

**EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM PARENTS'
ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION, PERCEPTIONS
OF CHILD LITERACY DEVELOPMENT, AND
CHILD-ORIENTED LITERACY ACTIVITIES**

THESIS

**Presented to the Graduate Council of
Southwest Texas State University
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements**

For Developmental and Adult Education

Master of Arts

By

Ursula A. Parker, B.S.

**San Marcos, Texas
August, 2000**

COPYRIGHT

by

Ursula A. Parker

2000

DEDICATION

First giving honor to God who has showered me with his grace and mercy. He, who has given me strength to endure and persevere through this humbling and rewarding experience.

This research project is dedicated to my parents, Charles and Mamie McArthur. Thank you so much for your tuition assistance, encouragement, and your assistance in the final design of this research project. Mom, you are awesome! I can never thank you enough for all of the late nights on the phone, disruptions on your job, and providing a shoulder to cry on. If it had not been for you, I might not have finished school. Syrup, thanks for always bragging about your one and only daughter. That's how I knew you were proud of me.

To my husband, Reggie. You're the man!!!! I am utterly grateful to you for working extra jobs and hours so that I could go to school full-time and we would continue having a roof over our heads. Thank you for the cards and notes I would find in my car or in the kitchen late at night. Thank you so much for taking care of me when I didn't take care of myself.

I love you all and again thank you. This book belongs to you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks be to God for his everlasting mercy and his continued showers of blessings.

I want to thank my committee chair, Dr. Emily Payne, for her guidance, direction, and availability wherever and whenever I needed her. Thanks to Dr. Lyman and Dr. Ross-Gordon for seeing my potential and demanding my best. I am grateful for that because this project is definitely something to be proud of.

Thanks to Tamara Thornton, Betty DeRoche, and Mamie McArthur for your assistance in this project. Thanks Christine at Afterwords for your editing expertise and a host of others for just acting as my soundboard.

Thanks to the Even Start Family Literacy Program and its' participants for allowing me to be nosy.

Bless You All!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	ix
Chapter	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	
Even Start Family Literacy Program	
Questions Addressed in this Study	
Rationale	
Significance of the Study	
Delimitations	
Definitions of Terms	
Summary	
II LITERATURE REVIEW	10
Even Start Family Literacy Program	
Parental Attitudes	
Parental Perceptions of Early Childhood Literacy Development	
Literacy Development	
Piaget's Child Development Theory	
Other Theories on Early Child Development	
Emergent Literacy	
Literacy Activities Parents Engage in with Their Children	
Summary	
III METHODOLGY	35
Data Collection	
Setting	
Data Collection Strategies	
Attitudinal Inventory	
Parental Interviews	
Home Literacy Material Inventory	
Home Literacy Engagement Activity Form	
Observations	
Procedures	
Data Analysis	
Summary	

IV	RESULTS	45
	Analysis of Data	
	Analysis of Inventory Data	
	Analysis of Interview Data	
	Case Studies	
	Summary	
V	DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS	109
	Generalizations & Discussions	
	Parental Attitudes Toward Education	
	Parental Perception of Early Childhood Literacy Development	
	Parent/Child Engagement In Literacy Activities	
	Limitations of the Study	
	Recommendations for Further Study	
	Implications For Instruction	
	Summary	
	REFERENCES	134
	LIST OF APPENDICES	142
	Appendix A	Adult Consent Form
	Appendix B	Statistical Demographics-Even Start Family Literacy Program
	Appendix C	Attitudinal Inventory
	Appendix D	Interview Questions
	Appendix E	Expanded Interview Questions
	Appendix F	Research and Interview Question Matrix
	Appendix G	Home Literacy Material Inventory
	Appendix H	Literacy Engagement Activity Form
	Appendix I	Observation Form
	Appendix J	Even Start Family Literacy Statistical Comparison of National and Study Group
	Appendix K	Matrix Example

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Parental Attitudes	47
Table 2	Perception of Literacy Development	48
Table 3	Literacy Participation with child	50
Table 4	Parental Interview Demographics	54
Table 5	Previous Educational Experience	55
Table 6	Category-School Importance.....	57
Table 7	Parental Teaching Behaviors	58
Table 8	Parental opinions on why some children learn to read and write well in school	60
Table 9	Activities parents can do to help children birth to 2 years learn t read and write	62
Table 10	Activities parents can do to help children 2 to 7 years learn to read and write	63
Table 11	Activities parents can do to help children 7 to 11 years learn to read and write	64
Table 12	Home literacy material inventory for adults	66
Table 13	Home literacy material inventory for children	67
Table 14	Literacy activities engaged by parent and child	68
Table 15	Jackie’s inventory responses on parental attitudes.....	71
Table 16	Jackie’s inventory responses to perception of literacy development	72
Table 17	Jackie’s inventory responses to literacy participation with child	73
Table 18	Jackie’s home literacy materials	74
Table 19	Jackie’s literacy activities with Candy	75
Table 20	Jackie’s observed parental verbal and physical behaviors	79
Table 21	Donika’s inventory responses on parental attitudes	80
Table 22	Donika’s inventory responses on perceptions of literacy development	81
Table 23	Donika’s inventory responses on literacy participation with Michael	82
Table 24	Donika’s home literacy materials	83
Table 25	Donika’s literacy activities with Michael	84
Table 26	Donika’s observed parental verbal and physical behaviors	89
Table 27	Laddie’s inventory responses on parental attitudes	91
Table 28	Laddie’s inventory responses on perception of literacy development	92
Table 29	Laddie’s inventory responses on literacy participation with Alicia	93
Table 30	Laddie’s home literacy materials	94
Table 31	Laddie’s literacy activities with Alicia	95

Table 32	Laddie’s observed parental verbal and physical behaviors	99
Table 33	Alejandra’s inventory responses on parental attitudes ..	100
Table 34	Alejandra’s inventory responses to perception of literacy development	101
Table 35	Alejandra’s inventory responses on literacy participation with Michael	102
Table 36	Alejandra’s home literacy materials	103
Table 37	Alejandra’s literacy activities with Michael	104
Table 38	Alejandra’s observed parental verbal and physical behaviors	107

ABSTRACT

EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION, PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND CHILD-ORIENTED LITERACY ACTIVITIES

by

Ursula A. Parker (B.S.)
Southwest Texas State University
August 2000

SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: Dr. Emily Miller Payne

For young children who come from a family background where low literacy and under-education prevail, there exists a need for research to examine parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities parents engage in with their children.

This study was designed to examine parental attitudes toward education and perceptions of early childhood literacy development in an Even Start Family Literacy Program. This study also documented the literacy activities parents engage in with their children.

The instrumentation used to collect the data were an attitudinal inventory, parental interviews, home literacy inventory, home literacy engagement form, and observations. The data analysis consisted of emerging themes and patterns to develop naturalistic generalizations.

The results indicate that Even Start Family Literacy Program parents have positive attitudes toward education and that their attitudes are shaped by prior educational experiences. Parental perceptions of early childhood literacy development findings indicate parents are aware that their children are learning and how they are learning. Although parents are unfamiliar with Piaget's specific stages of development, parents are supporting and encouraging their children's emergent literacy behaviors. Reading is the most reported literacy activity parents are engaging in with their children. Parents are also participating in literacy activities that they are unaware promote literacy development. Such activities include cooking, grocery shopping, and pretend play.

“There is increasing recognition that literacy learning is a socio-cultural phenomenon and that the way in which learning is intended, meanings ascribed to literacy, and literacy activities in which members of a cultural group engage are determined by beliefs and values held by those participants” (Clay, 1993).

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Research (Auerbach, 1989; Anderson, 1995a) has revealed that children whose home literacy practices and activities resemble those of the school have more academic success. It is therefore reasoned that parents who engage in fewer literacy development activities similar to the school environment tend to have children who enter formal education with limited skills and subsequently have difficulty in the classroom and progress unsatisfactorily (Auerbach, 1989).

Furthermore, parents' attitudes toward and perceptions of learning development will affect what types of literacy activities and experiences their children will have in their care. When young children come from a family background where functional literacy and under-education prevail, there exists a need for research to examine parental attitudes toward education and perceptions of early childhood literacy development among low-income and low-literacy families. Also, there is a need to establish a well-planned family resource center that will serve parent and child as a unit and at the same time break the cycle of illiteracy (Parks, 1995).

Even Start Family Literacy Program

Even Start is a federal program authorized as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, amended by the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary Act of 1988 and implemented in 1989 (Tao, 1997). It is designed to address the literacy development of children who are between the ages of birth and seven years and whose

parents are of low-income and low adult literacy. The program intends to prepare children for success in formal education, increase the literacy level of parents, and increase positive educational and social interaction between parent and child (Tao, 1997).

The mission of Even Start is to "...help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of the Nation's low-income families by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program" (Ricciuti, St. Pierre, & Tao, 1997, p. 3).

Questions Addressed in this Study

This qualitative case study examined parental attitudes toward education and their perceptions of early childhood literacy development in an Even Start Family Literacy Program. The case study also examined the literacy activities and practices the parents engage in with their children. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are parental attitudes toward education?
2. What are parental perceptions of early childhood literacy development? How and when do the parents think developmental changes occur?
3. What literacy activities do parents engage in with their children?

Rationale

Cunningham, Fitzgerald, and Spiegel's (1991) study on the relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of emergent literacy suggests that limited research exists on parental perceptions of literacy development in early childhood years, and few studies are available that examine the views of parents with low literacy levels. Anderson (1995b) states that it is very important to find out what parents from outside the

mainstream culture believe about literacy development, and how these beliefs affect their children's literacy development.

In order to explore parental attitudes and perceptions of early childhood literacy development, a qualitative case study research design was utilized. The following descriptive study was an attempt to examine what low-income, low-literate parents in an Even Start Family Literacy Program know and do rather than to perform a comparison or seek relationship between variables. The qualitative case study design allows new insights and questions to emerge which may be otherwise restricted in dissimilar methodologies.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to present the adults' perspective and responsiveness to their education and their children's literacy development. This study could prove to be beneficial to programs, such as Even Start Family Literacy, whose primary focus is adult education, child development, and parenting.

Adult educators need to be aware of the needs, beliefs, and attitudes of adult learners. Educators struggle daily with teaching strategies and motivational tools to assist adult learners in their educational and personal development. The educators' awareness can be instrumental in developing and adjusting teaching strategies and instruction that are suited for adult learners' needs and attitudes toward their own education as well as their children's learning.

This study explored low-income, low-literate parents' views regarding the importance of education and parents' ability to provide a literacy-rich environment. For parents needing assistance in providing a literacy-rich environment or accessing literacy

resources, Cunningham et al. (1991) implied that these parents can be equipped with practical and concrete literacy activities that can be used inside and outside the home. For example, Shockley (1994) reported that parent-child read-alouds not only stimulate listening comprehension skills but they can also create a positive attitude toward reading. Enz and Searfoss (1996) suggest that while riding in a car or bus, parents and their children can read traffic signs, billboards, and street signs. Also, methods can be developed to inform parents about upcoming educational events as well as provide brochures that explain “how to” participate in these educational events. For example, programs can present information on how to access the public library or a calendar of events can be displayed that will inform parents about family fieldtrips sponsored by existing social and educational services that will enhance child literacy development.

Knowing parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of literacy development, and the types of literacy activities used in the home, program directors can implement literacy development methods that are based on the views and knowledge of the parent and that simultaneously increase the future academic success of the child. Further, program directors can improve their approach and methods toward adult education and increase the parents’ self-concept and self-esteem as their children’s first teacher. This study explored current low-income, low-literate parents’ engagement in literacy activities with their children, even though they may be unaware that those activities are conducive to literacy development. This study also explored low-income, low-literate parents’ participation in their children’s early literacy development. McCarthy (1997) and Elish-Piper’s (1997) research revealed that some parents view education as the responsibility of the school and believe that early child literacy

development is unimportant. These parents can be encouraged to modify their attitudes and behaviors in order to create a positive literacy environment that will greatly enhance their children's academic success.

According to Briggs (1994), the National Association for the Education of Young Children affirms that it is very important that adults create settings where children can engage in print-related activities during play, and hear and see adults read, write, and converse in their daily lives. So, for parents who have a hands-off approach toward their children's literacy development, the importance of home literacy can be explained and demonstrated. Further, the implications of not involving themselves in the literacy development of their children can be explored and analyzed.

The outcomes of this study may have a positive impact on the environment in which the child lives. The discovery that parents need to know practical literacy methods to teach their children how to access literacy resources, such as a public library, is a progression toward emergent literacy. Aspects that are not so easily resolved, such as the parents' possible indifference to home literacy practices, may be challenging, but having a working knowledge of how the parent perceives his or her role as a teacher provides a foundation upon which educators can build.

Delimitations

The study is delimited by certain aspects of the research design:

1. The sample population was not randomly selected, but was made up of one intact group of adults (parents) who voluntarily participate in an Even Start Family Literacy Program. Results may not be generalizable to other populations.

2. The research relied on self-reporting from participants to gather information to answer the research questions.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this study, a number of terms with potentially multiple meanings as well as new terms were used which relate to family literacy and socioeconomic conditions. The following terms are clarified to best represent the meanings as they are applied to this study:

adult education: “services or instruction below the postsecondary level for individuals who have attained 16 years of age; who are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; who lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable them to function effectively in society or who do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or who are unable to speak, read, or write the English language” (Texas Education Agency, 2000, p. 1).

early childhood education: “high quality, intensive services to meet the early education of children from birth through seven years of age, designed to enhance development and prepare children for success in school” (Ricciuti, St. Pierre, & Tao, 1997, p. 4).

eligible child: “from birth through age seven, of any individual described [below]” (Ricciuti et al. 1997, p. 27).

eligible parent: “who [is] eligible for participation in an adult basic education program of the Adult Education Act or who [is] within the State’s compulsory school

attendance age range, so long as a local educational agency provides the basic education component required” (Ricciuti et al. 1997, p. 27).

emergent literacy: children’s early reading and writing experiences in the home and community that precede conventional or formal education (Briggs, 1994).

illiteracy: individuals 14 and over who report they cannot read or write English or who cannot read or write in their native language (Parks, 1995).

literacy: “an individual’s ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one’s goals, and develop one’s knowledge and potential” (Office of Technology Assessment, 1993, p. 3).

low-income: as defined by Even Start Evaluation as a measure of families most in need. Families with an annual income of less than \$9,000 (Ricciuti et al, 1997).

low-literacy: parents with an 8th grade or lower educational attainment or parents who speak languages other than English in the home (Tao, 1997).

mainstream educators: teachers and administrators who believe that education begins in the home and for children to be academically successful they should have encountered certain literacy experiences before entering formal education.

parenting education: “high quality, intensive services for parents designed to enhance parent-child relationships and help parents understand and support their child’s growth and development” (Ricciuti et al. 1997, p. 4).

reading readiness: an instructional period which prepares children for reading.

Summary

Student achievement is greater when the home and school environment are congruent. Research has shown that when home and school differ or are in conflict, the student suffers. This conflict has often been attributed to parental attitudes toward education and their involvement, or lack of involvement, in literacy activities with their children.

There exists a need to examine parental attitudes toward education and perceptions of early childhood development among low-income and low literacy parents. It is also essential to know what, if any, literacy activities parents participate in with their children. Several research studies (Briggs, 1994; Enz & Searfoss, 1996; Fields, Lee, & Spangler, 1991; Hsu, 1995; McCarthy, 1997; Parks, 1995) have shown that parents play a vital role in the academic success of their children. Therefore, it is important to know parental attitudes toward education and the literacy activities engaged in with the child in the home so that efforts can be made to build on or potentially alter existing parental knowledge and behaviors.

Programs are available to assist low-income, low-literacy parents with creating literacy experiences that support the future academic success of their children. These programs, such as the Even Start Family Literacy Program, can also address the literacy needs of the parents. The Even Start Family Literacy Program is a federally funded program that provides a comprehensive set of services promoting development for parent and child as a unit. The program is designed to address the literacy development of children between birth and seven years who are of low-income, low literate parents. The Even Start Family Literacy Program prepares children for success in formal education and

simultaneously increases the knowledge of early childhood development, literacy proficiency, and employment skills of the parents.

This qualitative case study examined parental attitudes toward education, parental perception of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities parents engage in with their children in an Even Start Family Literacy Program.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed in this chapter examined The Even Start Family Literacy Program and four additional family literacy programs. This chapter also explored three important issues that set the context for the study: parental attitudes toward education, parental perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities parents engage in with their children.

Even Start Family Literacy Program

Even Start Family Literacy Program, a federal program, was authorized as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and amended by the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Implementation Amendment of 1988. The Even Start program was amended once again in 1991 after Congress passed the Literacy Act of 1991 (Tao, 1997).

Even Start, a family-centered program, administers educational services to both parents and children as a unit. The program not only concentrates on the literacy development of children between the ages of birth and seven years, but also on their parents who are of low-income and low adult literacy. Even Start's fundamental task is to "...help break the [intergenerational] cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of the Nation's low-income families by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education. This program promotes achievement of the National Education Goals, to assist child and adult from low-income families to achieve to challenging State Content standards" (Ricciuti et al. 1997, p. 3).

The objectives of Even Start are to help parents become full partners in their child's education; provide high quality child development activities to prepare children for school; provide adult education that integrates life skills, academics, and job readiness training; and help parents in developing strategies and acquiring knowledge in child development and learning practices (Ricciuti et al. 1997).

Even Start population.

The 1994-1995 National Evaluation of Even Start revealed that the typical family participant was composed of two parents between the ages of 20–39 with three to four children, and the average age of the child was 4.4 years. Teen parents headed nine percent of the families. The participants in Even Start programs frequently cited improving their educational status as the major reason for participating, followed by their desire to learn English and improve their child's contingency for academic success.

The ethnic composition of Even Start families has undergone a dramatic change since 1989. In 1989, Hispanic families represented 22% of participants. They currently constitute the largest group at 36 %. African-American family participation decreased from 36% in 1989 to 23%, and white family participation decreased from 40% to 34% (Ricciuti et al. 1997). Parents who are primarily Spanish speakers increased as well. As of 1994, 29% of Even Start parents spoke Spanish and English in the home and 37 % spoke Spanish only in the home (Ricciuti et al. 1997).

The income level of parents in Even Start has remained low. According to an Event Start study don in 1994, 72% of families had a total income of less than \$11,999. Fifty-seven percent of those made an annual income of less than \$9,000. Family income of \$9,000 or less is defined as low income, and those at this income level or below are

targeted as families most in need by the National Even Start Family Literacy Program. Most of those individuals reported government assistance as their primary source of income, and only 27% are employed at the time they entered the program (Ricciuti et al. 1997).

The educational status of the parents varies. Twenty-eight percent completed the eighth grade or less, and approximately 11% of the adults had a high school diploma or GED upon entering the program (Ricciuti et al. 1997).

Even Start program components.

The Even Start Family Literacy Program provides services in three core areas: adult education, parenting education, and early child development. According to Even Start program guidelines, adult education is composed of adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English as a second language (ESL) education. Sub-component areas involve more functional and social-context literacy approaches such as money management and health. ABE focuses on adults whose reading and writing skills are below the eighth grade equivalency level (Office of Technology Assessment [OTA], 1993). ASE refers to instruction for adults whose skills were at the high school level. The focus is on attaining a high school diploma either through coursework or passing the GED examination (OTA, 1993). ESL education teaches reading, writing, and speaking English to non-English speakers. ESL parents are complex learners to serve due to varying degrees of English proficiency and literacy in their native language. They also account for the fastest growing portion of the adult literacy program in the United States (OTA, 1993).

Parenting education focuses on parent issues and concerns. These issues include child development, health, safety, and household management (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 1997) These areas reinforce literacy skills of the parent as well as include activities that could be conducted in the home. Also included in the parenting education component is parent and child interaction time (PACT). This allows parents opportunities to observe and demonstrate positive parenting techniques (TEA, 1997).

The Even Start Family Literacy Program core components are integrated to provide a comprehensive set of services targeting the development of parent and child as a unit. Hausman, Seppanen, & Weiss's (1990) research project described innovative family literacy models that provided similar services. The four innovative models are Missouri's *Parent as Teachers*, Minnesota's *Early Childhood Family Education Program*, Connecticut's *Parent Education and Support Centers*, and Maryland's *Family Support Centers*.

These programs stress the importance of strengthening and empowering the family. The Missouri, Minnesota, and Connecticut models emphasize strengthening the child's early learning environment by reinforcing the parent's role as the child's first teacher and lifelong teacher. The success of these three programs is based on their ability to provide practical information to parents regarding early childhood development, identify elements that may interfere with normal development, and help parents provide a home environment that stimulated and encouraged the child's physical, intellectual, and social development (Hausman, et al. 1990).

Due to the high incident of teen pregnancy in the state, Maryland's Family Support Centers primary target group is teen parents. The Centers not only emphasize

strengthening the child's early learning environment ,but also provide support and educational services that can reduce pregnancies among adolescents, assist adolescent parents to become better parents, and assure the healthiness and development of children of adolescent parents as well. Support is also given to encourage the young parents to remain in school, and training for future employment is provided.

The four innovative models' ability to achieve their goals is connected to eliciting how parents view education, their involvement in literacy activities, and their knowledge of child development. The four models have established a base of parental views and understanding that has led to the design of a program utilizing the data collected to create preventative programs. The programs' framework is designed to assist parent and child in acquiring knowledge and training (individually and holistically) for their development, and in making definitive choices for their livelihood.

The Even Start Family Literacy Program and the four innovative models integrate parent education, early childhood development, and adult education to help parents become full partners in their children's education while increasing their own academic and social development. The programs were developed with the realization that parents play a vital role in the success of their children, and the needs of the parents were directly related to that success (Parks, 1995).

