- Assessment</th>
<th>Post-- Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>7/9</td>
<td>8/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>8/9</td>
<td>9/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>6/9</td>
<td>7/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>4/9</td>
<td>8/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>7/9</td>
<td>7/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working with the School Librarian

The interviews provided qualitative data to understand more about the role the school librarian plays in equipping participants to help their child build early literacy skills. The participants were asked how the school librarian helped them to understand the dialogic reading
strategy in order to implement it with their child. The participants responded with answers such as:

- “She went over the strategy thoroughly.”
- “She gave us tips and examples to help us use this with our child.”
- “She gave us examples of questions to ask and gave us ideas to focus on while reading.”
- “She modeled examples of personal experiences to share while reading with your child.”
- “She explained each part of the process and gave examples.”

The interview question also allowed the participants to share what else the school librarian could do to help the participant continue to build early literacy skills in their child. The participants shared a variety of ideas that they would like more knowledge and guidance on from the school librarian:

- “More examples of questions to use while reading with their child.”
- “Work with small groups of parents to model other strategies or activities to build early literacy skills.”
- “Introduce more strategies for me to use to focus my child back on the story when they lose interest.”

These findings indicate that participants are receptive and open to the expertise the school librarian can provide to help them build literacy in their child. Participants need specific strategies shared with them with detailed examples, modeling, and practice to help them feel empowered to implement it with their child. Participants viewed the school librarian as a professional expert and want to learn more.
The research conducted in this study affirms the need for early literacy intervention for children. As recognized by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), it is vital to involve parents and families in the early literacy development of children (DESE 13). Willingham (31) stressed that parents are the first models for children and Streelansky (28) agreed that the family provides the most important contexts for early literacy development. The participants in this study were eager to participate and shared positive literacy experiences at the conclusion of the study. The participants shared that the experience with the dialogic reading strategy increased their child’s engagement with the story, prompted their child to ask questions and discuss the story more, and encouraged the child to share in the reading experience as the story was reread and the child became familiar with the repetition of words or the rhymes in the story.

**How does dialogic reading impact the vocabulary development of early childhood students?**

The specific early literacy strategy investigated in this study, dialogic reading, did appear to increase important components of early literacy in the study participants’ children. As suggested by the *What Works Clearinghouse* (1), the dialogic reading strategy introduced to the participants was child-centered, interactive, and used questioning and discussion throughout the reading to engage the child. The most significant difference in the areas the study examined was in the vocabulary development of the children of the participants. Two children began the study with a higher degree of vocabulary development compared to the others (identifying 10/14 words), and still gained two new vocabulary words from the strategy. The other three children...
that had an overall lower vocabulary development gained four to seven vocabulary words over the course of the study. One participant commented in the interview that they had not considered looking for specific words in the story to help their child build vocabulary before. She felt that through the intervention of the dialogic reading strategy she would now pay attention to that with other books they read to continue to build her child’s vocabulary.

**How does dialogic reading build print awareness in early childhood students?**

The childrens’ Print Awareness section did not see as much growth as the vocabulary. Print Awareness had an overall increase of 19% in the concepts, where vocabulary mastering increased by 29%. The more basic concepts about print (front cover, back cover, picture, words, how to hold the book, and how to turn the page) were already mastered by almost all the participants’ children. The more difficult concepts about print (one word, one letter, and tracking reading) only improved by 20% overall. It is possible that this lack of improvement could be because these concepts are not embedded within the story. The concepts about print occur before the story is read, and are unrelated to the content contained in the story. This might not engage the child and therefore is not retained, or more exposure attempts are needed for the retention of the concepts to occur.

In the interviews, participants did not share any specific experiences related to print awareness. This concept did not seem to contribute to the overall study. Instead, participants indicated that their children were engaged by asking questions related to the story and pictures. The children wanted to be able to talk and share, the print awareness concepts did not appear to provide these opportunities for the participants and their children.
How does working with a school librarian equip parents to build early literacy in their child?

As Donna Shannon stated, the school librarian is to the leader of all things literacy in the school (1). The school librarian must recognize that targeting families of early childhood students is the best way to help begin that foundation for learning and reading once they enter formal school. The study participants were eager to participate and learn from the researcher. The participants wanted to help their children be successful and they recognized that the expertise of the school librarian can equip them to help their child be successful. The positive response from the participants and the growth shown in the children encourages the school librarian to continue to research strategies that could be taught to parents to aid them in working with their children.