Parental Attitudes Toward Education

To increase children's chances to succeed in school, parents themselves should possess literacy awareness that will enhance their children's development and the knowledge of how to provide a literacy-enriched environment (Cunningham, et al.1991; Hsu, 1995). There are obstacles that prevent parents from providing a literacy-enriched

environment that is consistent with mainstream society's views and beliefs regarding early child education.

Parents' attitudes toward education can be one obstacle (Sherman, 1990). Many adults seem to be skeptical about their ability to learn, which may inadvertently generate low self-confidence and self-esteem. The beliefs and attitudes that parents have with respect to literacy have a strong effect on their child's motivation to learn (Baker, Serpell, & Sonnenschein, 1995). A study by Schaefer (1991) indicates that the parents' sense of efficacy and relevant knowledge positively correlates with the child's motivation and literacy development. The study also indicates that a negative correlation exists between parental "authoritarianism," motivation, and low literacy development. Parents should view themselves as having the knowledge and the ability to teach their children regardless of the parents' academic achievement.

The implications are that in order to reach the children, the parents must be reached as well. Research findings on the evaluation of Even Start Family Literacy Programs show that children whose parents receive a substantial amount of parenting education have increased vocabularies over children whose parents receive minimal parenting education (McKee & Rhett, 1995). Therefore, direct instruction of parents on how to support their child's educational development could have a positive effect on their child's literacy gains.

Research conducted by Cunningham et al. (1991) suggests other attitudinal barriers exist. Those barriers may include that parents may place less importance on early child education or may believe early child education is important, but are unable to nurture that development due to lack of resources or lack of access to resources.

McCarthy's (1997) and Elish-Piper's (1997) research reveals that parents who do not intervene in their child's education usually view education as the responsibility of the school.

Parents' attitudes may also be derived from their own negative educational experiences (OTA, 1993). The Even Start Family Literacy Program guidelines specify that parents who participate must be eligible for the adult education program under the Adult Education Act; therefore, those adults must have low literacy skills and need assistance to attain their high school diploma or an equivalency. Also, parents can participate if they have a high school diploma but need assistance to increase their literacy skills. Because such parents view their own education as lacking, they tend to not view themselves as teachers or providers of knowledge for their children (Neuman, & Roskos, 1993). Unintentional as this may be, parental low self-confidence may interfere with their ability to provide a literacy-enriched environment for their children.

Parental Perception of Early Childhood Development

Many parents may not be aware of the significance of early literacy behaviors or recognize the developmental stages their children exhibit (Baker et al., 1995). Anderson (1995b), for example, in his effort to determine parental perception of literacy development, discovered that Chinese-Canadian and Indo-Canadian parents, in white-collar and blue-collar occupations respectively, place little importance on their knowledge of literacy development.

According to Nino (1979), high socioeconomic and literate parents reported earlier ages at which a baby starts to see, understand, and identify the mother compared to

low-income and low-literate parents. Nino's (1979) research reveals that high-literate parents place more emphasis on supporting and encouraging emergent literacy behaviors than low-literate parents. Research by Cunningham et al. (1991) supports Nino's (1979) findings.

However, Anderson (1995a) found that high-literate parents do not always support an emergent literacy orientation and that low-literacy parents do. Low-literate parents place strong emphasis on reading to their children at infancy and beyond. Shared reading is also identified as an important activity. As the child ages and develops (talking), the child reads (reading behaviors) to the parent.

Regardless of parental literacy achievement, the parent's lack of knowledge or interest in early literacy development could decrease the child's desire to participate in literacy activities (Baker et al., 1995).

Parental perceptions and/or knowledge of specific literacy activities for literacy development are circumspect. Parental views on pretend play fall along a continuum of having no educational value to having educational value with certain constraints (Neumann & Roskos, 1993). Research by Neuman and Roskos (1993) discussed how parents initially believe that pretend play is undisciplined and hinders learning. Following parental participation in a pretend play activity, parents come to realize the value it has in literacy development. Pretend play encourages verbalization of ideas, imagination, playfulness, and creative discoveries (Shaefer, 1991; Wassermann, 1992). Morrison & Rusher (1999) asserted that pretend play is a process that is used to learn, support growth and development, and promote practice for future roles. It is through play that children construct meaning of their environment.

Understanding the stages of cognitive development and that children learn by exploring, discovering, and imitating, parents can provide a wide variety of experiences and literacy materials that aid in the future academic success of their children (Piaget, 1959).

Literacy Development

Holdaway's (1979) theory of literacy development contends that literacy development is a process that begins at birth and continues throughout one's life. Literacy development is said to be achieved in everyday contexts of the home, community, and school through meaningful and functional experiences.

Teale (1982) viewed literacy as the result of a child's involvement in reading and writing, actively modeled by more literate individuals. But because they differ in their rates of literacy achievement, children should not be pressured or placed on a predetermined schedule for literacy development. Some children have considerable information about reading and writing before they enter formal education. Even though children's strengths in literacy vary, they have a general command of their language and a sizable vocabulary (Hsu, 1995). Children are said to know the difference between drawing and writing and associate books with reading. Also, children are aware of how they are learning and pretend to read by labeling pictures in a book (Hsu, 1995).

Research (Baker et al., 1995; Morrow & Strickland, 1989; Saracho, 1997) has revealed that some children read early; that is, they read before entering school without formal instruction. Children learn to read and understand the functions of print as a result of their informal everyday experiences in their environment. They become acclimated with the different forms of text and how text is used (McGee & Richgels, 1990). Those

experiences include being read to, finding their favorite food label at the store, or seeing how their name is written.

Children as young as three are able to read common words in their environment such as McDonald's, Burger King, Pepsi cans, cereal boxes, and stop signs (Sulzby, 1986). Children relate these common words by paying attention to the context and what people are saying and doing (McGee & Richgels, 1990). Environmental print helps children discover how the different forms of print are organized and used as well as what it is used for. In McGee and Richgels (1990), a preschooler demonstrates his knowledge of what a story looks like by filling a page with lines of writing. The preschooler then reads the story.

According to Morrow (1997), young children also demonstrate their knowledge of reading by their handling of books. Young children seem to know where to begin reading, the difference between picture and print, and how to turn the page. Children who have had stories read to them invariably take a favorite book and read it to themselves even though they are not "reading it." Emergent literacy research (Heath & Mangiola, 1991; Fields, Lee, & Spangler, 1991; Hsu, 1995; Morrow, 1997) considers this reading-like behavior a very significant stage in reading development. Young children engage in pretend reading before they can talk or speak in complete sentences (Holdaway, 1979).

According to the research by Fields et al. (1991), children recreate stories as they understand them, using language at their command. At first, young children pay little attention to the print on the page but instead focus on the aspects of book reading such as turning the page, holding the book upright, and reading (looking) from left to right. As

they begin to focus on print, children began examine the writing in the books, and later noticing print everywhere.

When the child begins to focus on print, it is important that he or she sees the page that is being read. As the child follows along, he or she has an opportunity to match the printed symbol with the spoken language. The reading process begins by assigning one letter per syllable heard, and then the child eventually learns that certain letters are consistently correlated with certain words. Soon he or she will move to working on the concept that letters stand for certain sounds (Fields et al, 1991; Morrow, 1997).

Although recognition of print demonstrates the first stages of reading and writing development in early childhood, the child simultaneously acquires interest about the forms and conventions of print (Morrow, 1997). The child soon realizes that markings on a paper could be meaningful and fun and their interest in writing intensifies.

Sulzby (1985) described children's writing behaviors in six categories that reflect their attempts at writing but do not represent a chronological order. The categories are: use of drawing for writing, scribbling drawing, use of letter-like forms, use of well-learned units, invented spelling, and conventional writing.

Children, during the drawing stage, draw pictures when prompted to write a story or names. They also read the drawings as if there were print on the page. Writing by scribbling is a stage in which children appear to be writing. There is no differentiation between drawing and writing, but to the child the scribbles are writing. The child also models adult behavior of scribbling left to right on the page. In making letter-like forms, the child's writing appears to resemble letters, but upon closer examination the letters are a creation of symbols that represent letters. The child creates writing forms that are not

conventional but resemble the conventional form (McGee & Richgels, 1990). Again, the child is mimicking adult behavior. Examples of writing using well-learned units is a string of letters written in a linear form from left to right across the page. The child can change the order of the letters or write the same string of letters in many different ways; Fields et al., (1991) described this as non-phonetic writing. Sulzby (1985) suggests children learn this form of writing from seeing their names written. Writing using invented spelling varies among children. Children create their own spelling when they do not know the correct conventional spelling. In invented spelling, one letter could represent an entire syllable and/or words may sometimes overlap. As the child's writing matures, the words begin to look like conventional writing with only one letter possibly invented or left out. For example, " I love cats bcuz thea are so prety and I lik uther anmlz. I love mi famle and thea love me bac [I love cats because they are so pretty and I like other animals. I love my family and they love me back.]" This was written by a 5-year-old in Morrow's (1993, p. 244) research. Next, in conventional spelling, the child's writing resembles conventional or the formal structure of writing in which words are spelled correctly and punctuation is used. To reach that point, the child tends to compare his or her spelling with spellings in books, peers, and other sources. The child gradually revises his or her own spelling to resemble what is seen in environmental print.

Children move in and out of these stages in their attempts to write. Sulzby (1985) and Hsu (1995) caution that children do not proceed in a sequential manner of learning (hierarchical) but in a random and less defined form of learning.

Piaget's Child Development Theory

Piaget (1959) proposed a developmental theory that is widely discussed in both psychology and education. Piaget's theory suggests that a child constructs meaning in his or her environment through definite stages that occurred in a fixed sequence. The modes in which the child gains understanding of his or her environment are through reading, listening, and exploring. The sequence described by Piaget occurs in four stages of development. They are sensory-motor (birth to 2 years), pre-operational (2 to 7 years), concrete operational (7 to 11 years), and formal operations (11 and beyond). Because of the Even Start Family Literacy Program's target age of children birth to 7 years, this study addresses the first three cognitive stages of development.

Sensory motor developmental stage (birth to 2 years).

During this stage, Piaget (1959) found that a child's cognitive system is limited to motor reflexes and sensory input which the child builds on and gradually moves to more sophisticated concepts. The child relies on touching, feeling, and hearing to gain understanding of the environment. Felton-Collins & Peterson (1986) explained that an important part of this stage is that the child's ability to learn that things exist when they are out of sight, which Piaget (1959) called object permanence. Object permanence is considered a precursor to the pre-operational stage.

Pre-operational developmental stage (2 to 7 years).

Children in this stage begin to symbolize and internalize thought. They also start to imitate speech and behavior to adjust to new situations. Mental images, drawings, dreams, and playing make-believe are examples of symbolism. Instead of grasping, the child asks. Instead of seeing, the child develops a mental picture. Pulaski (1980), for example, presented an illustration of a child in the sensory motor stage crying to be

handled by the mother. As the child moves into the pre-operational stage and begins to symbolize and internalize thought, the child is able to generate a mental image of the mother that will replace the need to be immediately attended by her.

Concrete operations developmental stage (7 to 11 years).

This stage is characterized by the ability of the child to reason logically. The child is able to organize and classify thought into different groups or structures. Basically, the child is able to differentiate, extend, or combine thought for the best organizational fit. Pulaski (1980) provided another illustration in which a child in the pre-operation stage will believe without a doubt that clay molded into a rectangular shape is much larger than clay that is formed into a ball with the same amount of clay. The child's reasoning is based on visual observation. However, as the child's cognition matures and progress to the concrete operations developmental stage, the child becomes uncertain about those distinctions. The uncertainty becomes more evident after witnessing the manipulation of the rectangular shaped clay being rolled into a ball. Eventually the child reasons that regardless of the shape, the same quantity exists.

Other Theories on Early Child Development

However, other theories exist that provide a different perspective on early child development. Vygotsky (1962) proposed that a child's cognitive development occurs in less well-defined stages and that learning takes place in a sociocultural context. The emphasis is social interaction, albeit parents, siblings, and/or peers. Vygotsky also believed that language plays a major role in the cognitive development that forms the basis of the child's mental structures. Children need language to label their actions. The supplier of the language assists in the child's ability to understand and use the action.

More importantly, Vygotsky emphasized the complex relationship between learning and cognitive development. Learning and cognitive development can proceed at different rates or occur at the same pace (Bodrova, & Leong, 1996). In other words, the child could learn and be taught without regard to age or stage of development. The aim is to develop the child's emerging skills and place less emphasis on development of existing skills.

Chomsky (1972) proposed that children are born with an inclination to learn language. Language is an innate process that predisposes children to communicate at infancy. Also, Chomsky believed that language and symbolism are independent structures, and that symbolism can exist without language. Piaget (1959) concluded that sensory-motor skills are preconditions for language development, and that symbolism and the acquisition of language are dependent structures. Piattelli-Palmarini (1980) recorded Chomsky's illustration of why Piaget's theory of child language development is suspect. First, according to Chomsky, sensory-motor skills are not a precursor to language acquisition because a paraplegic who has limited motor skills can develop thought and language. And second, symbolism and language acquisition are independent because a child can think without speaking.

Although opposing views to Piaget's theories and stages of early childhood cognitive development exist, he concluded that children may not enter the proposed stages at the same rate because some children may progress or mature faster than others. Regardless of Vygotsky's and Chomsky's criticisms of the specifics of Piaget's cognitive developmental stages, the stages provide a framework for parents to reference their children's developmental needs. Parents could involve their children in literacy activities

that will enhance their cognitive development when presented in the context of emergent literacy research.

Emergent Literacy

Briggs (1994) defined emergent literacy as children's early reading and writing experiences in the home and community that precede conventional or formal education. Emergent literacy as a construct evolved following a critical analysis of the theoretical and practical approach based on the traditional reading readiness principle.

Traditional reading readiness theory and practice began during the 1920s when Gesell (1925) suggested that reading readiness is the result of intrinsic growth in children that unfolds automatically. That belief led to the practice that children were taught to read when they were deemed ready with the process of maturation not being forced. Postponing reading until a child reached the mental age of six years and six months was widely accepted during the 1920s (Sulzby & Teale, 1986).

During the social movement of the 1960s, many minority children who entered integrated schools were said to have come from culturally disadvantaged conditions (Sulzby & Teale, 1986). The practiced theory of waiting until children reach school to help them overcome those disadvantages or until they were ready to learn to read was seriously questioned (Sulzby & Teale, 1986). The theory and practice of reading readiness changed from an intrinsic growth factor (waiting until when a child is mentally ready to read) to children's extrinsic readiness to read (reading based on their experiences or environment). The theoretical change led to the development and implementation of programs for disadvantaged children which provided the literacy experiences needed to offset poor home environmental situations.

Even though research existed on efforts to teach preschoolers to read, renewed interest in the concept resurfaced during the late 1960s and early 1970s that placed critical significance on the first few years of development (Sulzby & Teale, 1986). Studies by Goodman (1967), Clay (1966, 1967), and Goodman and Goodman (1979) revealed that young children engage in reading and writing behaviors and have knowledge about the aspects of reading and writing before entering formal education.

Literacy learning begins during infancy. Parents begin interacting with their children through repetitive oral language activities such as peek-a-boo games and storyreading (McGee & Richgels, 1990). As children develop, they engage in reading behaviors that include visual-sensitivity to letter and word forms, directional movement of print, and manipulation of books. Findings, such as those cited by McGee and Richgels (1990), lead to research in the cognitive and linguistic development of young children from various ethnic and social backgrounds. Such research (Health & Mangiola, 1991; McGee & Richgels, 1990; Sulzby, 1983) shows that regardless of their background, children learn reading and writing in a sociocontextual atmosphere that aids in the survival of their communities. While children's exposure to print varies considerably, the amount of exposure depends on the quality of home support for literacy. However, contrary to the amount of home support, children become aware of the functions and modes of print and develop a motivation to learn to read and write on their own (Baker et al., 1995).

The reading and writing behaviors young children engage in are conveyed as more closely related to the process of learning to read and write than simply being taught about letters and words (Briggs, 1994; Hsu, 1995). Emergent literacy proponents concur that

reading and writing are integral parts of the language process. They are highly interactive, interrelated, and develop simultaneously. Each influences the other, and the commonality is written language (McGee & Richgels, 1990). Children are constantly reconstructing their understanding of how language works. Preschool children start their own active involvement in reading by reading labels and referring to pictures and print in books, magazines, and on billboards. Scribbling and invented spelling provide the basis for early writing development. Young children recognize word meaning in their active engagement in environmental print. Children's literacy awareness seem to be related to the quality of home support for literacy (Baker et al., 1995).

Phonemic awareness seems to contribute to reading and writing successfully. Beck and Juel (1992) defined phonemic awareness as a child's ability to recognize sound segments within words and convert them into mapped letters. Phonemic awareness is fostered through word play, nursery rhymes, and songs because they provide an opportunity for children to become attuned to the sounds of words (Mayfield & Ollila, 1992). In their attempts to write, children use invented spelling and their phonemic ability to construct words or write a story. The home environment seems to be instrumental in supporting and encouraging literacy development efforts by young children. Literacy related efforts and experiences at home can lead to a child entering formal education equipped with the tools necessary to be successful.

Literacy Activities Parents Engage in with Their Children

Educational researchers have long stressed the importance of the home-school connection (Handel, 1992; Mayfield & Ollila, 1992; McKee & Rhett, 1995; Morrow & Strickland, 1989; Shockley, 1994). They have also suggested that these connections may

be especially critical for low socioeconomic status students (Auerbach, 1989; Handel, 1992). However, many parents have their own way of asking their children to display what they know. Parents send a clear signal that the activities are important because they encourage their children to participate, provide reinforcement for their attempts, and show praise when the child completes a task.

Some parents who are low-income and have low literacy tend to view literacy development as a difficult and an unrewarding task (Baker et al., 1995). That has been attributed to their own largely unrewarding educational experiences. Research by Auerbach (1989) and Elish-Piper (1997) revealed that parents who do participate in home literacy activities with their children do so for the sole purpose of literacy learning and not for pleasure. According to Heath (1986), some low-income parents have their children participate in activities that their children will need to function in their environment. Other low-income parents stress reading and writing as a means to getting an education. Parents may feel the need to provide a structured learning environment that includes direct instruction and repetitious activities. This approach could lead to children developing a preconception that reading and writing are tedious and unrewarding.

However, Dorsey-Gaines and Taylor (1988) addressed recreational literacy usage in low socioeconomic urban homes. They found that parents are reading, and when they read it is usually conducted in the presence of their children. Reading and writing materials are readily available throughout the home, and those materials are not limited to magazines, newspapers, and brochures.

There are parents who take a hands-off or limited approach to assisting their children with early literacy development. Parents tend to believe the school (formal education) will supply their children with literacy learning (Heath, 1991). Heath's (1991) study of low-income families with this perspective revealed that children in these families do not maintain patterns of success throughout their schooling. It can be ascertained that preventative measures are needed to reach these families and encourage early childhood literacy development.

Parents need support in recognizing and consistently using a range of literacy activities that will assist their child in attaining academic success. Evidence points to the fact that children are more successful in school when their parents are actively involved in their learning and show an interest in their progress. Shockley (1994) implied that there should be parallel literacy practices that match school experiences with home opportunities. Those practices should be easy to use and include practical suggestions that involved the child in home literacy.

Piaget (1959) declared that cognitive development begins at birth and continues to evolve until the child is able to solve problems, generate meaning in the context of culture, and engage in the process of reading and writing. Parental involvement during these stages is critical to literacy development (Piaget, 1959).

Saracho (1997) concluded that family literacy development can be achieved by the quantity of literacy materials in the home, interpersonal interaction with family members concerning literacy activities, and through the social environment found in the home. Dorsey-Gaines and Taylor (1988) provided insight into the literacy activities engaged in by urban children at home. Attention is placed on the child's ability to construct

understanding and communication of his/her environment through drawing. Children in that study are preoccupied with the act of writing and are creative in expressing their thoughts. The children's drawings seem to reflect their cognitive development. Some drawings begin with images representing mom and/or dad, other adults, and siblings. Gradually the drawings developed into pictures with words and later into cards or letters. Those children are growing up with literacy as an integrated part of their lives.

Research conducted by Elish-Piper (1997) reveals that low-income families participate in social-context literacy activities. Those literacy activities are clipping coupons, reading the bus schedule, completing agency forms, and reading the sale advertisements in the newspapers. The life situations of those families determines their need and use of literacy in the home, and the home environment determines the literacy experiences the child will have before entering and during formal education. It is important that educators start where families and children are with regard to literacy experiences and skills and build on what they have and know and not what they lack.

Enz and Searfoss (1996) provided practical ideas for supporting literacy in the home. Children can enhance their literacy development by helping parents in the kitchen, especially with cooking. Cooking and playing in the kitchen provides experience in seriation and the ability to understand sequence of operations or events. Cooking helps children differentiate texture, size, and taste, and cooking involves sensory-motor skills, visual perceptions, pre-reading, and pre-math.

Also, Enz and Searfoss (1996) suggested that playing "let's pretend" or "make-believe" helps children assimilate objects and activities to their own satisfaction. Pretend play supports the development of written language. Children who engage in pretend play

tend to have a greater range of vocabulary and writing skills (Morrison & Rusher, 1999). During the pretend play activity, children are constructing their understanding of the physical and social world around them. Pretend play literacy activities include using empty food containers for playing restaurant, building with blocks or legos, using paper and books for playing school, and playing bank with blank deposits slips or canceled checks.

What has been heralded as the best home literacy activity that parents can engage in with their children is reading together. Research (Baker et al, 1995; Christenson, 1990; Morrow & Strickland, 1989; Reynolds, 1992; Saracho, 1997; Schockley, 1994) revealed that reading to and with children stimulates oral language, listening skills, and concepts of spatial relationships. Reading encourages children to ask and answer questions, and it supports positive parent-child interaction.

While some literature supports the notion that low-income, low-literacy parents are reading to their children (Anderson, 1995a; Dorsey-Gaines & Taylor, 1988), a large portion of the review of the literature supports the idea that low-income, low-literacy parents seem to be less likely to read to their children (Elish-Piper, 1997; McCarthey, 1997; Office of Educational Research and Improvement [OERI], 1994). Therefore, parental attitudes, behaviors, and understanding of early childhood literacy development seem to be influential in parent and child shared reading time.

Summary

Research reveals that children whose home literacy practices and activities resemble those of the school tend to have more academic success than children whose home literacy practices are dissimilar to the school environment. Therefore, parental

attitudes toward education and perceptions of literacy development affect what types of literacy activities their children will have in the home.

As more young children enter formal education from a family background where functional low-literacy and under-education prevails, there is a need to examine parental attitudes toward education and their perceptions of early childhood literacy development.

The literature review presents an overview of the Even Start Family Literacy Program whose mission is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of low-income families. The family literacy program addresses, as a unit, the literacy development of children and their parents who are of low-income and low-literacy. The program prepares children (birth to seven years of age) for formal education, and helps parents recognize and become instrumental as their children's first teacher.

To understand why some low-income children tend to lack the educational experiences expected by the school system upon entering formal education, parental attitudes are explored. The beliefs and attitudes that parents have about literacy development greatly affect how a literacy-enriched environment is provided. Parental beliefs and attitudes also affects the educational experiences of their children.

Parental perceptions of early childhood development may also affect the child's literacy development and preparation for formal education. The literature review suggests that many parents are either unaware of or disinterested in their child's development. Parents who may be unaware of how their children learn to read and write may also be unsure about how to involve their children in literacy activities that will enhance their cognitive development. The probable underlying cause of parents who

were disinterested in early childhood development may be a low sense of efficacy which may also be associated with their own educational experience. There have also been instances when low-income, low-literate parents are aware of their children's cognitive development and engage their children in literacy activities that promote literacy development. Parental attitudes and perceptions of early childhood development interconnect with the literacy activities parents engage in with their children which eventually affect the child's academic success.

Parents provide an array of views toward education and perceptions of early childhood literacy development. The review of the literature also indicates that low-income and low-literate parents either view literacy development as tedious and difficult and inadvertently convey those preconceptions to their children or they convey that literacy development can be pleasurable. It is important to know what parental views are so that literacy methods can build on existing knowledge and not ignore what parents already know.

Research can guide, support, and encourage practical literacy activities parents can participate in with their children to enhance the child's development. Those practical methods can provide the literacy experiences that may prepare children for formal education. The practical literacy activities parents can use in the home are not limited to reading to the child, cooking with the child, or playing "let's pretend." Those and other activities encourage and stimulate the overall development of the child: problem solving, visual perceptions, listening and comprehension skills, and oral language.

The goal of this study is to examine parental attitudes, parental perceptions of early childhood development, and the literacy activities parents engage in with their children in an Even Start Family Literacy Program.

Chapter III METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to examine parental attitudes toward education and their perceptions toward early childhood literacy development. The study also identified literacy activities parents engaged in with their children. Participants were from an Even Start Family Literacy Program.

The methods used in this study were based upon techniques described in the literature and were designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are parental attitudes toward education?
2. What are parental perceptions of early childhood literacy development? How and when do parents think developmental changes occur?
3. What literacy activities do parents engage in with their children?

Data Collection

This qualitative case study employed data collection strategies that included an attitudinal inventory, parent initial and follow-up interviews, a home literacy inventory form, a literacy engagement activity form, and observations. The review of documents and records was used to gain additional information about the participants (Creswell, 1998). The attitudinal inventory using a Likert scale item format was given and scored prior to the initial interview, initial and follow-up interviews for parents were audio-taped and transcribed, and observations of parent-child interactions were recorded in descriptive and reflective notes from the field using protocols from Creswell's (1998) case study methodology.

Participation was voluntary, and those who chose to participate received detailed information regarding the study, how it would affect them, and their right to withdraw at any time. Parents signed an informed consent form to allow use of their demographic information, audio-taped verbal responses, and observations (see Appendix A).

Setting

The study was conducted at an Even Start Family Literacy Program site. The program offered adult education (ABE, ASE, and ESL), parenting education, early childhood education (classes for infants, 18 months to 2 years, and 3 year olds) including parent and child time (PACT). The program had computers in each class and had a state-of-the-art technology lab at the main site/office. The program had several locations, and at the study site approximately 50 families were served. The learning site was located in a predominantly minority community that provided easy access for minority participants. The Even Start Family Literacy Program site's participants came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (see Appendix B). The program was mostly composed of Hispanic families (78%), and the marital status of most participants was that of couples (51.3%). Fifty-nine percent of the participants have a 9–12th grade education and the average length in the program is eight months. To obtain a rich core of participants for the study that represented the demographics of this site, an interpreter (English/Spanish) was used for non-English speaking and was available for limited English speaking parents.

The attitudinal inventory was administered intact at the onset of the ABE, ASE/GED, and ESL class time in the classroom. Interviews of participants in the ABE and ASE/GED classes occurred in the morning, beginning at the second hour of class time, and continued to the beginning of their scheduled lunches. Their interviews took

place in an empty classroom adjacent to the ABE, GED, and ESL classes. Interviews of ESL participants took place in the afternoon following the completion of class instruction and in the same empty classroom as the other interviews . Observations took place during PACT (parent and child time), which was conducted in the early child development classroom.

Data Collecting Strategies

The data collecting strategies selected for the qualitative focus of this study were an attitudinal inventory, parent interviews, a home literacy material inventory, a literacy engagement activity form, and observations (Creswell, 1998).

Attitudinal Inventory

An attitudinal inventory was used to help document parental attitudes and perceptions. The attitudinal inventory that was used in this study was taken verbatim from Parks's (1995) study.

The inventory was composed of 15 Likert-scale questions with choices of responses: Agree Strongly, Agree Somewhat, Disagree Somewhat, and Disagree Strongly. The inventory questions were divided into three categories that addressed the issues in the study. The categories included parental attitudes, knowledge of early childhood literacy development, and the degree of parental involvement in literacy activities (see Appendix C). The inventory was administered to 21 participants.

Parental Interviews

Interviews, which were audio-taped and transcribed, were conducted in an one-on-one format using open-ended questions. A total of 10 parents were selected, representing a cross-section of ABE, GED, and ESL participants, from the original 21 participants

who completed the attitudinal inventory to participate in the interview component of the study. The interviews began one week after the administration of the attitudinal inventory. The interviews sought information in three areas: first, the parents' own educational experiences and how those experiences may have affected their attitudes toward education; second, parents' perception of early childhood literacy development; and third, identification of any literacy activities parents and children engaged in together. Additional interviews occurred to clarify information given previously by parents, and the additional interview provided the parent an opportunity to review transcriptions from the first interview and make any additional comments.

Cross-checking of interview responses was achieved by comparing them with attitudinal inventory results and observation results of parents in adult education and parenting classes, and with parent and child interactions (Creswell, 1988; Lujan, 1985).

There were eight primary questions for the entire interview process (see Appendix D). These questions had sub-questions that aided in the retrieval of information from parents who provided minimal responses to the interview questions (see Appendix E).

The primary questions were arranged in a sequential order that built on preceding questions and answers. Some interview questions used in this study were direct questions used in previous research interviews discussed in the review of the literature. The research questions, corresponding interview questions, and source are: 1) What are parent attitudes toward education? 1a) Describe your own educational experience (McCarthy, 1997). 1b) How does your educational experience effect your attitude toward education? 2) What are parent perceptions of early child literacy development, and how do they occur? 2a) Why do you think some children learn to read and write well in school and

others do not (Cunningham, et al, 1991)? 2b) What can parents of children, birth to 2 years of age, 2 to 7 years of age, 7 to 11 years of age do to help their children learn to read and write better when they start school (Cunningham et al, 1991)? 3) What literacy activities do parents engage in with their children? 3a) What five important things you are doing to help your child(ren) learn to read and write (Anderson, 1995)? 3b) What circumstances get in the way of you engaging in literacy activities with your child(ren) (Anderson, 1995)? Each question was designed to elicit information that would address the research questions in the study (See Appendix F). The parent interview process was completed in three weeks.

Home Literacy Inventory and Engagement Activity Forms

At the conclusion of the interview, parents were given a home literacy material inventory form. The parents selected the materials available in their homes, and if those materials are used by adults, children, or both (see Appendix G). Parents were also asked to add any materials they used in the home that were not listed on the inventory form.

An additional form, a literacy engagement activity form, was given to determine what activities parents engaged in with their children and the frequency of those activities (see Appendix H). Parents were instructed to add activities they did with their children which were not listed on the form.

Observations

Observation is another technique described by Creswell (1998) that is useful in qualitative case study research. Observations in the study were recorded as descriptive and reflective field notes.

The observation process was conducted as recommended by Creswell (1998). The initial observation session occurred at the beginning of the study to become familiar with the setting, participants, and identify the “gatekeepers or key informants” (Creswell, 1998). During this time, notes were limited and the focus was strictly observing and becoming familiar with the parent and child time (PACT) routine. The social and educational parent-child interactions during PACT were recorded in 30 minute sessions using Creswell’s observational protocol for recording (See Appendix I).

The observations were directly linked to each family (parent and child) and the responses collected from the inventory and interviews. This method served as a validation for responses obtained in the interviews. Observation of parents and their children was completed in ten weeks following the interview component of the study.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted using six individuals with the same characteristics as the Even Start Family Literacy population. The pilot study determined that the inventory and interview questions were comprehensible and lacked ambiguity and determined that the questions elicited the data being sought. Further, the pilot study revealed that parent interviews did not need to be divided into phases as originally planned so as not to overburden participants; 30–45 minute intervals were sufficient.

Procedures

An initial observation session began the study in a naturalistic setting. The purpose was to allow time to observe the population and its collective behaviors. During this time, rapport was established with the population, and the “gatekeeper” who aided in encouraging adults to participate was identified.

Following the first week of observation in the adult education classes, 30 parents from ABE, ASE, and ESL classes were given a detailed explanation of the study and procedures. Twenty-one parents agreed to participate in the study, and they signed an informed consent form explaining their rights to confidentiality, autonomy, and withdrawal at any time during the study without the fear of negative consequences.

Immediately following the signing of the consent form, an attitudinal inventory was given to the 21 parents to obtain insights on their attitudes toward education, perceptions of literacy development, and the literacy activities parents engage in with the child.

Ten parents were selected to participate in the interview, representing a cross-section of ABE, GED, and ESL parents, from the group of 21 parents who completed the attitudinal inventory component of the study. The parent interviews began on a Monday, following the completion of attitudinal inventory administration. The duration of interviews for ABE and ASE/GED averaged 40 minutes, while the ESL parent interviews averaged one hour due to the use of an interpreter. The questions addressed parental attitudes, perceptions of early child literacy development, and literacy activities parents engage in with their children. Follow-up questions were used to elicit responses from parents who provided non-committal responses such as “I don’t know.” The home inventory and literacy engagement activity forms were given prior to the conclusion of the interviews. Follow-up interviews were conducted immediately after transcription of the interview data to clarify ambiguous responses provided by the parents, to ask additional questions that expanded upon previous responses, and to provide parents with an opportunity to review the transcription.

Four parents were selected from the ten interviewed to participate in the observation component of the study. Observations began the following Thursday after the completion of the interviews. The observations continued every Thursday for ten weeks to identify and record parental interactions and behaviors during parent-child interaction time (PACT). PACT duration was one hour weekly; therefore, the time was divided into 30 minute sessions for each parent and child. A general observation of all parents occurred at the beginning of PACT to witness parent and child interacting as the instructor read aloud the stories and discussed the lessons of the day. The observations also served as a basis to compare consistency between what was observed and what the parents had expressed in their interviews and inventory.

Documents and records of the ten parents who continued in the study were reviewed and compared with statistics provided by the National Evaluation of the Even Start Family Literacy (Tao, 1995). The information being sought included age of parent and child(ren); number of children in the family; other family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and or cousins within the home; and ethnicity. Additional information included educational attainment of parent(s) and length of participation in Even Start Family Literacy Program (see Appendix J).

Data Analysis

Data analysis and representation began on the first day and continued throughout the study. Analysis was conducted following Creswell's (1998) recommendations for case study methodology. Categorical aggregation involved sorting data to form the initial categories of the data collected. The data was initially sorted into the three major categories that mirrored the research questions that guided the study. Direct

interpretation looked at single instances or responses and “[drew] meaning from [them] without looking for multiple instances” (Creswell, 1998, p. 154). Direct interpretation dealt with searching for emerging and recurring themes and issues that could be divided into sub-categories. Patterns were sought and determined based on the categories discovered as well as relationships among the categories. Finally, naturalistic generalizations were developed from the data.

For verification and standard of quality, triangulation of information and member checking was used (Creswell, 1998). Triangulation of information required the use of different sources, methods, and theories to corroborate a theme or perspective. The attitudinal inventory, parent interviews, and observations were the data sources used in the process of triangulation. Parental documents and records were reviewed to gain a better picture of the participant. The information reviewed corroborated the parents demographic information and reported literacy materials in the home. Member checking was used that involved taking the data analysis and conclusions to the participants for review. This procedure took place when each interview was transcribed and at the completion of the study. The participants were given an opportunity to determine if the interpretations accurately represent what they said and did.

Summary

The data collection strategies used in this qualitative case study to collect data to answer the research questions were an attitudinal inventory, interviews, a home literacy material inventory, a literacy engagement activity form, and observations. The data collection took place at an Even Start Family Literacy Program site. Administration of the instruments occurred during class time and following class instruction.

Twenty-one parents completed the attitudinal inventory. Ten participants were selected, from the twenty-one who completed the attitudinal inventory, to continue in the study. Parental interviews occurred within one week following the attitudinal inventory, after which follow-up interviews were conducted. Four parents, from the ten interviewed, were selected to be observed during PACT. Observations occurred every Thursday over a ten-week time period.

The analysis of the data included sorting, categorizing, and interpreting. The study was verified using triangulation of information and member checking.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

This qualitative case study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are parental attitudes toward education?
2. What are parental perceptions of early childhood literacy development? How and when do the parents think developmental changes occur?
3. What literacy activities do parents engage in with their children?

These questions were addressed to parents who participated in an Even Start Family Literacy Program.

The data were collected using the following data collection strategies: an attitudinal inventory, interviews, a home literacy materials form, and a literacy engagement activity form. Documents and records were used to gain additional information about the participants. The data are presented in three parts: analysis of the inventory; analysis of the parental interview data; and case studies formed from the observations and interview data.

The data are presented in the form of summaries, interpretive comments, and tables associated with patterns and themes which emerged to answer the research questions regarding parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities they engage in with their children.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of Inventory Data

The attitudinal inventory was given to 21 Even Start Family Literacy Program parents who agreed to complete the inventory. The parents represented the three adult education components of the Even Start Family Literacy Program: adult basic education, adult secondary education, and English as a second language.

The 15 inventory questions were divided into three categories derived from the research questions: parental attitudes, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and literacy participation with child. Table 1 provides a compilation of responses to each of the four questions under the category of parental attitudes. Those four questions reflect the parents' attitude toward education with regard to their child's learning.

The results showed that 18 (85.7%) of the parents are aware that they are responsible for their child's learning, and 20 (95.2%) of the parents enjoy teaching their children something new. The results also revealed that 14 (66.6%) of the parents do not scold their child if he or she doesn't learn. When asked, "How do you know if your child is not learning?" based on the inventory and parental interview data, parents agreed that when a child refuses to remain still for an activity or has difficulty repeating or remembering what was recently told to them, they are not learning.

Table 1Parental AttitudesN=21

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly		Agree Somewhat		Disagree Somewhat		Disagree Strongly	
	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%
1. I really like to teach my child something new.	20	9.5	1	4.8	0	0	0	0
2. My child's education is the responsibility of our family.	18	85.7	2	9.5	1	4.8	0	0
3. My child's education is the sole responsibility of the school.	4	19.0	9	42.9	5	23.8	3	14.3
4. I scold my child when he/she doesn't learn.	1	4.8	0	0	6	28.6	14	66.6

Table 2Perception of Literacy Development

N=21

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly		Agree Somewhat		Disagree Somewhat		Disagree Strongly	
	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%
1. Much of my child's learning will take place before he/she enters kindergarten or first grade.	10	47.6	5	23.8	4	19.0	2	9.5
2. It is hard for me to tell when my child is learning something.	1	4.8	3	14.3	5	23.8	12	57.1
3. More of my child's learning at this age takes place by watching people and things rather than being told.	5	23.8	8	38.1	4	19.0	4	19.0
4. My child learns by playing with other children.	10	47.6	7	33.4	2	9.5	2	9.5
5. If we play whenever my child wants to, not much learning will take place.	2	9.5	9	42.9	8	38.1	2	9.5
6. I imitate my child's speech when we play so that the child understands.	10	47.6	4	19.0	4	19.0	3	14.3

The data indicated that 10 (47.6%) parents strongly agree that much of their child's learning will take place before he or she enters formal education (Table 2). This may indicate that parents believe their children engaging in literacy behaviors is representative of emergent literacy. Data collected from the interviews revealed that parents believe that their children should have learned the basics (colors, letter and

number identification, and handling a book) before entering formal education, and that after entering school, their learning expands.

The remaining parental responses were mixed. Two (19%) parents disagreed somewhat and two (9.5%) parents disagreed strongly that their child's learning will take place before entering formal education. This suggests that either the parents are unsure what kinds of learning takes place before entering school or are unsure that education is a continuing process. Their children will attend school for an additional eleven years, and numerically speaking, most of the child's learning will take place after entering formal education.

Twelve (57%) parents disagreed strongly that it is hard for them to tell if their children have learned or are learning something. Thirteen (61%) parents agree that their children learn by watching others and playing with other children. This suggests that parents are aware when their children are learning and how they are learning.

According to the participation data on the attitudinal inventory, parents are actively participating in their children's learning (Table 3). Fourteen (66%) parents believe that their children need to play with them, suggesting that the parents are playing with their children when possible. The results showed that 17 (87%) parents find playing with their children is an enjoyable experience and 16 (76.2%) of the parents reported that playing with their children motivates them to want to play more. The results also showed that 11 parents (54%) disagree strongly that it is difficult for them to stay interested when playing with their children.

Table 3

Literacy Participation with child
N=21

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly		Agree Somewhat		Disagree Somewhat		Disagree Strongly	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
1. My child needs to play with me.	14	66.6	5	23.8	1	4.8	1	4.8
2. It is difficult for me to think of things to say to my child during play.	1	4.8	2	9.5	8	38.1	10	47.6
3. It is difficult for me to stay interested when playing with my child.	3	14.3	3	14.3	4	19.0	11	52.4
4. Playing with my child is enjoyable.	17	81.0	2	9.5	0	0	2	9.5
5. Playing with my child motivates me to want to play more with my child.	16	76.2	2	9.5	2	9.5	1	4.8

Attitudinal Inventory Summary

The attitudinal inventory was given to 21 Even Start Family Literacy Program parents. The inventory questions were divided into three categories that reflected the research questions. The data analysis of the inventory revealed that the majority of parents in this study like teaching their children something new, and they do not scold their children when they do not learn. This suggests that parents have a favorable attitude toward educating their children and that they can teach their children. Parents reported that their children learn by watching others and playing with their peers. This

information reflects parental perception of how their children learn. Most parent reported that playing with their children is fun.

Analysis of Interview Data

Ten of the 21 parents were selected and agreed to be interviewed. The demographic data of gender, age, ethnicity, and length of time the parents have participated in the Even Start Family Literacy Program are presented in Table 4. The interviews questions were as follows:

- 1) Describe you own educational experience.
- 2) How does your experience affect your attitude toward education?
- 3) Why do you think some children learn to read and write well in school and others do not?
- 4) What can parents of children birth to 2 years of age do to help their children learn to read and write better when they start school?
- 5) What can parents of children 2 to 7 year of age do to help their children learn to read and write better when they start school?
- 6) What can parents of children 7 to 11 year of age do to help their children learn to read and write better while they are in school?
- 7) What are five important things you are doing to help your child learn to read and write?
- 8) What circumstances get in the way of you engaging in literacy activities with your child?

The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The interviews took place in a classroom at the learning facility. Approximately thirty minutes were used for each

parental interview except ESL parents because some required an interpreter; therefore, an additional 15 minutes were available if necessary. Twenty minute follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify responses to previous interview questions and/or ask additional questions to derive the best meaning.

Upon completion of the interviews, the transcriptions were taken to each parent for review. During this time, parents were given the opportunity to change any statements they deemed incorrectly represented their intended meaning. Following this verification process, analysis of the interview data began. A printout of all responses was compiled, grouping all responses for each individual question together. The responses were placed in a matrix for easy examination. The matrix was designed with the interview questions along the top grid and participants pseudonym's were placed along the left side of the grid. The data of each parent was inserted into the cells that matched the questions. For an example, see Appendix K.

The initial sorting of the data, categorical aggregation, was accomplished using the three main categories reflected in the research questions. The examination and reexamination of the data revealed patterns and themes that were coded according to their relationship to a single idea. Following the development of the code categories, the remaining material was either sorted into the code categories or examined for sub-themes. Finally, the analysis of the data yielded naturalistic generalizations: ideas and interpretations that answers and explains the research questions.