Participants seemed to rely on the librarian for guidance on how to complete the strategy, then also indicated that they would like more strategies from the librarian. These participants were already active members in the Parents as Teacher program at the Harrisonville Early Childhood Center and have shown to be receptive to parent education. The Parents as Teachers program in Harrisonville offers several opportunities for parents throughout the year to learn from experts in various fields related to the education and well-being of children.

Implications for Practice

School librarians can use the knowledge gained from this study to validate the need for their expertise in the field of early childhood education. School librarians are knowledgeable in the field of literacy and this knowledge should be shared with parents of early childhood students to prepare them for the rigor of today’s elementary classrooms.
The five sets of participants in this study were open to learning more and relied on the school librarian to provide specific information, examples, and models to give them the confidence to carry out the strategy with their child. Providing parents with a handout or brochure that is specific to the information shared can help parents to feel supported and reinforced when they are at home implementing the strategy with their child.

**Action Planning**

The dialogic reading strategy is multi-faceted and each area within the strategy could be researched and explored more. However, the print awareness area may need more research into how this can be taught most effectively to children. How can these concepts about print be taught in a more engaging and seamless way when reading with children?

The reading enjoyment area of the study could also benefit from additional research. After examining the data collected, the questions related to reading enjoyment could have been more specific to the reading habits in the home before the study versus after. More specific questions asked up front may have provided more concrete data on the increase in reading enjoyment once completing the study. Specifically requesting baseline data how many times the participants read per week with their child, how often does the participant choose the book to read, how often does the child choose the book, and how many minutes does your child stay engaged in a reading experience could have provided more data for this area of the research.

Future action for the school librarian can be to explore other researched strategies that could be shared with parents to help them build literacy skills in their child. The openness of the participants to learn and implement the strategy and their suggestion to teach them more strategies should be obliged. Using the resources of the *Parents as Teachers* program, the school librarian has a ready group of parents to instruct and implement more early literacy strategies.
with and could positively impact the reading readiness of many early childhood students before they enter formal school.
WORKS CITED


Shannon, Donna. "The School Library Media Specialist and Early Literacy Programs.”


Tadesse, S., & Washington, P. "Book Ownership and Young Children's Learning.”


Whitehurst, Grover J. and Christopher J. Lonigan. “Child Development and Emergent Literacy”


# APPENDIX A

## PRE-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

### Pre-Survey of Parents

Parent Name: ________________________________________

Date: ______________________

Age of child: ________________  Sex of child: _______________

Please ask your child what the following vocabulary words mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Word</th>
<th>Yes they know what this word means</th>
<th>No they do not know what this word means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cupboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emptied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>floorboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roof</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slobber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stockings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hedgehog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothesline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crooked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>somersault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please ask your child to show you the following parts of the book provided and concepts of reading within the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept of Print</th>
<th>Yes they know this</th>
<th>No they do not know this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Front cover of book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back cover of book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spine of book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct way to hold the book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a picture is in the book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where the words are in the book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to turn the page of the book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to start reading on first page of text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is just one word on a page text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is just one letter on a page of text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point to each word as parent reads the page of text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answer the following questions on how you and your child respond to reading activities in the home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your child initiate you reading to them daily?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you read with your child do they keep listening and engaged until the end of the story?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your child ask questions as you read to them?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your child point to images in the pictures of a story and initiate talking about them?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think your child enjoys reading with you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you initiate reading with your child daily?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

POST-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Post-Survey of Parents

Parent Name: ____________________________________________

Date: ______________________

Age of child: _______________ Sex of child: _____________

Please ask your child what the following vocabulary words mean.

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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</table>
Correct way to hold the book
What a picture is in the book
Where the words are in the book
How to turn the page of the book
Where to start reading on first page of text
Where is just one word on a page text
Where is just one letter on a page of text
Point to each word as parent reads the page of text

Answer the following questions on how you and your child respond to reading activities in the home.

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<td>Question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you enjoy reading with your child?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How did the instruction from the school librarian in the dialogic reading strategy help you to engage your child in reading the provided books?
APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did learning the dialogic reading strategy help you with your reading experience with your child?

2. How do you think this strategy engaged your child in the reading more than previous reading experiences?

3. How did the school librarian help you understand the strategy in order to implement it with your child?

4. What else could the school librarian do to help you build early literacy skills with your child?
APPENDIX D

HUMAN SUBJECTS DOCUMENTATION

Expedited Review
9/14/2018
Protocol Number: 1173

Dear Jodi Fischer:

Your research project, ‘Implementing Dialogic Reading As An Early Literacy Strategy’, was approved by the University of Central Missouri Human Subjects Review Committee on 9/14/2018. You may collect data for this project until 9/14/2019. Your informed consent is also approved until 9/14/2019.