Parental Attitudes

Upon examining the data to determine parental attitudes toward education, three major categories emerged. Those categories were previous educational experience,

school importance, and the effect of previous education experiences on how they teach the child.

Previous educational experience.

When asked to describe their educational experience, six (60%) parents dropped out of school and four (40%) had completed their high school education. Of the six (60%) who dropped out, two (33.3%) did not finish the ninth grade and the remaining 66.7% ($n=4$) had at least a tenth grade education. Of the four (40%) parents who completed high school, two (50%) went on to obtain a four-year degree and one (25%) went to a trade school (Table 4).

Table 4Parental Interview Demographics

N=10

Characteristics	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Length in Program		
< 1 year	9	90
> 1 year	1	10
2. Gender		
Female	10	100
Male	0	0
3. Ethnicity		
African-American	3	30
Mexican-American	6	60
Euro-American	1	10
4. Age		
18-25	3	30
>25	7	70
5. Dropped out of school	6	60
<9 th grade	2	33.3
≥9 th grade	4	66.7
6. ≥ High School	4	40
High school Completion	1	25
College Completion	2	50
Trade or Vocation	1	25

Note. Questions 5 and 6 represent the two categories and each n do not equal N of 10.

Three (30%) parents interviewed reported having a negative educational experience, and the remaining seven (70%) felt they had a positive educational experience (Table 5). Responses related to teacher attitudes and interests were combined to form one category-teacher attitudes. Of those who stated they had a negative experience, two parents responded that their teachers' attitude contributed significantly to their experience. One parent said, "Teachers didn't care whether I did the work." Another parent reported, "They [teachers] weren't interested and I started hanging out

with the wrong crowd.” Another parent stated, “They [teachers] didn’t expect much because I had a baby.” Another category—ESL—was formed consisting of one parent who stated that school was difficult because she was unable to “keep up” due to her lack of English. Only one parent reported that she had learning difficulties in school. She remarked, “I couldn’t read very well, but I am reading better now.”

Table 5

Category - Previous Educational Experience
N=10

<u>Responses</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Negative Experiences	3	30
Teacher Attitudes	2	
Learning Difficulty	1	
ESL	1	
2. Positive Experiences	7	70
Teacher Attitudes	5	
School Oriented	2	
Peer Interaction	1	

Of the parents who felt that they had a positive educational experience, teacher attitude was the main reason given. Five parents stated that teacher interest/attitude was a determining factor in whether they had a positive experience. One parent stated, “I did well in my subjects and [I] had good support from my teachers.” Another parent said, “My teachers were good and available,” while another remarked, “I was the teacher’s pet.” Only two parents made reference to school as a learning institution or were school oriented. One of the parents said, “I liked going to school because it provided me with a way of learning.” Another parent reported, “I got to learn many things.” Only one parent

reported having a positive educational experience due to peer interaction. She stated, “I liked going to school to hang out with my friends.”

School importance.

The school importance category revealed that all parents viewed education as very important and two primary sub-categories emerged—living condition and personal satisfaction. When asked why education is important, seven parents (70%) reported education is important to improve their living condition and three (30%) said for personal satisfaction or improvement.

Of the seven wanting to improve their living conditions, four (57.1%) parents believe that education is the key to getting a good or better job to improve their living conditions. These parents believe that a high school diploma, GED, or college will improve their living conditions. One parent said, “School is definitely important and needed to get ahead.” One parent commented, “Additional education is needed—an high school diploma is not enough.” Another parent stated, “if I [had] stayed in school, I would have had a good job by now.”

Three parents expressed that improving their English will improve their living condition. One parent stated, “The U.S. requires a lot of education to get a good job.” The other parent reported, “Even Start has helped me with my English. Now I can look for a job.”

Three of the parents interviewed reported that education is important for personal satisfaction and improvement (Table 6). One comment was made that “It’s [education] important; it is needed to improve self-esteem.” Additional comments related to self-esteem were “supportive teachers,” “caring teachers,” “drive to learn English,” and

“learning English helped me to be less shy.” One parent reported, “Education has helped me improve my English.”

Table 6

Category-School Importance

N=10

Responses	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Improve living condition	7	70
Gain better job	4	57.1
Improve English	3	42.8
2. Personal satisfaction/improvement	3	30
Enjoyment	2	66.6
Gain knowledge	1	33.3

How educational experiences affect how parents are teaching their children.

How parents’ previous educational experience affects how they are teaching their children was the final category that aided in determining current parental attitudes toward education (Table 7). Parents provided multiple responses to questions about how their prior educational experience has affected how they were currently teaching their children. Three parents are teaching their children by example. Modeling the importance of attending and finishing school seems to be critical for these parents. However they labeled their prior education experiences, parents believe that their current actions will affect how their children view importance of education later. One parent stated, “I need to finish [school] for mine and my son’s sake.” Another parent reported, “I must get my own education finished to set an example for my daughter.” A third parent stated, “They [children] see me doing homework and they want to do it too.”

For parents enrolled in the ESL component of the program, four reported that their children must learn the English language. Furthermore, some parents reported that not

learning English has prevented them from improving their living conditions and communicating with others, and they do not want this to happen to their children. One parent reported, “I emphasize the importance of education and [I] make sure that they learn English.” A couple of these parents are learning English along side their children.. One of them stated, “We’re learning both languages together.” Again, modeling seems to be very important to the parents for their children’s development. Learning English is important to the parents and they want their children to learn English to help them learn better in school and get good jobs later.

Table 7

Category-Parental Teaching Behaviors
N=10

Responses	Frequency	%
1. Stress the importance of getting an education	10	100
2. Involvement in child’s education	7	70
3. Provide support, praise, time, and high expectations	4	40
4. Role modeling	3	30
5. Encourage learning English	3	30

Being involved in their child’s educational and social development is emphasized as well. One parent remarked, “I get involved and spend time with my child.” Another parent said, “I talk with my daughter a lot,” while another parent reported, “I’m teaching my son early about reading, writing, and math.”

When asked what other behaviors they perform with regard to teaching their child, four parents reported that they give praise, support, and time to their children

because that was something the parents did not receive previously. Parental engagement in these behaviors encourages emerging literacy efforts among children. One comment was, “I praise and support my children in everything they do.” One parent said, “I have high expectations for my children.”

All parents reported that they stress the importance of getting an education to their children. One parent stated, “No one told me to stay in school and do well, so I didn’t.”

Parental Perceptions of Early Childhood Literacy Development

To determine what parents know about their child’s early childhood literacy development, parents were asked why some children learn to read and write well in school and others do not. Three questions regarding three of Piagets’ stages of child development were asked as well. During the questioning related to Piagets’ stages of child development, an exploration of emergent literacy behaviors occurred.

The first question asked why some children learn to read and write well in school and others do not. The most common answers, given by four (40%) of the parents, are related and grouped to form a category called “parental involvement/participation” (Table 8). For example, parents gave the following responses to this category: “parents are teaching them at an early age”; “children are raised in the home and mimic their parents”; and “parents encourage their kids to read and write.” This suggests that parents understand that early childhood development is occurring in the home.

Two (20%) of the parents suggested that innate ability is a reason why some children learn to read and write at an early age. One parent reported, “Some children have a natural interest for reading and writing,” while another parent said, “Some children are born to be strong in some areas.”

Three (30%) parents believe that sibling involvement is the reason why some children read and write well and others children do not. According to one parent, “some children have older brothers/sisters to help with reading and writing and the kids also imitate them,” while another parent reported, “older brothers and sisters help them and [children] mimic them.”

Finally, the category “peer interaction” emerged in an interview with one parent who reported that children “watch other children and learn from them.”

Table 8

Parental opinions on why some children learn to read and write well in school .

N=10

<u>Categories</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Parental Involvement/Participation	4	40
2. Sibling Involvement	3	30
3. Innate Ability	2	20
4. Peer Interaction	1	10

When parents were asked what they think parents of children birth to two years of age might do to help their children read and write better before they enter school, a variety of answers were given. Table 9 shows that “read to them” is the most common activity reported. Other responses included “watch educational programs,” “expose them to books and letters even though they don’t understand,” and “have [children] identify items. “Provide attention and play with them,” “give good discipline,” and “every situation should be a learning experience” were other activities suggested.

Question two asked what parents of children 2 to 7 years of age might do to help their children read and write before starting school. As shown in Table 10, four (40%)

parents felt that continuing to read to children remained an important activity. One parent reported, “read books and take them to the library.” Only two (20%) of the parents felt that having question and answer time was important. One parent stated, “I do what they like, ask and answer questions.” Another parent said, “ask [children] questions about what they read.”

Also, four (40%) of the parents stated that playing games was another activity to facilitate growth. One parent stated, “play games and activities that deal with math—adding and subtracting.” Another parent stated, “give them activities to do with adding and subtracting.”

Table 9

Activities parents can do to help children birth to 2 years learn to read and write.

N=10

Responses	Frequency	%
1. Read	8	80
2. Identify items, blocks, colors, letters.	3	30
3. Sing	3	30
4. Give attention to and play with children	2	20
5. Show picture books	2	20
6. Watch educational programs and play with educational toys	2	20
7. Make everything a learning experience.	2	20
8. Discipline children	1	10

Finally, parents were asked what they think parents of children 7 to 11 years of age do to help their children learn to read and write better when they are in school. As shown in Table 11, activities with math concepts is the common activity quoted, followed by reading. One parent reported, “they should be doing math for multiplication and division and doing advanced reading.” Another parent stated, “need to stress the importance of reading and writing,” and yet another parent said, “give more activities with math.”

Table 10

Activities parents can do to help children 2 to 7 years learn to read and write better before entering school.

N=10

Responses	Frequency	%
1. Parents read to child	4	40
2. Play mathematical games	4	40
3. Listen to their children read	2	20
4. Question and answer time	2	20
5. Draw pictures with child	1	10
6. Go to the library	1	10
7. Interactive play	1	10

Additional quotes included, “give plenty of attention;” “read to them,” “stay involved in their school,” “communicate more with child,” and “have a question and answer period after their homework is completed.”

Table 11Activities parents can do to help children 7 to 11 years learn to read and write better during schoolN=10

Responses	Frequency	%
1. Math activities	6	60
2. Reading	5	50
3. Writing	3	30
4. Question and time	2	20
5. Learning the computer	1	10
6. Provide attention and communication	1	10
7. School involvement	1	10

Literacy Activities Parents Engage In With Their Children

A home literacy material and engagement activity sheet was given to parents following the interview phase of the study (Appendix G). Parents were to identify the literacy materials they have in the home and note whether the literacy material was for an adult, child, or both. There were 19 literacy items on the inventory and parents were instructed to add any literacy materials found in the home that were not included on the list. The five items that were added to the list by parents included coloring books, memory cards, video cassettes, glue, and computers. Upon completion, the parents were to select the literacy activities (all that applied) they engage in with their children in the home and at the program during PACT. The activity sheet served not only to document what parents said they did with their children and what they have in their home, but it

served as another instrument to compare to reported parental behaviors and attitudes exhibited.

Table 12 shows the literacy materials, indicated by the parent, for adults in the home. The most frequently reported home literacy materials used by adults in the home are phone books, magazines, cookbooks, and newspapers. Other literacy materials that were frequently cited for adult use were story books, paperback books, pencils/pens, paper, and television. The least likely used or accessible to literacy materials for adults were the TV guide, video games, encyclopedias, and music books. Literacy materials that are not cited for adult use were coloring books, memory cards, video cassettes, glue, and the computer.

Table 12

Home literacy material inventory for adults.
N=10

Literacy Materials	Adults	
	Frequency	%
1. newspapers	4	40
2. TV guide	1	10
3. TV	6	60
4. video games	1	10
5. street maps	3	30
6. cookbooks	3	30
7. phone books	6	60
8. encyclopedias	2	20
9. dictionary	6	60
10. music books	2	20
11. story books	6	60
12. magazines	6	60
13. paperback books	6	60
14. hardback books	3	30
15. pencils/pens	10	100
16. markers	4	40
17. paper	6	60
18. crayons	4	40
19. blocks	3	30
20. coloring books	0	0
21. memory cards	0	0
22. video cassettes	0	0
23. glue	0	0
24. computer	0	0

Frequently cited materials used in the home for children's use were crayons, paper, pencils/pens, and television (Table 13). Other literacy materials included dictionaries, storybooks, magazines, and paperback books. Such material supported children's emerging literacy behaviors. The least likely materials used or materials not found in the home for children were newspapers, cookbooks, encyclopedias, and hardback books. One parent cited a computer as a literacy tool in the home; however, the computer was used only by the children and not the adults. Also one parent reported that

video cassettes were used frequently in her home to “keep the kids quiet” while she did other things around the house.

Table 13

Home literacy material inventory for children.

N=10

Literacy Materials	Children	
	Frequency	%
1. newspapers	1	10
2. TV guide	0	0
3. TV	6	60
4. video games	4	40
5. street maps	0	0
6. cookbooks	1	10
7. phone books	2	20
8. encyclopedias	1	10
9. dictionary	5	50
10. music books	3	30
11. storybooks	5	50
12. magazines	5	50
13. paperback books	5	50
14. hardback books	2	20
15. pencils/pens	10	100
16. markers	6	60
17. paper	10	100
18. crayons	7	70
19. blocks	3	30
20. coloring books	1	10
21. memory cards	1	10
22. video cassettes	2	20
23. glue	1	10
24. computer	1	10

In addition to completing the home literacy materials inventory, parents were instructed to report the literacy activities they engage in with their children and the frequency of engagement. Table 14 shows that six (60%) parents were reading books, inquiring about daily activities, and writing names with their children as daily activities. Five parents (50%) reported singing and oral storytelling as daily activities conducted between them and their children. Three parents (30%) reported reading street signs as an

activity that occurs less than once a week as well as four (40%) who stated the same for reading labels on food and containers. These reported activities suggests that parents are engaging in behaviors that support and encourage emergent literacy. One (10%) parent reported never participating in drawing pictures, scribbling, visiting libraries or museums with their children.

Table 14

Literacy Activities engaged by parent and child.

N=10*

Literacy Activities	Everyday		At least once weekly		Less than once weekly		Never	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
1. read books	6	60	0		0		0	
2. read street maps	2	20	3	30	2	20	0	
3. read labels	0		4	40	2	20	0	
4. draw pictures	4	40	1	10	0		1	10
5. write name(s)	5	50	1	10	0		0	
6. write stories	2	20	2	20	1	10	0	
7. scribble	4	40	0		1	10	1	10
8. oral storytelling	5	50	1	10	0		0	
9. cooking	3	30	2	20	2	20	0	
10. grocery shopping	2	20	3	30	1	10	0	
11. play make-believe	3	30	1	10	1	10	1	10
12. visit library	1	10	3	30	2	20	1	10
13. visit museum	2	20	2	20	1	10	1	10
14. inquire about daily activities	5	50	0		0		1	10
15. ABC's	3	30	2	20	0		1	10
16. tell time	3	30	2	20	0		1	10
17. singing	5	50	1	10	0		0	
18. other	0		0		0		0	

Interview Data Summary

The parental interview data were analyzed and sorted based on the research questions. Parental attitudes data revealed that parents do have positive attitudes toward education, however, their prior educational experiences seem to play a significant role in shaping their current attitudes. Parental perceptions of early childhood development data revealed parents in this study are unfamiliar with cognitive developmental stages but know that their children should be progressively learning. Parents monitor their children's progress by their ability to recite information and/or perform certain activities. Parents in this study reported numerous literacy materials in the home. The most frequently reported literacy materials used are TV, pen/pencils, paper, newspaper, phonebooks, magazines, and paperback books. Activities that parent and child engage in together are reading books, conversing, oral storytelling, writing names, scribbling, and drawing pictures.

Case Studies

The following case studies (A through D) present profiles of four families who were selected, from the group of ten who were interviewed, for detailed analysis. The descriptive case studies depict parents who participated in all phases of an Even Start Family Literacy Program. The parents were enrolled in either ABE, ASE, or ESL. These parents participated in parenting education as well as had children who participated in the early childhood literacy development program.

In conjunction with the multiple data sources used in the general study, observations were conducted on parent and child interaction during PACT. Names presented in the following case studies are pseudonyms created to protect the identity of the participants.

Case Study A

Case study A was an African-American family consisting of Jackie, 19, and her two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Candy. Jackie dropped out of school after attempting the 9th grade twice. She began the Even Start Family Literacy Program two months ago.

Prior to Jackie's interview, she completed a 15-question attitudinal inventory. The inventory was divided into three categories: parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and literacy participation. Table 15 revealed that Jackie strongly agreed with the statement that she likes teaching her child something new and strongly disagreed with the statement that she scolds Candy when she doesn't learn. Jackie is engaging in behavior that solidifies her role as her child's first teacher.

Table 15Jackie's inventory responses on parental attitudes

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. I really like to teach my child something new.	X			
2. My child's education is the responsibility of our family.		X		
3. My child's education is the sole responsibility of the school.		X		
4. I scold my child when he/she doesn't learn.				X

The perception of literacy development component of the inventory revealed that Jackie agreed somewhat that Candy learns by playing with other children and by watching people and things rather than being told how to do something (Table 16). Jackie seems to understand that Candy learns from her environment and she encourages it.

Jackie disagreed somewhat with the statements that much of Candy's learning will take place before entering first grade and, if they played whenever Candy wanted to, not much learning would take place (Table 17).

Table 16Jackie's inventory responses to perception of literacy development

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. Much of my child's learning will take place before he/she enters kindergarten or first grade.			X	
2. It is hard for me to tell when my child has learning something.		X		
3. More of my child's learning at this age takes place by watching people and things rather than being told.		X		
4. My child learns by playing with other children.		X		
5. If we play whenever my child wants to, not much learning will take place.			X	
6. I imitate my child's speech when we play so that the child understands.		X		

The literacy participation responses on the attitudinal inventory revealed that Jackie strongly agreed that playing with Candy is enjoyable and that playing with her motivates Jackie to want to play with her more (Table 18). Jackie disagreed somewhat with the statements that it's hard for her to stay interested when playing with Candy and that it's difficult for her to think of things to say during the time she is playing with Candy

Table 18 reveals the type of literacy materials in the home of Jackie and Candy. Newspapers, cookbooks, phonebooks, and dictionaries are used exclusively by Jackie;

and paperback books and blocks were for Candy. Items that are used by both parent and child were storybooks, hardback books, pens/pencils, and paper. This family has the materials needed to support emergent literacy behaviors.

Table 17

Jackie's inventory responses to literacy participation with child

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. My child needs to play with me.		X		
2. It is difficult for me to think of things to say to my child during play.			X	
3. It is difficult for me to stay interested when playing with my child.			X	
4. Playing with my child is enjoyable.	X			
5. Playing with my child motivates me to want to play more with my child.	X			

In addition to the home literacy material inventory, Jackie completed a form that listed possible literacy activities that are conducted in the home (Table 19). Jackie reported that the most frequent activities they do together in the home are reading books, inquiring about activities, scribbling, and oral storytelling, which are forms of emergent literacy. Reading and writing materials seem readily available to Candy. These activities support Candy's efforts to read and write and improve her oral language. The literacy activity that occurs less than once a week is visiting the library, visiting the museum, and practicing telling time.

Table 18Jackie's Home literacy materials

1. <u>Literacy Materials</u>	Adult	Child
1. Newspapers	X	
2. TV Guide		
3. TV	X	X
4. Video Games		X
5. Street Maps		
6. Cookbooks	X	
7. Phone Books	X	
8. Encyclopedias	X	
9. Dictionary	X	
10. Music Books		
11. Story Books	X	X
12. Magazines	X	
13. Paperback Books		X
14. Hardback Books	X	X
15. Pens/Pencils	X	X
16. Markers		
17. Paper	X	X
18. Crayons		
19. Blocks (Lego)		X

Table 19Jackie's literacy activities with Candy.

<u>Literacy Activities</u>	How Often
1. Read books	F*
2. Read street signs	O
3. Read labels	O
4. Draw pictures	O
5. Write name	O
6. Write stories	N
7. Scribble	F
8. Oral Storytelling	O
9. Cooking	O
10. Grocery Shopping	O
11. Play Make-believe	O
12. Visit Library	R
13. Visit Museum	N
14. Inquire About Daily Activities	F
15. ABC's	R
16. Tell time	N
17. Singing	O
Other_____	

Note: F= everyday; O= at least once a week; R= less than once a week; N= never

Jackie described her educational experience as “enjoyable” up to about age 12 or 13. She enjoyed school because not only did she do well but “teachers cared and had [her] attention.” After age 13, Jackie moved to a different school and neighborhood and “got off track so [she] just got with the wrong crowd.” As Jackie explained, “[I] started

skipping school and didn't like school anymore." She said, "I now realize that education is important," and she entered the Even Start Family Literacy Program to receive assistance with passing the GED. Jackie also stated, "Learning is fun because I now have supportive and caring teachers and a supportive family."

Jackie stated, "I need to get more education because I will need money to buy Candy things." Jackie explained that education is needed to "make good decisions, get a good job, and make a decent living." Jackie paused and then further explained that "when I got to a certain grade my momma couldn't help me with my homework, and getting more education will assist me in helping Candy with her homework."

Jackie exhibited the knowledge that children develop differently, an idea that is supported by research. She explained, "my knowledge of child development comes from me being around babies and toddlers," and "[she] likes to be around children." She and her mother were an extended family to her young cousins. She believed that being around babies and toddlers and enjoying their company may have contributed to her wanting to become a mother. "I wanted my own baby, someone to love and who would love me back."

Jackie further explained that children do well in school because "they have older brothers and sisters to help them with their homework," "parents read to them and help them with a lot of different things," and "children mimic their parents and brothers and sisters." Although Jackie does not label the learning process as emergent literacy, she seems to be aware that children gain knowledge and understanding from their environment with assistance from adults and child-child interactions.

With regard to Piaget's cognitive developmental stages, Jackie believed that continuous "reading and good discipline" are needed in all stages of development. Above all, "making learning fun" and "having good and supportive teachers" are the essentials to literacy development.

Following the interview, Jackie and Candy were observed at 30 minute intervals for four weeks during PACT. The observations were recorded in parental verbal and physical behavior data as shown in Table 20.

PACT began with an early childhood instructor reading a short story about the theme and activity for the day. Parents and their children watched and listened as the story was being read. Some children sat attentively on the floor in a semicircle in front of the teacher reading the story while their parents listen from the rear of the room. Other children sat beside their parents in a chair or in their parents' lap as the story was being read. That scene was observed during all observations except where noted.

Observation 1- Parents were to read the short story to their children today. Jackie was unable to read to Candy because she was very uncooperative. Nothing Jackie could do soothed Candy. Jackie continued to give affectionate physical contact and was very calm and pleasant throughout Candy's behavioral tantrums. Jackie's persistence paid off and Candy calmed down and they colored together. During the observation Jackie exhibited great patience.

Observation 2- Initially, Jackie and Candy listened to the theme story being read aloud by the early childhood development instructor. Following the story, Candy gathered the activity supplies as Jackie prepared the work table. Candy gave directions for the seating arrangement at the work table and Jackie began to explain to Candy what they were going

to do. As Candy performed the activity, Jackie continually gave praise to Candy for her efforts and for the finished product. Following completion of the activity, Jackie gave Candy a huge hug and Candy just giggled.

Observation 3- Jackie and Candy listen to the theme story together. Jackie allowed Candy to do the activity on her own and only intervened to control the scissors. Jackie continuously gave praise: “good job,” and “there you go.” Jackie asked Candy questions regarding the activity such as, “Where are you going to put the train?” Candy was very proud of her work. She showed Jackie what she did and began showing her work to the other children and their parents in the room.

Observation 4- Jackie explained to Candy what a sailboat was and had Candy repeat her explanation. Candy worked on her activity while Jackie watched. Jackie gave Candy praise throughout the activity. Upon completion, Candy sat in Jackie’s lap and stayed there until PACT was over.

Jackie consistently reinforces Candy’s attempts and successes with love and attention, a component of emergent literacy. Candy’s engagement in activities on her own displays what she already knows and how she is trying to construct meaning to something new. Her behaviors during PACT reveal emergent reading and writing behaviors and how those behaviors are supported and encouraged by Jackie.

Table 20

Jackie's observed parental verbal and physical behaviors.

	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3	Observation 4
1. Praising	X	X	X	X
2. Giving Direction	X	X	X	
3. Scolding				
4. Questioning	X	X		
5. Answering	X	X		X
6. Giving Information	X	X	X	X
7. Affectionate Physical Contact	X	X	X	X
8. Patience	X	X	X	X
9. Parent/Child Activity Participation		X	X	X

Case Study B

Case study B was an African-American family consisting of Donika, 17, and her one-and-one-half-year-old son, Michael. Donika dropped out of school in the 10th grade following the birth of her son. She entered the Even Start Family Literacy Program nine months later, and has been in the program for two months.

Prior to Donika's interview, she completed a 15-question attitudinal inventory. The inventory was divided into three categories: parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and literacy participation. Table 21 revealed that Donika strongly agreed that she really likes to teach Michael something new

and she is responsible for his education. Donika strongly disagreed that she scolds Michael when he doesn't learn.

Table 21

Donika's inventory responses on parental attitudes

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. I really like to teach my child something new.	X			
2. My child's education is the responsibility of our family.	X			
3. My child's education is the sole responsibility of the school.		X		
4. I scold my child when he/she doesn't learn.				X

The perception of literacy development component of the inventory revealed that Donika agrees strongly that much of Michael's learning will take place before he enters kindergarten or first grade and the he learns by playing with other children. Donika seems to understand that Michael gains knowledge and understanding from his environment. Donika reported that she disagreed somewhat with the statements that it is difficult for her to determine if Michael has learned something and that she imitates his speech when they play together so he can understand.

Table 22Donika's inventory responses to perception of literacy development

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. Much of my child's learning will take place before he/she enters kindergarten or first grade.			X	
2. It is hard for me to tell when my child has learned something.		X		
3. More of my child's learning at this age takes place by watching people and things rather than being told.		X		
4. My child learns by playing with other children.		X		
5. If we play whenever my child wants to, not much learning will take place.			X	
6. I imitate my child's speech when we play so that the child understands.		X		

The literacy participation responses on the attitudinal inventory revealed that Donika strongly agreed that playing with Michael is an enjoyable experience and that playing with him motivates her to want to play with him more. She strongly disagreed with the statements that it is difficult for her to think of things to say to Michael when they are playing and it's difficult for her to stay interested when playing with him. Donika also reported that she agreed somewhat with the statement that Michael needs to play with her.

Table 23Donika's inventory responses on literacy participation with Michael

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. My child needs to play with me.		X		
2. It is difficult for me to think of things to say to my child during play.				X
3. It is difficult for me to stay interested when playing with my child.				X
4. Playing with my child is enjoyable.	X			
5. Playing with my child motivates me to want to play more with my child.	X			

Table 24 reveals the type of literacy materials reported in the home of Donika and Michael. Newspapers, cookbooks, telephone books, hardback and paperback books were reported as used exclusively by Donika and other adults in the household. Music books were the only reported literacy material in the home used by Michael and visiting children in the home. Some literacy materials that are used by Donika and Michael are video games, television, pens/pencils, dictionary, and magazines. Donika added coloring books, memory cards, and video-cassettes to the list. She reported that Michael loves Barney and she always plays Barney video-cassette tapes for him. This family has readily available materials to support emerging literacy behaviors. The activities they engage in support Michael's efforts of reading and writing and improve his oral language.

Table 24Donika's home literacy materials

1. <u>Literacy Materials</u>	Adult	Child
1. Newspapers	X	
2. TV Guide		
3. TV	X	X
4. Video Games	X	X
5. Street Maps		
6. Cookbooks	X	
7. Phone Books	X	
8. Encyclopedias	X	
9. Dictionary	X	X
10. Music Books		X
11. Story Books	X	X
12. Magazines	X	X
13. Paperback Books	X	
14. Hardback Books	X	
15. Pens/Pencils	X	X
16. Markers	X	X
17. Paper	X	X
18. Crayons	X	X
19. Blocks (Lego)		X
20. Coloring books		X
21. Memory cards		X
22. Video-cassettes	X	X
23. Refrigerator magnets		X

Donika reported that she and Michael read books, draw, scribble, and learn ABC's everyday together (Table 25). These activities reflect emergent literacy occurring in the home. Reading street signs, writing stories, and inquiring about daily activities are literacy activities that Donika reported as occurring less than once a week.

Table 25

Donika's literacy activities with Michael.

<u>Literacy Activities</u>	How Often
1. Read books	F*
2. Read street signs	R
3. Read labels	O
4. Draw pictures	F
5. Write name	O
6. Write stories	R
7. Scribble	F
8. Oral Storytelling	F
9. Cooking	F
10. Grocery Shopping	F
11. Play Make-believe	F
12. Visit Library	R
13. Visit Museum	F
14. Inquire About Daily Activities	R
15. ABC's	F
16. Tell time	N
17. Singing	O
Other_____	

Note: F= everyday; O= at least once a week; R= less than once a week; N= never

In her interview, Donika described her educational experience as fine until her pregnancy. When she was asked to talk about what she liked and disliked about school, Donika stated, “I dislike school because my teachers—it seemed like they didn’t care.” Donika believed the teachers had low expectations of her because of the pregnancy and later the baby. She reported, “It seemed like I was the only one in their [teachers] classes that had a baby, and they didn’t expect much from me.” She explained that teachers’ actions such as, “giving her work and then they wouldn’t ask about it,” “not accepting it [class work],” and “they didn’t support her after her son was born” influenced her to leave school. However, Donika did mention that she had a bad temper and could have been considered a bully. She also reported that she has been discharged from school for fighting.

Playing sports was the only thing Donika considered fun and good about attending school. Before leaving high school and during middle school, Donika played basketball, volleyball, and ran track. She also enjoyed reading and “hanging-out” in the library. Donika reported, “When I was in school, the teachers wrote me passes all the time and I went to the library. Currently, Donika continues to read and enjoys the library at the learning site. The librarian reported, “Donika is always reading and checking out books.” Upon reflection, she smiled and said, “I was a big dope because since they didn’t care, I didn’t either.”

Donika felt that obtaining her GED was important. She needed to complete her GED because she wanted to be example for her son. She heard that if you did not finish school, then you can’t expect your child(ren) to finish. Donika stated, “I want to at least finish school and give him [Michael] a reason to finish.”

Donika's perceptions of early childhood literacy development were that children learn as they mature and that children need to be taught at an early age to make learning easier for them later in school. When asked why some children read and write well in school and other do not, she replied, "Parents are teaching them at an early age. "Parents are teaching them how to read and write and say their ABC's." She compared her son's literacy development with those "other" parents by proclaiming, "My son knows his ABC's and he is only one." Donika's statements are in agreement with emergent literacy theory. Children engage in activities that promote literacy development before they enter formal education.

With regard to Piaget's cognitive developmental stages, Donika stated, "Start them off early." For newborns to 2 years old, she expressed "reading to the child, and parents should use educational toys to help their children learn math." Donika verbally demonstrated how to use toys for math. She stated, "Get [a] toy and tell them [child] one and have the child repeat, add another toy and count, then take toy away for subtraction."

"Children 2 to 7 years old should do activities that involve more adding and subtraction," reported Donika. Another activity was "writing like getting their letters down." For children 7 to 11 years old, Donika suggested, "Give them more activities with math which should be harder."

Donika was asked to name five important things she is doing to help Michael learn to read and write. She responded, "I am starting him off early in learning to count; I'm teaching him his ABC's; Michael sees me reading; we read together and we write." Emergent literacy behaviors are evident in their reported activities. She also stated, "The only thing that gets in my way of helping Michael is Barney—he loves that dinosaur."

At the end of the interview, Donika added, “the Even Start Program has been helpful because it gives [her] activities to do with Michael at home.” She also stated, “I’m learning in the program, but not fast enough to take the test in March or May.”

Following the interview, Donika and Michael were observed at 30-minute intervals for four weeks during PACT. The observations were recorded in the parental verbal and physical behavior data as shown in Table 26.

PACT began with an early childhood instructor reading a short story about the theme and activity for the day. Parents and their children watched and listened as the story was being read. Some children sat attentively on the floor in a semicircle in front of the teacher while their parents listened from the rear of the room. Other children sat beside their parents in a chair or in their parents’ lap as the story was being read. That scene was observed during all observations except where noted.

Observation 1-Parents were to read the short story to the children. Donika read with excitement as Michael looked on. Michael sat in her lap, helping her hold the book upright. Michael pointed out the characters in the book as Donika read. Michael was actively engaging in emergent literacy behaviors by referring to pictures in the books and his manipulation of the book. She praised him as he points out the characters. As he recited the names, places, and things out of the book, Donika confirmed his responses by repeating after him. Michael did the drawing and gluing activity as Donika watched. She demonstrated to him how to hold the marker(s) and as he drew she had him explain to her what he was drawing. There was a lot of physical and verbal communication between the two. She touched, held, and talked to him throughout PACT. Donika seemed to enjoy the interactions as much as Michael did.

Observation 2-Michael sat with the other children and listened to the story while Donika sat at a table in the rear. Michael was not interested in doing the activity but Donika grabbed him and pulled him to the table. In frustration, Michael threw the glue bottle on the floor and Donika spanked him. Michael grabbed a book, left Donika, and went to another mom for her to read to him. Donika collected the supplies and placed them in their proper place and sat in a chair in disgust. No positive physical interaction occurred between mom and son.

Observation 3-Donika was sitting in a chair in front of the children on the floor who were listening to the story being read and singing the theme song. Following conclusion of the story, Donika began singing to another child while Michael sat in the chair. He tried to get up from the chair but Donika told him in a stern voice to remain seated. He began to cry and she grabbed him by the arm and put him in her lap. Michael struggled to get free but she held him tightly and whispered in his ear. Donika spanked him and he sat in a chair. She began doing the activity while Michael watched. Soon after, an ESL teacher came and talked with him. Donika continued to show little patience with Michael. There was little affection shown by her. The only positive interaction Michael received was when the ESL teacher came and gave him a hug and talked with him.

Observation 4-Michael sat next to Donika as the story was being read. Michael seemed excited today and Donika seemed to have a better disposition. Donika retrieved the supplies for making the sailboats while Michael sat at the table anticipating fun. The theme was sailboats and learning colors. As Donika selected colors and called them by name, Michael repeated after her. Soon he was recognizing colors. Donika allowed

Michael to make the sailboats while she gave verbal demonstrative instructions. No scolding took place, and following the activity she gave him a hug.

In some instances, Michael's emergent literacy behaviors were supported by the parent. However, Michael was observed exploring different concepts and trying to construct meaning and understanding on his own.

Table 26

Donika observed parental verbal and physical behaviors.

	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3	Observation 4
1. Praising	X			X
2. Giving Direction	X		X	X
3. Scolding		X	X	
4. Questioning				
5. Answering	X			X
6. Giving Information	X			X
7. Affectionate Physical Contact	X			X
8. Patience	X			X
9. Parent/Child Activity Participation	X			X

Case Study C

Case study C was a Mexican-national family consisting of Laddie and her one year old daughter, Alicia. In 1989, Laddie received a degree in elementary education from the University of Mexico. She and her husband came to the United States as migrant workers. Laddie started the Even Start Family Literacy Program three months

prior to the time of the interview to learn the English language. Laddie was very excited about being interviewed because it provided her with the opportunity to have a dialog in English. Whenever Laddie had extreme difficulty expressing herself, I encouraged her to speak Spanish to keep her from getting frustrated. An interpreter was present during the interview to help with translation but was rarely used during this interview.

Prior to Laddie's interview, she completed a 15-question attitudinal inventory. The inventory was divided into three categories: parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and literacy participation.

Table 27 shows that Laddie agreed strongly with the statement that she really likes to teach Alicia something new. The implication is that Laddie understands her role as her child's first teacher and she enjoys doing it. She disagreed strongly that when Alicia does not learn, she scolds her.

Laddie responded on the inventory that she agreed strongly that much of her child's learning will take place before she enters kindergarten and Alicia learns by playing with other children (Table 28). Laddie seems to understand that Alicia gains knowledge and understanding from her environment as well as from her parent. She disagreed strongly that if they played whenever Alicia wanted to, not much learning would take place.

Table 27Laddie's inventory responses on parental attitudes

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. I really like to teach my child something new.	X			
2. My child's education is the responsibility of our family.		X		
3. My child's education is the sole responsibility of the school.		X		
4. I scold my child when he/she doesn't learn.				X

Table 28Laddie's inventory responses to perception of literacy development

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. Much of my child's learning will take place before he/she enters kindergarten or first grade.	X			
2. It is hard for me to tell when my child has learning something.			X	
3. More of my child's learning at this age takes place by watching people and things rather than being told.	X			
4. My child learns by playing with other children.	X			
5. If we play whenever my child wants to, not much learning will take place.				X
6. I imitate my child's speech when we play so that the child understands.			X	

Table 29 revealed that Laddie agreed strongly with the statements “my child needs to play with me” and “playing with my child is enjoyable.” However, she disagreed strongly with “it is difficult for her to think of things to say” to Alicia during play and that “it is difficult for her to stay interested” when playing with Alicia.

Laddie's home literacy material inventory for adults included street maps, cookbooks, phone books, and hardback and paperback books. Literacy materials that were considered for children only were blocks and coloring books. The dictionary, television, paper, crayons, pens, and pencils were literacy materials that were shared by

both adults and children in the home (Table 30). Ample amount of literacy materials are readily available for Alicia to use.

Table 29

Laddie's inventory responses on literacy participation with Alicia.

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. My child needs to play with me	X			
2. It is difficult for me to think of things to say to my child during play.				X
3. It is difficult for me to stay interested when playing with my child.				X
4. Playing with my child is enjoyable.	X			
5. Playing with my child motivates me to want to play more with my child.	X			

Laddie reported that she and Alicia engage in many activities that are associated with reading everyday. These reading activities include reading books, street signs, and labels. Playing make-believe, inquiring about daily activities, and singing are also reported as occurring everyday (Table 31). These reported activities are clear indications that emergent literacy development is occurring in the home. Visiting the library occurs once a week and cooking together is reported as occurring less than once a week.

Table 30Laddie's home literacy materials

1. <u>Literacy Materials</u>	Adult	Child
1. Newspapers		
2. TV Guide		
3. TV	X	X
4. Video Games		
5. Street Maps	X	
6. Cookbooks	X	
7. Phone Books	X	
8. Encyclopedias		
9. Dictionary	X	X
10. Music Books	X	X
11. Story Books	X	X
12. Magazines		
13. Paperback Books	X	
14. Hardback Books	X	
15. Pens/Pencils	X	X
16. Markers	X	X
17. Paper	X	X
18. Crayons	X	X
19. Blocks (Lego)		X
20. Coloring books		X
21. Memory cards		
22. Video-cassettes		
23. Refrigerator magnets		

Table 31Laddie's literacy activities with Alicia.

<u>Literacy Activities</u>	<u>How Often</u>
1. Read books	F*
2. Read street signs	F
3. Read labels	F
4. Draw pictures	F
5. Write name	F
6. Write stories	F
7. Scribble	F
8. Oral Storytelling	F
9. Cooking	R
10. Grocery Shopping	F
11. Play Make-believe	F
12. Visit Library	O
13. Visit Museum	F
14. Inquire About Daily Activities	F
15. ABC's	F
16. Tell time	F
17. Singing	F
Other_____	

Note: F= everyday; O= at least once a week; R= less than once a week; N= never

Laddie reported her “education was good.” She stated, “I always liked school and [to] learn many things.” Laddie believed her good education was attributed to “having good teachers who were available to answer questions.” Laddie’s educational experience has effected her in a positive way. She stated, “Education has given me the

preparation I need and help me teach my daughter.” Her experience taught her to “talk a lot with Alicia and show her things, to expose her to different ideas.” Laddie also commented, “Education has given me the drive to learn English and everything about it.” Her positive educational experience has taught her to “do much of [her] learning on [her] own” and “like to read many books.”

When asked why some children learn to read and write and others do not, Laddie commented, “Parents are interested in their children and encourage them,” and “Some parents don’t give enough attention to their children in the areas of reading and writing.” Laddie reported, “Each age has a specific development and learning activities should encourage the development.”

Parents with children between birth and two years old “need to do everything with [the] child, like sing, dance, play, and paint,” reported Laddie. She also stated, “Every situation should be a learning experience.” Parents with children two to seven years old should “do what they [children] like.” Laddie said, “Parents should ask and answer questions and always read to their children.” For the third stage of Piaget’s proposed stages of cognitive development, Laddie suggested, “communicate more with children,” “stress the importance of reading and writing,” and “read advanced books.” Laddie reported, “Teaching vowels, drawing, reading, singing, and spending a lot of time with Alicia are the most important activities we do together.” Shared reading activities seem to be Laddie’s way of facilitating Alicia’s literacy development.

Following the interview, Laddie and Alicia were observed at 30-minute intervals for four weeks during PACT. The observations recorded parental verbal and physical behaviors toward their child as shown in Table 32.

PACT began with an early childhood instructor reading a short story about the theme and activity for the day. Parents and their children watched and listened as the story was being read. Some children sat attentively on the floor in a semicircle in front of the teacher while their parents listened from the rear of the room. Other children sat beside their parents in a chair or in their parents' lap as the story was being read. That scene was observed during all observations except where noted.

Observation 1-Parents were to read the short story to their children. Laddie read as Alicia looked on. As she was reading, Laddie pointed at the text, and Alicia at times would put her hand on her mom's hand and follow along. Alicia was actively engaged in emergent literacy behaviors. She was learning and recognizing directional movement of print and correlating sound with words. At other times, Alicia pointed to the pictures and Laddie told her what they were. On occasion, Alicia would say a word that represented the picture and Laddie would praise her for her efforts. Alicia performed the drawing and gluing activity while Laddie gave instructions. Following the activity, Laddie gave Alicia a big hug and told her, "You did well."

Observation 2-Laddie and Alicia sat together and listened attentively to the story being read by the early childhood teacher. Laddie and Alicia participated in the activity together. Laddie demonstrated to Alicia how to hold the glue bottle and Alicia repeated after her. Throughout the activity, Laddie praised Alicia for her efforts. Following the completion of the activity, Laddie asked Alicia what she wanted to do now. As they colored together, Alicia told her mom what she was coloring and drawing. Again, emergent literacy behaviors were occurring.

Observation 3-Laddie and Alicia sat together listening to the story and later singing the theme song of the day. Laddie allowed Alicia to do the activity while she provided confirmation throughout the activity; for example, Alicia was gluing and Laddie said, “I see you are gluing.” Also, Laddie constantly praised Alicia throughout the activity. Following the activity, Laddie asked Alicia what she wanted to do next. They colored together.