If an adverse event (such as harm to a research participant) occurs during your project, you must IMMEDIATELY stop the research unless stopping the research would cause more harm to the participant. If an adverse event occurs during your project, notify the committee IMMEDIATELY at researchreview@ucmo.edu.

The following will help to guide you. Please refer to this letter often during your project.

- If you wish to make changes to your study, submit an “Amendment” through Blackboard under the “Amendment and Renewals” tab. You may not implement changes to your study without prior approval of the UCM Human Subjects Review Committee.

- If the nature or status of the risks of participating in this research project change, submit an “Amendment” through Blackboard under the “Amendment and Renewals” tab. You may not implement changes to your study without prior approval of the UCM Human Subjects Review Committee.

- If you are nearing the expiration date for collecting data for this project (9/14/2019) and you have not finished collecting data:

  1. submit your project application via Blackboard under the “Amendment and Renewals” tab (include any revisions and/or amendments approved since you submitted your application initially)

  AND

  2. submit a “Renewal Report” through Blackboard under the “Final/Renewal Report” tab.

- When you have completed your collection of data, please submit the “Final Report” found on Blackboard under the “Final/Renewal Report” tab.

If your protocol contained a consent form and the consent form was approved, you will receive an additional e-mail. The e-mail will contain a copy of your consent form with an approval stamp in the top right corner. Do not begin data collection until you receive a copy of your consent form with an approval stamp. Note: One year after your protocol's approval date, a request for renewal OR a final project report is required.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at researchreview@ucmo.edu.

Sincerely,

Equal Education and Employment Opportunity
CONSENT FORM

Identification of Researchers: This research is being done by Jodi Fischer, school librarian. I am with the University of Central Missouri.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to find out whether the dialogic reading strategy helps parents improve the early literacy support given in the home when reading with their child.

Request for Participation: We are inviting you to participate in a study on the dialogic reading strategy. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to stop at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may simply skip them. You may withdraw your data at the end of the study. If you wish to do this, please tell me before you turn in your materials.

Exclusions: Participations must be parents of children ages 3-5 who participate in Harrisonville ECC

Description of Research Method: This study involves completing a short presurvey about your child. The survey will ask you about your child’s vocabulary, their print awareness, and their enjoyment of reading with you. You will then be given an instructional training on how to implement dialogic reading with your child and four books to practice this strategy in the home over a four week study period. You will also have a chance to ask questions in a mid-study interview. At the end of the four week study you will complete a post-survey about your child’s vocabulary, print awareness, and enjoyment of reading with you after implementing the dialogic reading strategy.

Privacy: All of the information we collect will be kept confidential. You will not be specifically identified in the research paper. You will have the choice to share your experiences with other study participants.

Explanation of Risks: The risks associated with participating in this study are similar to the risks of everyday life.

Explanation of Benefits: You will benefit from participating in this study by getting training in dialogic reading, an early literacy strategy. The books used in the study will be yours to keep at the conclusion of the study for your family to continue to read together.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Jodi Fischer at jrf21820@ucmo.edu or at 816-509-7511. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the UCM Research Compliance Officer at (660) 543-8562.

If you would like to participate, please sign a copy of this letter and return it to me. The other copy is for you to keep.

I have read this letter and agree to participate.

Signature: ___________________________ Printed name: ___________________________

Date: ___________________________

Person obtaining consent: ___________________________
What is dialogic reading?

Dialogic reading is a shared reading strategy where the adult helps the child become the teller of the story.

The adult becomes:

- the questioner
- the listener
- the audience

Children need to be actively engaged in order to become a reader.

Why dialogic reading?

- Supports oral language development
- Supports emergent literacy
- Children become actively engaged in the story
- Adults can determine if the child is understanding the story
- Research supports its effectiveness as a early literacy strategy

Questioning Techniques

Dialogic reading uses prompts to engage the child in the story. One technique of questioning uses the acronym CROWD for question types.

- C – completion questions
  - When reading a repetitive or familiar line from the book and leave off the final phrase or word and allow the child to fill it in
- R – recall questions
  - Ask the child to recall an event from the story
- O – open-ended questions
  - Ask a question that might ask for the child’s opinion or ideas about a key event in the story
- W – wh-questions
  - Who, what, when, where questions about events or characters in the story
- D – distancing questions
  - Ask the child think like a character from the story and explain how they might have felt or why they might have done something that took place in the story

Reminder

Be relaxed, keep it fun, vary the questions with each reading, and follow your child’s interests in the story.