Observation 4-Laddie and Alicia sat together as the story was read. Following the story, Laddie explained to Alicia what a sailboat was and had Alicia repeat it. They participated together in learning colors using sailboats. Laddie said “red” and Alicia repeated the word “red.” That process occurred with the colors green, blue, black, brown, yellow, orange, and white. Later, Laddie retrieved a crayon box for Alicia and told her to select a specific color. That occurred with each color they learned during that PACT. After that exercise, Alicia began drawing pictures with the crayons and told Laddie the story she was “writing.” After writing her story, Alicia left the work area and started playing with other children.

There is considerable emphasis placed on doing activities together. Laddie’s reported statements and actions are highly supportive of the emergent literacy perspective. It seems evident that in this case study a strong relationship exists between Laddie’s beliefs about early childhood development and the home literacy environment that she creates for her daughter, Alicia.

Table 32

Laddie's observed parental verbal and physical behaviors.

	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3	Observation 4
1. Praising	X	X	X	X
2. Giving Direction	X	X		X
3. Scolding				
4. Questioning		X	X	X
5. Answering				
6. Giving Information	X		X	X
7. Affectionate Physical Contact	X	X	X	X
8. Patience	X	X	X	X
9. Parent/Child Activity Participation	X	X	X	X

Case Study D

Case study D was a Mexican immigrant family consisting of Alejandra, 18, and her three-year-old son, Joshua. Alejandra has a five-year-old daughter, Erin, who attends kindergarten. Alejandra married her husband at the age of 13 and was told by him that she did not need to go back to school. So, following her eighth grade year, Alejandra did not go back to school. Alejandra was excited to be in the Even Start Family Literacy Program to obtain her GED.

Prior to her interview, Alejandra completed a 15 question inventory. The inventory was divided into three categories: parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and literacy development activities.

Table 33 revealed that Alejandra agreed strongly that she likes to teach Joshua something new and that his education is the responsibility of her family. Alejandra disagreed strongly with the statement that she scolds Joshua when he doesn't learn.

Table 33

Alejandra's inventory responses on parental attitudes

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. I really like to teach my child something new.	X			
2. My child's education is the responsibility of the school.	X			
3. My child's education is the sole responsibility of the school.	X			
4. I scold my child when he/she doesn't learn.				X

Alejandra's responses to the perception of literacy development were unremarkable. She agreed somewhat that Joshua's learning will take place before he enters kindergarten and that he learns by playing with other children (Table 33).

Alejandra did not respond to the statement, "it is hard for me to tell when my child has learned something new"; however she agreed strongly that she imitates Joshua's speech when they play together so that he will understand.

Table 34Alejandra's inventory responses to perception of literacy development

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. Much of my child's learning will take place before he/she enters kindergarten or first grade.		X		
2. It is hard for me to tell when my child has learning something.				
3. More of my child's learning at this age takes place by watching people and things rather than being told.		X		
4. My child learns by playing with other children.		X		
5. If we play whenever my child wants to, not much learning will take place.			X	
6. I imitate my child's speech when we play so that the child understands.	X			

Table 35 revealed that Alejandra agreed strongly that Joshua needs to play with her and that she enjoys playing with him. She also reported that playing with Joshua motivates her to want to play with him more. Alejandra disagreed strongly with the statements, "it's difficult for me to stay interested when playing with my child" and "it's difficult for me to think of things to say during play."

Table 35Alejandra's inventory responses on literacy participation with Michael

Inventory Statements	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
1. My child needs to play with me.	X			
2. It is difficult for me to think of things to say to my child during play.				X
3. It is difficult for me to stay interested when playing with my child.				X
4. Playing with my child is enjoyable.	X			
5. Playing with my child motivates me to want to play more with my child.	X			

Literacy materials reported in the home for adults include magazines (Table 36).

Literacy materials reported in the home for children include video games, paper, pens/pencils, desk, glue, paper, and hardback books. Items used by adults and children include video-cassette tapes and television. Alejandra added glue and a desk to the list of home literacy materials she has at home.

The literacy activities Alejandra engages in with her children are limited. She reads a book to them every night and helps them with writing their names. The majority of the items listed occur infrequently, and she was encouraged to add to the list if it did not represent what she did at home (Table 37). Literacy activities that she reported as never engaging with her children are writing stories, scribbling, and visiting the museum.

Table 36Alejandra's home literacy materials

<u>Literacy Materials</u>	Adult	Child
1. Newspapers		
2. TV Guide		
3. TV	X	X
4. Video Games		X
5. Street Maps		
6. Cookbooks		
7. Phone Books		
8. Encyclopedias		
9. Dictionary		
10. Music Books		
11. Story Books		
12. Magazines	X	
13. Paperback Books		X
14. Hardback Books		X
15. Pens/Pencils	X	X
16. Markers		
17. Paper		X
18. Crayons		X
19. Blocks (Lego)		X
20. Coloring books		X
21. Memory cards		X
22. Video-cassettes	X	X
23. Refrigerator magnets		X

Table 37Alejandra's literacy activities with Michael.

<u>Literacy Activities</u>	<u>How Often</u>
1. Read books	F*
2. Read street signs	N
3. Read labels	N
4. Draw pictures	R
5. Write name	F
6. Write stories	N
7. Scribble	N
8. Oral Storytelling	R
9. Cooking	F
10. Grocery Shopping	R
11. Play Make-believe	R
12. Visit Library	R
13. Visit Museum	N
14. Inquire About Daily Activities	R
15. ABC's	R
16. Tell time	R
17. Singing	R
Other _____	

Note: F= everyday; O= at least once a week; R= less than once a week; N= never

Alejandra has no high school experience, but she remembers that she enjoyed attending school. She stated, "I hated math, but I liked going to school to see and visit with my friends." Alejandra acknowledges that education is important, and she "begged

her husband to let her attend school.” She also stated, “I don’t read very well and I want to be able to help my children with their school work when they get older.”

When asked why some children learn to read and write well and others do not, Alejandra responded, “[children] pick up books and try to read them” and “parents are reading to their kids and the kids are reading to their parents.” She further explains, “That’s how my mother is—when my little sister was smaller, my mother read to her and she reads real good.”

With regard to Piaget’s cognitive developmental stages, Alejandra stated, “parents should keep reading to their kids.” She explains, “My little sister is 11 years old and my mother still reads to her and she reads to my mother.”

Alejandra reported that the most important activities she engages in with her children are “reading to them,” “answering questions,” “singing,” and “cooking.” She also stated, “My parents read to my kids and are teaching them Spanish.” Alejandra later responded, “I use to be scared to read to my children because I was afraid I wasn’t reading well. Now I really don’t care. My children love for me to read to them and I’m getting better at it.”

Following the interview, Alejandra and Joshua were observed at 30-minute intervals for four weeks during PACT. The observations recorded parental verbal and physical behavior data as shown in Table 38.

PACT began with an early childhood instructor reading a short story about the theme and activity for the day. Parents and their children watched and listened as the story was being read. Some children sat attentively on the floor in a semicircle in front the teacher reading the story while their parents listen from the rear of the room. Other

children sat beside their parents in a chair or in their parents' lap as the story was being read. That scene was observed during all observations except where noted.

Observation 1-Alejandra and Joshua sat at opposite ends of the semicircle. After the early childhood instructor finished reading, Joshua ran to the work table and waited for Alejandra. Joshua grew tired of waiting on Alejandra so he went to another table where a mom and her child were seated. In the meantime, Alejandra walked around and socialized with other people. The mother at the table watched as both children performed the activity. The others child's mom gave hugs and praises to both children. When Alejandra finished socializing, she went to the table in the rear of the room and sat until PACT was over.

Observation 2-Alejandra was not sitting near her son. Joshua was enjoying the reading and singing the theme song. He clapped, sang, and showed jovial body movements during that time. In the meantime, Alejandra sat in a chair away from the rest of the class. She periodically shouted commands across the room at Joshua. Eventually the early childhood instructor asked her to move to a table with Joshua. While Alejandra did the gluing activity, Joshua played with another child. Soon afterwards, Joshua came to see what Alejandra was doing. She began explaining to him what she was doing and he listened attentively. Joshua seemed to be getting restless and starting moving around the table. Alejandra jerked on his arm for him to remain still. She completed the activity, put the supplies in their proper place and they both left the room.

Observation 3-Alejandra and Joshua sat and listened to the story together. Following completion of the story, Alejandra collected the literacy materials and Joshua waited at the table. Alejandra started coloring with Joshua, and soon afterwards received a page on

her pager. Joshua was left alone to color while Alejandra left the room to make a telephone call. Eventually, Joshua went to the next table and colored, pasted, and drew with that family. Alejandra returned to class when PACT had concluded.

Observation 4-Joshua waited for Alejandra to arrive from her class. While waiting, he sat in of the early childhood education teacher as she read a story. Alejandra entered the classroom, took Joshua out, and they did not return to PACT.

Table 38

Alejandra's observed parental verbal and physical behaviors.

	Observation 1	Observation 2	Observation 3	Observation 4
1. Praising				
2. Giving Direction		X		
3. Scolding		X		
4. Questioning				
5. Answering				
6. Giving Information		X	X	
7. Affectionate Physical Contact			X	
8. Patience				
9. Parent/Child Activity Participation			X	

Alejandra seems to afford relatively little importance to Joshua's development during PACT. Her actions support her reported statements that they engage in limited literacy activities.

Case Studies Summary

Four families were selected for detailed analysis. The four families represented a cross-section of the ten parents who were interviewed. These families were observed during PACT and their actions were recorded. The parents participated in adult and parenting education and their children participated in early childhood literacy development.

Case Studies A, B, and C analysis revealed that these parents are purposefully increasing their literacy development. They are back in the classroom to either improve their academic skills to obtain a GED and later a job or increase their English skills to get a good job. During their observations, Case Studies A, B, and C are exhibiting positive verbal and physical behaviors. These parents are praising, patiently giving directions, providing physical contact, and participating in the planned activities. Case Study B has some inconsistencies with her behavior toward her son but she is exhibiting positive behaviors. Case Study D provides little or none of the above. The parent in this family seems to be more interested in what she wants to do and less on assisting her son with his development.

Summary

The data collected were presented in tables associated with patterns and themes that emerged around the concept of parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and literacy activities parents engaged in with their children. Four family case studies were presented to provide an in depth examination as it relates to the research questions.

The attitudinal inventory was given to 21 Even Start Family Literacy Program parents who represented the three adult education components of the program: adult basic education, adult secondary education, and English as a second language. A significant number of parents like teaching their children and believe that teaching their children is their primary responsibility. This is evidenced by parental responses on the inventory. The results showed that 20 (92.5%) parents agreed strongly with liking to teach their children something new, and 18 (85.7 %) parents believe that their child's education is the responsibility of the family.

The interviews revealed that parents are cognizant of how and when their children are learning. Although most parents are unaware of Piaget's cognitive developmental stages, parents are familiar enough with child development to know that their children should be steadily progressing. Therefore, some of their perceptions of early childhood literacy development are supported by the literature.

Parents are engaging in literacy activities with their children. This data is supported through observations during PACT and reported statements collected from the interviews, home literacy inventory, and literacy engagement activity forms. They seem to spend less time deliberately attempting to teach their children skills but more time supporting and encouraging their child's participation in literacy activities that reflect those of emergent literacy. Parents are responsive to their children's inquiries and display positive physical and verbal behaviors.

The data collected and presented in this chapter relied on various methods to address the research questions. The data were collected from parents who were recently enrolled in an Even Start Family Literacy Program. The data were presented in

interpretive comments and tables associated with patterns and themes that emerged to answer the research questions that guided this study. The three main categories are parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities parents engage in with their children.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine Even Start Family Literacy parents' attitudes toward education, their perception of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities they engage in with their children. The study was designed to present the adults' perspectives on and responsiveness to their education and their children's literacy development.

The study's significance is that by knowing parental attitudes toward education, their perceptions of literacy development, and the literacy activities used in the home, program directors can implement literacy development methods that take into account the views and knowledge of the parent. Teachers can adjust or modify their attitudes and behaviors to encourage and support parent participation in the classroom and in their children's development.

The overall findings were that parental attitudes toward education are influenced by prior educational experience as a student, self-concept, and socioeconomic conditions. These influences, whether positive or negative, had an impact on the attitudes of parents toward their own education as well as the literacy development of their children.

Finding concerning parental perceptions of early childhood education revealed that parents are aware that their children are learning and how they are learning. However, parents are unfamiliar with specific stages of early childhood literacy development.

Further, the findings revealed that parents engage in activities that promote and encourage emergent literacy, whether they are conscious of it or not and that parents may not know specific strategies for maximizing the emergent literacy experience.

The remainder of this chapter will discuss generalizations from this study about parental attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities parents engage in with their children that were derived from parental interviews and observations. This chapter will provide a summary of conclusions that can be made based on the study, the limitations of the study, recommendations for further studies, and implications the results may have for adult and family literacy instruction and program administration.

Generalizations & Discussion

Research Question One: What Are Parental Attitudes Toward Education?

There are several inferences concerning parental attitudes toward education that can be based on the data obtained during the research. These inferences can be helpful in understanding how and why specific characteristics of parents' prior educational experience as a student themselves, their self-concept as a student and as their child's first teacher, and socioeconomic conditions can influence parents' attitudes toward education.

Prior experience as a student influences parental attitudes toward education in two ways. First, teacher attitudes and expectations seem to be a primary factor that contributes to the shaping of parental attitudes as students toward education. Parental comments reflected parents' association to their educational experience with teacher attitudes. Seven out of ten parents reported that they had a positive educational experience. Of the seven parents who reported having a positive education experience,

five believed teacher attitudes were a contributing factor. One parent reported, “I did well in my subjects and had good support from my teacher,” while another remarked, “I was the teacher’s pet.” Another parent stated, “My teachers were good and available.”

Based on the study, if teachers were involved, exhibited high expectations, and displayed concern and interest toward the student, the student tended to make educational gains and have favorable opinions about education and its importance. However, if teachers were not involved, exhibited low expectations, and did not display concern and interest toward the student, there may be an increased tendency by students to demonstrate behaviors that show lack of interest in school and hold school in low importance. These behaviors have led to students dropping out of school. Parents who reported having a negative educational experience associated that experience with teachers who did not care about them or who had low expectations. Two parents reported that “teachers seemed to not care” and that teachers had “low expectations.” The data from this study points out that teachers have a significant influence on their students’ attitude towards education which can affect the parents’ decision to remain in school, become academically successful, and in most cases, pursue additional education.

In Case Studies A and B, teacher attitudes appeared to be a significant factor in parents’ dropping out of school. These parents felt that if the teacher did not care, why should they? Teacher attitudes were also a significant factor for the Case Study C parent who remained in school and pursued additional education. Laddie’s teachers were pleasant, encouraging, and available whenever she needed help.

The results obtained from this study support the literature in that parental attitudes are derived from their own educational experiences (Sherman, 1990). According to OTA

(1993), when parental educational experiences are negative, then most likely their attitudes toward their education and their children's education will be negative. Parents tended to display low self-esteem and low self-confidence regarding their ability to learn and to teach their children. There are some incidences in which parents are able to overcome their negative educational experiences and support and encourage their children to learn. The opposite occurs when the educational experience is positive.

Second, the parent's self-concept as a student influences parental attitudes toward education as well. Based on the study, parents who believe they were good academic students displayed confidence in their abilities to learn and exhibited high self-esteem. These parents tended to view education as an important tool to possess for self-improvement, productivity, and economic prosperity. The majority of parents in the study and in this group were English as a Second Language (ESL) parents. These parents generally possessed high school diplomas, certificates, or college degrees, and appeared interested in improving their English. However, a couple of ABE/ASE parents felt they were good students in school, but they dropped out of school to help support their families. The Case Study C parent was very confident in her learning abilities. She possessed a sense of empowerment, and approached learning new things as an exciting challenge.

Parents who had low self-esteem considered themselves academically poor students possessed low self-confidence in their learning abilities. They had a tendency to view education as a needed tool for survival, but they had apprehension about returning to the classroom (OTA, 1993; Sherman, 1990). One parent reported, "I couldn't read and was embarrassed to read to and in front of my children." ABE/ASE parents in this study

tended to fall in this category. One exception was an ESL parent who attended primary school in the United States but whose language barrier made it difficult for her to learn. She reported that out of frustration, she dropped out of school. Case Studies A, B, and D parents expressed nervousness about returning to the classroom again. They exhibited low self-confidence and were concerned about disappointing themselves and failing. However, Case Study A parent reported that she currently has caring and supporting teachers and feels that she will finish her GED.

Neuman and Roskos (1993) discussed how parents did not view themselves as teachers or providers of knowledge to their children because of their lack of education. In this study the ABE/ASE parents tended to fall within this group description. These parents had not received their high school diploma, they reported having teachers who did not care about them, and in some cases they had repeated a grade. Their attitudes toward their ability to aid in educating their children were based on their lack of high school accomplishments, unsuccessful and unrewarding educational experiences, and low self-concept.

Parental self-concept as their children's first teacher was acknowledged by most parents who believed they had an influence on their children's learning. These parents understood the connection and significance between their educational gains and their children's learning. One parent remarked, "I want him [son] to know that I think education is important by going back to school." Another parent stated, "I need to finish for my son's sake." Parent's self-concept as the child's first teacher can be observed in how parents are teaching their children. They display behaviors that validate their position as their child's first teacher. Parents model the importance of education by going

back to school. Parents read and study in the home, and their children observe their parents' behavior. Case Studies A, B, C, and D parents believe that what they do and believe will affect their children's attitudes and beliefs. These parents want their children to learn and be successful in school and in other endeavors their children pursue. The first step is recognizing and understanding the importance of education. These parents are returning to school to reinforce education and to learn the English language.

According to one parent, "They see me do homework and they want to do it too."

Another parent reported, "My son sees me getting my education, so he will want to get his."

According to Baker et al. (1995), parents recognize the link between their educational gains and their child's learning. According to several parents in this study, they were becoming educated so that their children will stay in school and learn. Parental self-concept as their child's teacher had emerged. This was seen as parents model the importance of education by going back to school, doing their homework in the presence of their children, and encouraging and assisting their children in their literacy development in the home. These characteristics seem to be influential in shaping the children's attitudes towards education (Baker et al., 1995).

Some parents are teaching their children when they participate in learning activities with their children. During observations and recorded statements, most parents observed were encouraging, providing direction, and supporting their children in their emergent literacy development. Most parents were responsive to their children's initiatives when they rendered praise for their children's efforts and accomplishments.

Most parents were building self-confidence and self-esteem in the child and, simultaneously, improving their own.

According to Baker et al. (1995), parental attitudes toward education have a strong effect on their children's motivation to learn. The more interested, motivated, and supportive parents are in learning for themselves and their children, the more eager their children will want to learn. This was evident in some case studies during PACT observations. As seen in Case Studies A, B, and C, the more support and encouragement the children received from their parents, the more the children were to learn. Although minimal contact existed between parent and child in Case Study D during PACT, the child continued to participate in the learning process with another family. The child received encouragement and continued to learn by exploring and experimenting with another adult. This seems to be an understandable occurrence to this parent due to the fact that the child's grandparents provide much of his literacy development.

Parents who are indifferent to the importance of education tend to change their beliefs toward education and make getting their education a priority when economic factors become significant. These parents believe that to improve their living standards a better job is required, and to obtain a better job higher education and/or training is needed. This assertion is supported by the survey data that reveal that four (57.1%) of the seven parents who were interviewed believe that the key to getting a better job is education. According to one parent, "Education wasn't important until I needed a job."

Although many parents make the autonomous decision to return to the classroom via the Even Start Family Literacy Program, there were some parents in this study who were strongly encouraged by federal and state government agencies to return to school

and get the education and skills to be marketable for the workforce. In some cases, parents may remain indifferent to the advantages of having an education until they are able to recognize significant academic progress and a link between real life skills and their education. Parental indifference to education alters when parents have the satisfaction of having their children view them as role models.

Research Question Two: What Are Parental Perception of Early Childhood Literacy Development?

Anderson (1995) found that parents place little importance on their knowledge and understanding of early childhood literacy development, but place more importance on supporting their child's participation in literacy behaviors or activities—a key tenet of an emergent literacy perspective (Sulzby & Teale, 1986). Many children are entering formal education already possessing literacy knowledge due to emergent literacy practices in the home.

Most Even Start Family Literacy parents are cognizant of how and when their children are learning. These parents reason that external factors such as peer interaction and sibling and parental involvement influence how their children learn. The learning process can occur during direct interaction with others or by observation. According to the survey data in this study, 17 (81%) parents believe that their children's learning process takes place during direct interaction with others (adults and/or peers), and 13 (61.9%) parents believe that the learning process takes place by observation. Parents know that their children learn from older children in the home. The younger children watch older siblings and mimic their behavior, specifically reading and writing behaviors.

What was noted in this study was that parents were not only aware that their children should be progressing, but what they should be progressing toward. The data links what parents think their children should be learning and doing to Piaget's (1959) cognitive stages of development.

Contrary to Baker et al. (1995), most parents in this research study understood the significance of the literacy behaviors their children exhibited and tended not to dismiss those literacy behaviors as irrelevant. According to the parents in this study, their children's participation in literacy activities was relevant to their learning. When their children held books, most parents knew this was the beginning stage of reading books.

Although most parents were unaware of literacy stages of development, parents were able to discuss how their children learn information—through parental and sibling involvement, peer interaction, or an innate ability. Parental and sibling involvement and peer interaction supports Vygotsky's (1978) postulation that children gradually acquire literacy through the interaction and socialization with others who are literate.

Peer interaction occurs in the same manner. Parents are aware that their children learn from their playmates. Playmates act as cognitive resources and foster the development of social skills. The relationships with their playmates encourage children's learning through peer tutoring, peer collaboration, and peer modeling. The child's learning activities can include pretend play, singing, drawing pictures, writing stories, or storytelling sharing. Parents also recognize that parental involvement is a key component of their child's learning. Parental involvement can include reading to the child, having the child read to the parent, writing together, and asking and answering questions.

Even Start Family Literacy parents are aware of when their children are learning. The survey analysis reveals that 17 (80.9%) parents in this study believe they know when their children are leaning. Parents participate in learning activities and observe as their children engage in emergent literacy activities daily. Although parents measure their children's learning achievement by their children's ability to match, select, and/or recite learned information, they are able to recognize benchmark achievement that was not previously displayed. Such achievement may include holding writing utensils and books upright, pointing at words on a page, and saying or writing the alphabet. Case Study C parent was very observant. When her child makes the slightest improvement or adjustment in reading and writing, the parent is eager to acknowledge her achievements and efforts.

Parents know that their children should be able to perform certain activities by specific ages. Parents gain this knowledge through generalized observations of children in their families and communities. A parent reported, "Having had to help my mother raise my first cousins, I learned how children grow." The knowledge is also incidentally acquired via literature in doctor's offices, purchased baby books and magazines, and literature sent in the mail from health insurance plans. Even Start Family Literacy parents in this study believe that children should be able to say and recognize their ABC's and count to twenty by age four. Parents believe children should be able to read books by age seven, but the parents did not specify what reading levels their children should be reading by age seven. Overwhelmingly, parents believe that reading to children should begin at birth and continue to age ten. According to the parents in the study, children should begin reading to their parents at age eight.

Parents in the study acknowledge that children learn by exploring and pretending during play; however, uncertainty exists as to whether playing is always a mode for learning. Indications from parental responses to the survey questions about playtime are that parents seem to lack a clearly defined concept of playtime and its role in child literacy development. Although some parents believe playtime is an opportunity for learning, others perceive playtime as a normal activity for children that does not have literacy value.

This data supports Wassermann's (1992) research that most parents were uncertain as to the value of pretend play as an educational learning experience. However, parents in that study were given practical ideas, explanations regarding the validity of pretend play, participated in role playing, and watched their children participate in the pretend play. Upon completion of the research, most parents' opinions regarding pretend play changed toward a favorable opinion.

The results of this study show that Even Start Family Literacy parents do not recognize the developmental stages, their children progress through as defined by Piaget, but know that their children should be progressing. Parents in this study were able to express what they believe their children should be learning during Piaget's stages of development. During the sensory motor stage when children learn through their senses, parents reported that reading to the children helped the children prepare for formal education. During infancy, children respond to the sound of the parent as they read. Parents reported that children should continue to be read to and that children begin to read for themselves, identify objects, and group like things in the pre-operational stage.

During the concrete operational stage, parents reported that children should be doing a lot of mathematical activities, reading, and answering and asking questions.

Research Question Three: What Are Parent/Child Engagement In Literacy Activities?

Even Start Family Literacy parents say they are promoting early childhood literacy development by providing literacy materials in the home, encouraging the use of the literacy materials, and engaging in literacy activities with their children; thus their home environment is related to fostering child development and literacy for themselves. The results of this study are generally consistent with those of Dorsey-Gaines and Taylor (1988), who found that parental reading was usually conducted in the presence of their children. Also, reading and writing materials were readily available in the home.

Parents report that they have an array of literacy materials in the home for themselves and for their children. Examples of these literacy materials were various books, paper, pens/pencils, and videocassettes. The indications are that parents are able to recognize what are considered literacy materials and understand how they are used for early child literacy development. Parents encourage the use of literacy materials by role modeling, supporting their children to participate in literacy activities, and engaging in activities with their children. Case Studies A, B, C, and D reported that their literacy material ensemble is abundant. They have numerous literacy materials for the entire family. The materials are not lying around unused but are used frequently in the home by the parents, other adults living in the household, children, and parent and child together.

The results indicate that families are promoting and supporting literacy development. Saracho (1997) concluded that promotion of literacy is achieved by the quantity and use of literacy materials in the home and interpersonal interaction with

family members concerning literacy activities. Parents in this study are actively engaging in literacy activities that support their child's development. Reading to and with their children is an overwhelmingly reported activity. Reading acts as a springboard for other modes of support such as asking and answering questions and positive interaction.

Parental modeling includes but is not limited to reading books and magazines, writing letters and notes, doing homework, looking up words in the dictionary, and locating information in the telephone book. Even Start Family Literacy parents increase the use of literacy materials in the home when they encourage their children's literacy development experiences. Parents encourage literacy development by requesting the children to color, write, draw, tell a story, count, and ask questions.

The literacy experiences that the children engage in are considered emergent literacy development. Children engage in writing experiences when they are scribbling and drawing and can provide a detailed story or description of the writing product. Phonemic awareness is fostered in the home because parents are purchasing videos and cassette tapes that have nursery rhymes, songs, and word games that children can follow along.

Parental engagement in literacy activities with their children is evident by the activities observed and reported by the parents. Parents are reading, writing, talking, and spending time with their children. During the activities, parents are responsive to their children's inquiries and display positive physical and verbal behaviors. However, this is not evident in Case D, where minimal positive interactions were seen during PACT between parent and child. The parent had previously reported having limited activity engagement with her children in the home.

The results of this study do not support the conclusions of Elish-Piper (1997) and McCarthy (1997) that low-income and low literacy parents are less likely to read to their children. Clearly in this present study, most Even Start Family Literacy parents are reading to their children. Shockely (1994) and Baker et al. (1995) point out that reading is the best home literacy activity parents can engage in with their children because it stimulates oral language and listening skills.

Most Even Start Family Literacy parents in this case study are only engaging in activities that they know support emergent literacy development, but are engaging in activities that they would not normally think are conducive to learning. Cooking, grocery shopping, and playing make-believe with their children are activities parents engage in with them but are unaware of their educational value. Parental participation in these and other activities is merely due to ordinary routines.

It is implied in the Enz and Searfoss (1996) research that practical ideas in the home can support literacy development. The ideas suggested by Enz and Searfoss are utilized in Even Start Family Literacy parents' homes. However, some parents are unaware that those activities support literacy development. Parents are cooking and grocery shopping with their children; parents are also playing make believe with their children. Neuman and Roskos's (1993) research suggests parents initially believed that pretend play was an ordinary activity without significant educational value. At the conclusion of the study, parents began to move away from the idea that "pretend play has no significant educational value" to "play is a means for literacy learning"(p. 68). Even Start Family Literacy parents tended to be on both ends of the spectrum. Some parents believed that pretend play had no educational value, and others believed that pretend play

is a means for literacy learning all the time. Perhaps parents need to be informed of how play is valuable and conducive to learning.

Participation in literacy activities exists in the Even Start Family Literacy families. The literacy activities encourage development among the parents as well as the children. Parents self-concept and self-esteem increases and their role as their child's first teacher is enhanced. Children are developing cognitively as well as socially, and the relationship between parent and child is strengthened. These relationships are evident in Case Studies A, B, and C. However, Case Study D requires intensive self-efficacy intervention and knowledge regarding the importance of parent-child relationships, engagement in activities that foster early childhood literacy development, being able to recognize when her children engage in emergent literacy activities, and how to encourage and support their development.

Summary of Discussions and Conclusions

The majority of the data gathered in this study is supported by the literature. Parental attitudes toward education are shaped by prior educational experiences. If the prior educational experience is negative, then parental attitudes toward education may be negative as well. The same is true used for parents who had a positive prior education experience. The data revealed that several factors contribute to parental attitudes. The factors are teacher attitudes, self-concept as a student, and self-esteem and self-confidence.

The findings revealed that parents know when and how their children learn. Parental beliefs and ideas regarding their children's development supports Vygotsky's (1978) postulation that children acquire literacy through interaction with their

environment and with others who are literate. Parents in this study were not aware of Piaget's stages of development but were able to provide suggestions for each stage to increase their children's ability to learn to read and write.

Parents engage in many activities with their children that promote and encourage emergent literacy development. Parents are reading and writing, telling stories, and counting with their children. Parents are participating in activities with their children that to them had no educational value. Such activities include singing, cooking, grocery shopping, pretend play, and asking and answering questions. Parents in this study also reported having an abundant amount of literacy materials in the home. The literacy materials include pens/pencils, crayons, coloring and number books, paper, various styles of books, newspaper, magazines, and videogames.

Limitations of the Study

First among the limitations in this study is that the majority of the sample consisted of ESL parents who were relatively well educated in their native language. The data may not accurately represent ABE, ASE, and ESL parents who are not well-educated in their native language.

The second limitation relates to the data gathered during the interviews. The data showed so much teacher involvement in the formation of attitudes that it might have been more telling had a sample of current teachers been interviewed to corroborate current parental attitudes. Current teacher data could provide another dimension to parental attitudes toward education.

The third limitation was the low number of parents observed during PACT and the amount of time allocated to each parent. Four parents were selected from the ten

interviewed to be observed. Observational data were collected on the four parents in 30-minute sessions during PACT. The data could have more depth had all interviewees been observed and had the observation time been extended to at least one hour to obtain more detailed information that would substantially support or contradict prior recorded information. Perhaps if videotaping of PACT had occurred, additional data collected by this medium could have been beneficial to the study. Furthermore, when manually recording information there is a tendency to miss some interactions. Home visits were not conducted to corroborate the engagement in literacy activities that were reported as well as actual literacy materials in the home.

Finally, because the study relied heavily on self-reported data, we cannot be certain that the information reported represents what parents actually do with their children to support early childhood literacy development.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the findings in this study, several recommendations can be made which might encourage further study into parental attitudes toward education, parents' perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities they engage in with their children.

One study should be undertaken that includes ABE, ASE, and ESL parents who have not obtained their high school diploma or degrees. The literature focuses on populations who have limited education, are low-income, have minimal parenting education, and who encounter barriers that interfere with their participation in family literacy programs. However, a separate study would be instrumental in examining the needs and interests of well-educated ESL parents.

The next recommendation relates to teacher attitudes toward their adult students. Parental attitudes toward education are influenced by prior student experiences with teachers. Knowledge of teacher attitudes, obtained by interviews, could provide insights as to how teachers are addressing the needs and interests of their students.

Third, a longitudinal study from entry to exit, investigating Even Start Family Literacy program parents' attitudes toward education, their perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities they engage in with their children should be conducted. The current study examined these parental attitudes and behaviors on entry into the Even Start Family Literacy Program only. Further research should look at attitudinal changes, if any, to determine if they persist and for how long. The study should incorporate a substantial number of home visits to determine whether negative or positive parental verbal and physical behaviors such as praising, affectionate contact, patience, and scolding are carried out in the home.

Saracho (1997) concludes that young children learn to read and increase their literacy experiences when the environment is supportive and interactive. The longitudinal study should also include interviewing children and observing what, if any, emergent literacy behaviors occur, and how these behaviors are supported in the home. The basic understanding of how families promote learning can aid early childhood, adult, and K–12 teachers in devising methods to enhance literacy development rather than ignore family literacy experiences and dismiss how these events can perpetuate school learning.

Fourth, the Cunningham et al. (1991) research revealed that parents believe that literacy material and activity engagement are important during the early years, but

emergent literacy is not strongly supported in the home. A study of the correlation between parental perceptions of literacy development and documented literacy development should be conducted to determine if development is supported and if it correlates with parental knowledge of the development process.

Lastly, a larger population needs to be studied in order to increase the generalizability of the results.

Implications For Instruction

First and foremost, the data showed that parents realize the importance of achieving an education regardless of past experiences. However, negative and positive prior educational experiences shape parental attitudes toward education that eventually affect the literacy activities and experiences their children will have in the home.

Assessing parental attitudes toward education can be beneficial to adult educators. Teachers have the ability to change attitudes. From the study, several students commented that they have “supportive and caring teachers who make learning fun now,” while others reported having teachers who were available, caring, and who show interest in their learning currently. When teachers are aware of their student’s attitudes and how those attitudes are shaped, teachers can adjust their behaviors and attitudes to create an environment that encourages individual learning and growth among their students. It is very important to students that teachers are encouraging and positive.

Knowing parental attitudes toward education and how the parents/students view their present and past educational experiences, teachers are able to modify their instructional strategies that create individualized and engaging curricula related to the student’s needs and interests. As these areas of adult learning are addressed, parents

increase their quality of life and improve the chances that their children will be successful in school (Morrow, 1997; OTA, 1993; Schaefer, 1991).

During PACT, early childhood educators emphasize that parents have a considerable impact on their children's attitudes toward education, and that parental attitudes and behaviors will affect subsequent educational experiences of the child. Early childhood educators' knowledge of parental attitudes toward education and their attitudes toward their children's learning could not only strengthen the curriculum for intergenerational family literacy, but the educators could become more aware of why parents respond the way that they do to their and their children's educational experiences.

Knowledge of parental attitudes toward education allows the early childhood educators to modify their own attitudes and instructional behaviors to either reinforce or change parental beliefs and behavior as appropriate. The data shows that ambiguity exists among parents regarding child's play. Some parents are not sure whether play can be a learning activity (Morrison & Rusher, 1999). Equipped with this information, early childhood educators can integrate the concept of playtime, the skill learned through play, and how to assess learning during play in the educators' training of parents as their children's first teachers.

Learning can be enhanced when early childhood educators know what parent and child is doing together in the home and what types of literacy materials are available. Instead of focusing on what parents' lack or what they are not doing, early childhood educators can take what parents are doing with their children in the home and build on that. Complacent parents can become excited parents through PACT and take home activities when a positive relationship has been established between the parent and the

early childhood educator. The early childhood educator establishes this relationship by understanding why the parent is in the program, and accentuating what the parent is doing with the child regardless of how simple and uneventful it may be. Eventually these parents will become excited because they are learning something that would help their children and put the new learning into practice (Handel, 1992).

Furthermore, the implication for instruction of primary educators is that they need to know and understand that parents are engulfed in issues that affect their learning and their children's learning as well. Some parents may often equate the school system with painful negative experiences. These issues or experiences can range from poor academic skills, low self-confidence and low self-esteem, lack of support from other adults in the family, and possible ridicule for returning to school to get an education. These are just a few issues that effect participation in adult education. When parents are apprehensive about returning to the classroom, educators must be sensitive. When the parent's issues are addressed and progress is noticeable to the parent, parents are more likely to participate and learn practical activities that will develop their children's literacy.

Parents may be reserved in their approach to education or those involved in education. These parents may not know how to approach the learning institution if they face a language barrier. Teachers need to be cognizant of family's circumstances so that the parents feel welcomed, and are not embarrassed into not participating.

Many parents who participate in their child's literacy development. Parents not only provide literacy materials in the home, but engage in activities with their children (Anderson, 1995b; Dorsey-Gaines & Taylor, 1988). Parents are responsive to their children's attempts to read, write, and communicate in the home, however different from

the expectations of formal education (Morrow & Strickland, 1989). The steps to integrating home and school have become apparent. Emergent literacy is occurring in the home and children are entering the school system with literacy experiences. Instead of concentrating on what the student lacks when he or she enters formal education, educators need to examine what's going on in the home and build on that learned knowledge. Teachers should not only know what is happening in the home, but should be able to take that knowledge and integrate it into the classroom. As previously mentioned, less attention should be paid to what the children lack and more attention placed on what they know and what they bring to the classroom.

Summary

This qualitative case study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are parental attitudes toward education?
2. What are parental perceptions of early childhood literacy development?
3. What literacy activities do parents engage in with their children?

The purpose of the study was to examine and document parental responsiveness to their children's literacy development. To document parental attitudes toward education, an examination of their prior educational experience needed to occur. According to the literature (Briggs, 1994; Neuman & Roskos, 1993; OTA, 1993; Sherman, 1990), the parent's prior educational experience can become a barrier to self-improvement or to recognizing their roles as their child's first teacher. However, parents are coming to accept their roles as their child's first teacher by valuing and modeling literacy behaviors regardless of their prior educational experience.

Parental perception of early childhood development is an area in which parents place little emphasis on, but are making mental notations as to how their children are developing and progressing.

The parents in this study engage in literacy activities with their children. Although parents may not be aware of the true value of the activity, they know that their children are learning. Participation and support of activities in the home not only assists in increasing parental self-concept as a teacher, but enhances the relationship between parent and child. Emergent literacy behaviors are occurring in the home, and parents are supportive of the child's attempts to become literate.

This chapter provided generalizations, discussion, and implications for research in adult and family literacy. In order to help the child become better prepared for formal education, parental attitudes toward education and their engagement in literacy activities with their children should be explored. Examining and incorporating this knowledge can better serve the family unit holistically and individually. Parents play a vital role in the success of their children, and the needs of the parent are directly related to that success.

Even Start Family Literacy programs and others have strategically implemented this concept into their framework, thus creating programs that provide literacy experiences that benefit all family members. The Even Start Family Literacy programs are sensitive to the strengths, interests, and needs of adults and children.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, J. (1995a). How parents' perceptions of literacy acquisition relate to their children's emerging literacy knowledge. Reading Horizons, 35,(3), 209-228.
- Anderson, J. (1995b). Listening to parents' voices: Cross cultural perceptions of learning to read and to write. Reading Horizons, 35,(5), 394-413.
- Auerbach, E. R. (1989). Toward a social-contextual approach to family literacy. Harvard Educational Review, (59), 165-181.
- Baker, L., Serpell, R., & Sonnenschein, S. (1995). Opportunities for literacy learning in the home of urban preschoolers. In L.M. Morrow (Ed.), Family Literacy: Connections in schools and communities (pp. 236-251). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.
- Beck, I., & Juel, C. (1992). The role of decoding in learning to read. In A. Farstrup & S. Samuels (Eds.), What research has to say about reading instruction. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. (1996). Tools of the mind: The Vygotskian approach to early childhood education. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Briggs, N. (1994). The relationship between adult participation in a family literacy program and the reading attitudes, behaviors, and home environment of adult and child family members. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- Clay, M. (1966). Emergent reading behavior. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

- Clay, M. (1967). The reading behavior of five-year-old children: A research report. New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 2, 11-31.
- Clay, M. (1993). Already a learner: A fable. Reading Today, 3, 10-12.
- Chomsky, C. (1972). Stages in language development and reading exposure. Havard Educational Review, 42, 1-33.
- Christenson, S.L. (1990). Differences in students' home environments: The need to work with families. School Psychology Review, 4, 505-517.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). Data collection and data analysis and representation. Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions (pp. 109-165). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cunningham, J.W., Fitzgerald, J., & Spiegel, D.L. (1991). The relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of emergent literacy. Journal of Reading Behavior, 23(2), 191-212.
- Dorsey-Gaines, C., & Taylor, D. (1988). Growing up literate: Learning from inner-city families. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Elish-Piper, L. (1997). Literacy and their lives: Four low-income families enrolled in a summer family literacy program. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 40(4), 256-268.
- Enz, B. & Searfoss, L. (1996). Expanding our views of family literacy. The Reading Teacher, 49(7), 576-579.
- Felton-Collins, V., & Peterson, R. (1986). The Piaget handbook for teachers and parents: Children I the age of discovery, preschool- third grade. Columbia University: Teachers College Press.

Fields, M., Lee, D., & Spangler, K. (1991). Let's begin reading right: Developmentally appropriate beginning literacy. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Gesell, A. (1925). The mental growth of the pre-school child. New York: Macmillan.

Goodman, K., & Goodman, Y. (1979). Learning to read is natural. In L.B. Resnick & P. Weaver (Eds.), Theory and practice of early reading. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Goodman, Y. (1967). A psycholinguistic description of observed oral reading phenomena in selected young beginning readers. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Wayne State University, Detroit.

Handel, R. (1992). The partnership for family reading: Benefits for families and schools. The Reading Teacher, 46 116-126.

Hastings, C.N., Linn, R.L., & Meyer, L.A. (1990). What parents do that correlates with early reading achievement (Technical Report No. 518). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED325830).

Hausman, B., Seppanen, P., & Weiss, H. (1990). Innovative models to guide family support and education policy in the 1990's. An analysis of four pioneering state programs: Connecticut, Maryland, Missouri, and Minnesota. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project, Graduate School of Education.

Heath, S.B. (1986). Separating things of the imagination from life: Learning to read and write. In a E. Sulzby, & W. Teale (Ed.), Emergent literacy: Writing and reading (pp. 156-172). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Heath, S. B., & Mangiola, L. (1991). Children of promise: Literate activity in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Holdaway, D. (1979). The foundations of literacy. New York: Ashton Scholastic.

Hsu, Y. (1995). Emergent literacy and young children. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED382403).

Lujan, M.E. (1985). The effect of parent training on preschool literacy development. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New Mexico State University.

Mayfield, M., & Ollila, L. (1992). Home and school together: Helping beginning readers succeed. In A. Farstrup, & S. Samuels (Ed.), What research has to say about reading instruction (pp. 17-45). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

McCarthy, S.J. (1997). Making the invisible more visible: Home literacy practices of middle-class and working class families. Early Child Development and Care, 127, 179-189.

McGee, L.M., & Richgels, D.J. (1990). Literacy's beginnings: Supporting young readers and writers. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

McKee, P., & Rhett, N. (1995). The even start family literacy program. In L.M. Morrow (Ed.), Family literacy: Connections in schools and communities (pp. 155-166). NJ: Rutgers University.

Morrison, G.S., & Rusher, A.S. (1999). Playing to learn. Dimensions of Early Childhood, 27, 3-8.

- Morrow, L.M. (1993). Literacy development in the early years (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Morrow, L.M. (1997). Literacy development in the early years (3rd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Morrow, L.M., & Strickland, D.S. (1989). Family literacy and young children. The Reading Teacher, 49, 530-531.
- Neuman, S., & Roskos, K. (1993). Enhancing Head Start parents' conceptions of literacy development and their confidence as literacy teachers: A study of parental involvement. Early Child Development and Care, 89, 57-73.
- Ninio, A. (1979). The naïve theory of the infant and other maternal attitudes in two subgroups in Israel. Child Development, 50, 976-980.
- Parks, R. (1995). The influence of a family literacy program on low socio-economic families and their children. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Miami.
- Patten, M. (1998). Questionnaire research: A practical guide. Pycszak Publishing: Los Angeles.
- Piaget, J. (1959). The language and thought of a child (3rd ed., Majorie and Ruth Gabain, Trans.). London: The Humanities Press Inc. (Original work published in 1923)
- Piattelli-Palmarini, M. (1980). Language and learning: The debate between Jean Piaget and Noam Chomsky. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pulaski, M. (1980). Understanding Piaget: An introduction to children's cognitive development. New York: Harper & Row.

Rettinger, G.S. (1996). Parents and preschoolers: Literacy partners (Keys for Kids). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 402493).

Reynolds, A.J. (1992). Comparing measures of parental involvement and their effects on academic achievement. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 7, 441-462.

Ricciuti, R., St. Pierre, A., & Tao, F. (1997). Third National Even Start Evaluation: Overview. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service.

Saracho, O.N. (1997). Using the home environment to support emergent literacy. Early Child Development and Care, 127, 201-216.

Schaefer, E. (1991). Goals for parent and future parent education: Research on parental beliefs and behavior. Elementary School Journal, 91(3), 239-247.

Sherman, J. (1990). Change theory and increase participation in adult basic education. Journal of Adult Education, 18, 18-29.

Shockley, B. (1994). Extending the literature community: Home-to-school and school-to-home. The Reading Teacher, 47(6), 500-502.

Sulzby, E. (1985). Children's emergent reading of favorite storybooks. Reading Research Quarterly, 20, 458-481.

Sulzby, E. (1986). Writing and reading: Signs of oral and written language organizations in the young child. In a E. Sulzby, & W. Teale (Ed.), Emergent Literacy: Writing and reading (pp. 50-89). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Sulzby, E., & Teale, W. (1986). Emergent literacy as a perspective for examining how young children become writers and readers. In a E. Sulzby, & W. Teale (Ed.), Emergent Literacy: Writing and reading (vii-xxv). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Tao, F. (1997). National Evaluation of the Even Start Family Literacy Program (Interim Report 1995). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 410037)

Teale, W.H. (1982). Toward a theory of how children learn to read and write naturally. Language Arts, 59, 555-570.

Texas Education Agency. (2000). Glossary (SAS-A331-00). Austin, TX: Author.

Texas Education Agency Proposal Application. (1997). Even Start Family Literacy Program. Austin, TX: Colley, Maureen.

U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment. (1993). Adults as learners and the literacy system: A patchwork of programs and resources. Adult literacy and new technology: Tools for a lifetime (pp. 61-126). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (1994). Family-child engagement in literacy activities: Changes in participation between 1991 and 1993. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1962). Thought and language (E. Hanfmann & G. Vakar, Ed. and Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wassermann, S. (1992). Serious play in the classroom: How messing around can win you the Noble Prize. Childhood Education, 68, 133-139.

Appendix A
Adult Consent Form

Parent's Name: _____

Date: _____

I hereby agree to participate in the parental attitude study offered to the adults who bring their children to the Even Start Family Literacy Program.

I understand that I will be asked to complete a parental attitude survey at the beginning of the study.

I understand that if I am selected to continue in the study, I will be asked a variety of questions in an interview format in which I will discuss my attitudes toward education, perceptions of early childhood literacy development, and the literacy activities I participate in with my child(ren).

I grant permission for the project director/researcher to audio-tape all interviews with me.

I grant permission for the project director/researcher to audio-tape and observe my interactions with my child during parent-child interaction time.

I understand that my child will not be interviewed or observed at any other time outside of parent-child time.

I understand that the project director/researcher will assure me and my child's confidentiality and that the information collected in this study will be revealed to no one other than the researcher/project director.

I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time simply by indicating my desire to do so to the project director/researcher.

I understand that my decision to withdraw from the study will in no way affect the service provided to me or my child by the Even Start Family Literacy Program now or in the future.

I hereby grant permission for the project director/researcher to access my documents and records that reveals items such as income, length of participation in Even Start, education level, etc.

I hereby grant permission for the project director/research to include the collected information in the study report.

Please Print—Name of Parent

Signature of Parent

Date

Appendix B
 Statistical Demographics
 Even Start Family Literacy Program (All) Sites
 1998-1999
 N=112

Characteristics	Frequency
Marital Single Couple (married or singles living together)	 30.6% 51.3%
Average No. of Children in household	4
Other Adult Members in household	17.1%
Gender Female Male	 99% 1%
Ethnicity Black Hispanic Caucasian Other	 18% 78% 2% 2%
Education $\geq 8^{\text{th}}$ grade 9-12 th grade 12 th grade \leq	 32% 59% 9%
Average Length in Program	8 months

Appendix C Attitudinal Inventory

Parent's Name: _____

Date: _____

	<u>Agree strongly</u>	<u>Agree somewhat</u>	<u>Disagree somewhat</u>	<u>Disagree strongly</u>
1. I really like to teach my child something new.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. My child's education is the responsibility of our family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. My child's education is the sole responsibility of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I scold my child when he/she doesn't learn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Much of my child's learning will take place before he/she enters kindergarten or first grade.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. It is hard for me to tell when my child had learned something.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. More of my child's learning at this age takes place by watching people and things rather than being told.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. My child learns by playing with other children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. If we play whenever my child wants to, not much learning will take place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I imitate my child's speech when we play so that the child understands.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<u>Agree strongly</u>	<u>Agree somewhat</u>	<u>Disagree somewhat</u>	<u>Disagree strongly</u>
11. My child needs to play with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. It is difficult for me to think of things to say to my child during play.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. It is difficult for me to stay interested when playing with my child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Playing with my child is enjoyable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Playing with my child motivates me to want to play more with my child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

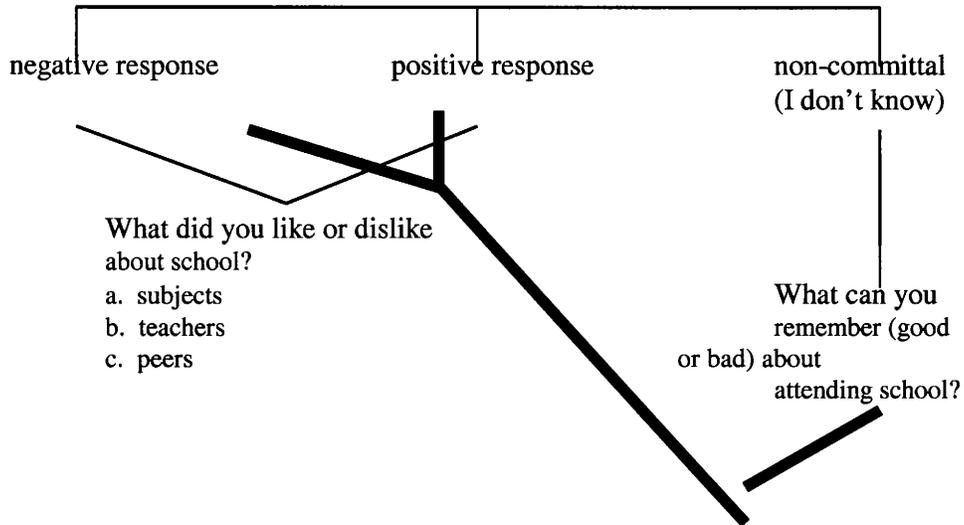
Parks, R. (1995).

Appendix D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

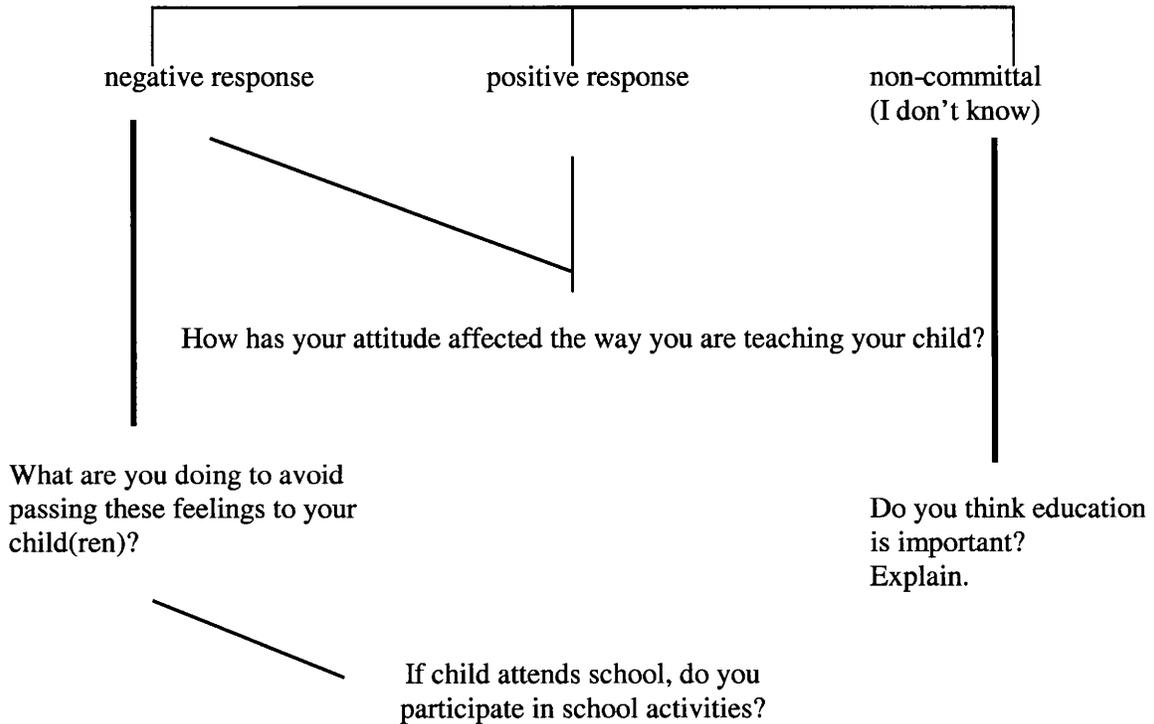
- 1) Describe your own educational experience.
- 2) How does your experience affect your attitude toward education?
- 3) Why do you think some children learn to read and write well in school and others do not?
- 4) What can parents of children birth to 2 years of age do to help their children learn to read and write better when they start school?
- 5) What can parents of children 2 to 7 year of age do to help their children learn to read and write better when they start school?
- 6) What can parents of children 7 to 11 year of age do to help their children learn to read and write better while they are in school?
- 7) What are five important things you are doing to help your child learn to read and write?
- 8) What circumstances get in the way of you engaging in literacy activities with your child?

Appendix E Expanded Interview questions

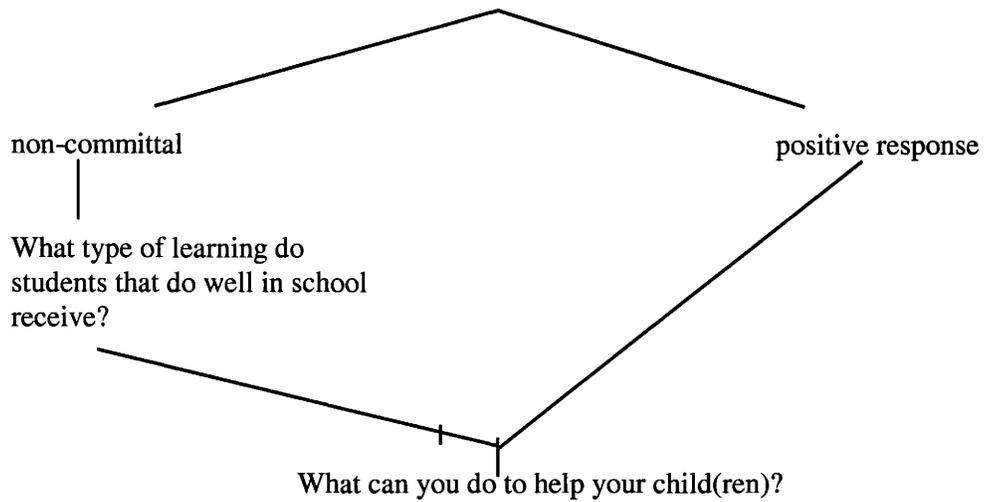
1. Describe Your Own Educational Experience



2. How does your educational experience affect the way you feel about education now?

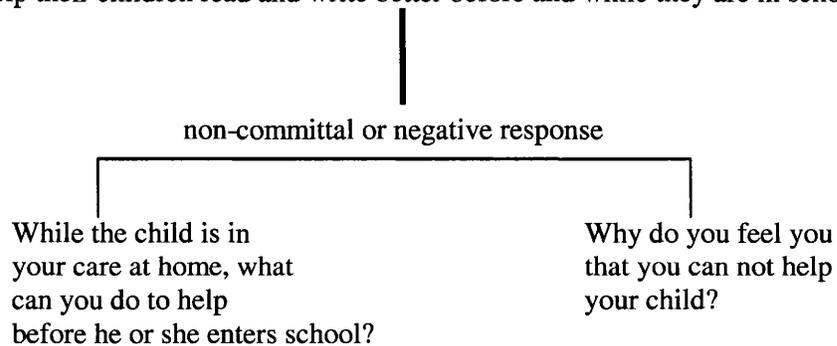


3. Why do you think some children learn to read and write well in school and others do not?



Questions 4, 5, and 6 represent Piaget's cognitive developmental stages. Same questions asked for each stage of development.

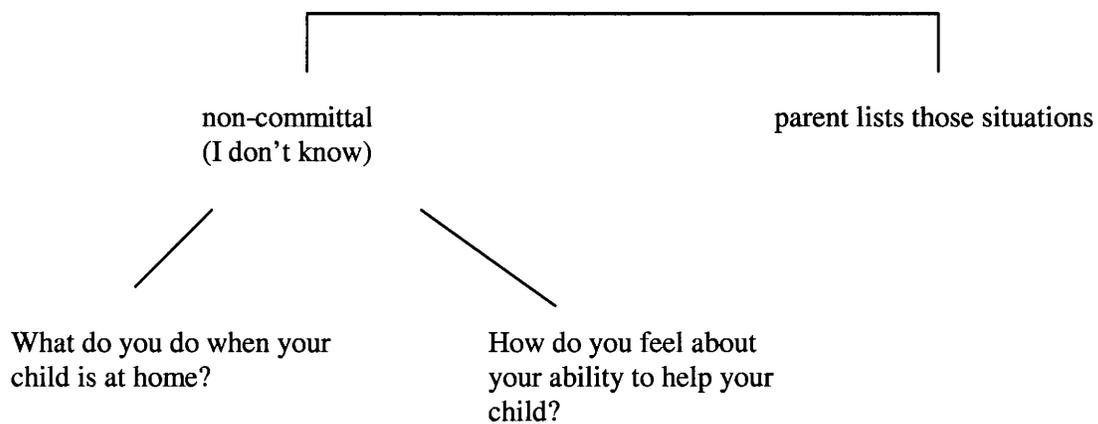
What can parents of children birth to 2 years; 2 to 7 years; 7 to 11 years of age do to help their children read and write better before and while they are in school?



7. What are five important things you are doing to help your child learn to read and write?

|
If unable to list activities,
refer to Appendix G
(Literacy materials and activities)

8. What circumstances get in the way of you teaching your child?



Appendix F
Research and Interview Question Matrix

Correlation between research questions, interview questions, and literature review.

<u>Research questions</u>	<u>Inventory</u>	<u>Interview questions</u>
What are parental attitudes toward education?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I really like to teach my something new. 2. My child's education is responsibility of our family. 3. My child's education is the sole responsibility of the of the school. 4. I scold my child when he/she doesn't learn. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe your own educational experience. 2. How does your educational experience affect your attitude toward education?
<p>What are parental perceptions of early childhood development?</p> <p>How and when does it occur?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Much of my child's learning will take place before he/she enters kindergarten or first grade. 2. It is hard for me to tell when my child had learned something. 3. More of my child's learning at this age takes place by watching people and thing rather than being told 4. My child learns by playing with other children. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do you think some children learn to read and write well in school and others do not? 2. What do you think parents of children birth to 2 years of age, 2 to 7 years of age, 7 to 11 years of age do to help their children learn to read and write better when they start school? If so, what?
What literacy activities do parents engage in with their children?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My child needs to play with me. 2. It is difficult for me to think of things to say to my child during play. 3. It is difficult for me to stay interested when playing with my child. 4. Playing with my child is enjoyable. 5. Playing with my child motivates me to play more with my child. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What five important things you are doing to help your child learn to read and write? 2. What circumstances get in the way of you engaging in literacy activities with your child?

Matrix Continuation

<u>Research questions</u>	<u>Literature Review</u>	
What are parental attitudes toward education?	1. McCarthy's (1997) "Home literacy practices of middle-class and working families."	1. This question is an extension of the previous question to examine whether past experiences, positive or negative, has affected how parents currently view education and their roles as the child's first teacher.
What are parental perceptions of early childhood development? How and when does literacy occur?	Cunningham, Fitzgerald, & Speigel's (1991) study, "The relationship between parental literacy level and perceptions of emergent literacy." The questions were designed to gain parental opinions about early childhood literacy development.	The categories were modified to reflect three out of four cognitive development stages among children as described by Piaget (1959).
What literacy activities do parents engage in with their children	1. Anderson's (1995) study on "Listening to parents' voices: Cross-cultural perceptions of learning to read and write."	2. The phrasing of the question is to allow parents to state what they actually doing to help their children attain literacy and not be guided by a list of items that would prompt them to say what they thought the researcher may want to hear.

Appendix G
Home Literacy Material Inventory

Parent's Name

Date

<u>Literacy Materials</u>	Adult	Child
Newspapers TV Guide TV Video Games Street Maps Cookbooks Phone Books Encyclopedias Dictionary Music Books Story Books Magazines Paperback Books Hardback Books Pencils Markers Paper Crayons Blocks (Lego)		

Briggs, N. (1994). The relationship between adult participation in a family literacy program and the reading attitudes, behaviors, and home environment of adult and child family members.

Appendix H
Literacy Engagement Activity Form

Parent's Name

Date

<u>Literacy Activities</u>	How Often
Read books Read street signs Read labels Draw pictures Write name Write stories Scribble Oral Storytelling Cooking Grocery Shopping Play Make-believe Visit Library Visit Museum Inquire About Daily Activities ABC's Tell time Singing Other _____	

Appendix I
Observation Form

Name: Parent-Child

Date

Activity and Length

<u>DESCRIPTIVE NOTES</u>	<u>REFLECTIVE NOTES</u>

Creswell, J. (1998)

Appendix J
Even Start Family Literacy
Statistical Comparison
of
National and Study Group
Demographics

	National 1994-1995	Study Group 1998-1999 N=10
Marital		
Single	45%	40% (<u>n</u> =4)
Couple	55%	60% (<u>n</u> =6)
Average No. of children in household	4	2
Other adult family members in household	13%	30% (<u>n</u> =3)
Ethnicity		
Black	23%	20% (<u>n</u> =2)
Hispanic	36%	70% (<u>n</u> =7)
Caucasian	34%	10% (<u>n</u> =1)
Education		
≥8 th grade	28%	20% (<u>n</u> =2)
9-12 th grade	61%	50% (<u>n</u> =5)
12 th grade <	11%	30% (<u>n</u> =3)
Average length in program	13 months	8 months (as of 8/99)

DESCRIBE SELF	SELF & EDUCATION	EDUCATION NOW	HOW CHILDREN LEARN	AGES 0-2
<p>A1: married with two children and in the Even Start program to improve my English. dropped out because family was very poor</p>	<p>9th grade education, did well in math and writing and have good support from the teachers</p>	<p>Education is very important. If stayed in school would have had a good job by now. Need education to improve living condition</p>	<p>parents don't give enough attention to their children in the areas of reading to them or drawing.</p>	<p>read to them, sing songs, show picture books and show them what colors and numbers look like</p>
<p>A2: 18, love children and am a very good parent. dropped out in the 9th grade</p>	<p>liked and did well in school, liked teachers at first. after moving teachers seemed to not care, got with wrong crowd and quit going</p>	<p>school is very important and like it now. have supportive teachers that care and have family support</p>	<p>raised in the home. have older brothers and sisters to help and mimick them. parents are reading to them</p>	<p>read to them and give good discipline</p>
<p>A3: degree from University of Mexico</p>	<p>My education was good. I always liked school and learning many things. My teachers were good and available</p>	<p>education is important. It gives preparation for life and teaching my daughter and education has given me the drive to learn English and everything about it.</p>	<p>Parents are interested in their children and encourage them. Some parents don't give enough attention to their children in the areas of reading and writing. Each age has a specific deveopment and learning activities should encourage development.</p>	<p>do everything with child. sing, dance, play, and paint. Every situation should be a learning expereince.</p>
<p>A4: *17 with one child. Dropped out in the 10th grade b/c child was sick.</p>	<p>did well in school except math. Teachers seemed to not care. had low expectations b/c of baby. Love to read. played sports</p>	<p>from experience education is very important to get a good job and I need to finish for my son's sake. I want him to know that I think education is important by going back to school</p>	<p>parents are teaching them at an early age. They are teaching them how to read and write using different activities.</p>	<p>start them off early. get educational toys. Parents either get thin into it now so that they will catch on in the future.</p>