The Effects of KEEP Books on Parent-Child Book Sharing and Reading Achievement during the Kindergarten Year: A School-Home Literacy Project

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1. Description

The proposed project is consistent with OSU/USI priorities in two areas: raising literacy achievement and studying the roles of families and schools in supporting student learning. Our intent is to study the implementation of a school-home literacy project involving the gradual distribution of 48 inexpensive books (KEEP Books) to each child in 18 classrooms throughout their kindergarten year. We propose:

- to document and describe the implementation of a KEEP Books project in both home and school environments including the range of uses and depth of experiences with KEEP Books in both contexts; and,

- to study the effect of KEEP Books on literacy achievement during the kindergarten year by comparing the achievement of students with a high level of involvement with KEEP Books during the year at home with students experiencing a low level of involvement with KEEP Books at home.

The two goals of our project proposal link with an ongoing project involving the Literacy Collaborative of The Ohio State University and three of the USI school districts: Columbus Public Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western Schools. We have worked intensively with all three districts for the last three to five years. Columbus will significantly expand the Literacy Collaborative program in 1999-2000 to train 9 Literacy Coordinators with a board-approved contract for OSU services. Of the 16 Literacy Collaborative schools in Columbus Public Schools, two are in the University District: Indianola and Fifth Avenue. Both Mansfield and South-Western districts have indicated a commitment to expanding the project within their districts as well as to continue working with us over the next few years. South-
Western, in fact, has made a commitment to training a district level person to further expand the project. The Office of Professional Practices is aware of this proposal and paperwork requesting permission for this study has been submitted to Don Cramer pertaining to Columbus Public Schools and South-Western School District.

Literacy scholars have consistently documented the positive relationship between early experiences with books and learning to read (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Whitehurst et al., 1998). Access to books and other reading materials in homes with preschool children often varies resulting in students entering school with a wide range of familiarity with reading and writing (Feitelson & Goldstein, 1986). Research on programs such as Books Aloud, a program distributing books to 17,675 children in 337 day care facilities in a large urban community, has documented significant changes in literacy achievement when young children have increased access to books (Neuman, 1999). This proposed study will contribute to our current understanding of the contributions of early experiences with texts to children's literacy achievement.

KEEP Books were designed as an inexpensive way to provide positive experiences with books for children in home and school settings. Each book is introduced in school, read several times during classroom instruction, and taken home for further reading experiences with parents, siblings, and other family members to strengthen children's understandings about literacy concepts. Children collect their KEEP Books in a special container at home and reread the books each night. Over 10,000,000 KEEP Books have been used in primary classrooms throughout the country. Program evaluation data, in the form of parent surveys, have been collected and reveal positive parental responses; however, little research exists to document the effects of their use.

2. Background and Problem Statement

We propose to conduct this project in 18 Literacy Collaborative kindergarten classrooms across all three school districts to gradually distribute 48 KEEP Books to 450 students for school and home reading during the 1999-2000 school year. KEEP Books are small, inexpensive paperback books designed to provide successful reading experiences for young children (see sample attached). The texts are specifically designed to support the development of effective reading
strategies and are inviting reading material for beginning readers with interesting stories and illustrations. One set of KEEP Books is specifically designed to support children's development of phonics strategies through books that will incorporate these patterns but, at the same time, offer enjoyable stories that will make sense to children.

Following the identification of the 18 classrooms, a training meeting will be held with teachers to explain the research component of this project, train them to complete the Letter Identification assessment on each child and review the procedures for teaching children using the KEEP Books. Teachers will learn to introduce the appropriate KEEP Book as they work with small groups of children and teach children to read it several times during guided reading instruction. Then, children will take each book home to "keep," read each night to family members, and store in a special container. The intent is to create multiple opportunities for children to successfully read texts to accelerate student learning in both school and home settings. As their KEEP Books collection grows, children will have more and more stories to reread each night with family members continuing their literacy learning. Teachers will also learn a structured program of strategies for introducing the KEEP Books program to parents and encouraging active use of the little books during nightly reading.

Methodology

To inform the first research question, we will examine the implementation of KEEP Books in school and home settings through teacher and parent questionnaires distributed in March and follow-up interviews with selected parents and teachers. Data will document the range of implementation in both settings and issues related to establishing this home-school program.

Data collection to inform the achievement question will begin as teachers pretest all children with Clay's Letter Identification Test (1993) in October 1999. Letter identification appears to be the strongest predictor of future reading achievement (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Consequently, this brief, individually administered assessment is useful to determine children's initial understanding of print and its functions. In April 2000, children with similar pretest scores within each class will be identified as experiencing either low or high implementation of KEEP book reading at home based on the results of the questionnaires. This analysis will identify
matched pairs of students with similar pretest scores but differing levels of implementation of KEEP Books.

Posttests with each pair of students will be completed by Graduate Research Assistants and include Clay's Letter Identification, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, and Concepts About Print tasks (1993). In addition, students will complete a sight word test developed through a content analysis of the 48 KEEP Books to determine word recognition levels. A comparison of posttest scores for pairs of students with similar pretest scores but different levels of involvement with KEEP Books at home will provide insight into the effectiveness of KEEP Books in supporting early literacy learning.

**Work Plan and Timeline**

This project will begin in September 1999 and continue through January 2001.

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<th>Month</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| September 1999 | Identify 18 classrooms in 3 districts  
Obtain district and school permission to conduct this research |
| October 1999  | Training meeting with teachers  
Pretesting 450 kindergarten students - Letter Identification task |
| October – February | Analyze pretest data  
Construct achievement clusters based on pretest data  
Develop teacher and parent questionnaires  
Conduct a content analysis of KEEP Books to create posttest word test |
| March 2000    | Distribute teacher and parent questionnaires to determine levels of implementation in school and home settings |
| April 2000    | Second meeting with teachers  
Collect and analyze parent and teacher questionnaires  
Conduct interviews with selected teachers and parents |
| May 2000      | Posttest 3 pairs of children in each of the 18 classrooms |
| June-January 2001 | Data analysis  
Development of deliverables:  
1) final report with implementation recommendations  
2) expanded guide for teachers and parents on the use of KEEP books  
3) two articles for research and practitioner journals |
4. Deliverables

We believe that this project will yield valuable information about the educational potential of a KEEP Books program in kindergarten classrooms. The data collection and analysis will support the development of specific recommendations about home-school literacy partnerships and the use of KEEP Books in kindergarten classrooms.

Deliverables from this project will first inform participating school districts through a final report, which will include implementation recommendations for a home-school book sharing project. In addition, an expanded guide for teachers and parents on the use of KEEP books will be developed based on the results of this study. Finally, two manuscripts reporting the results of this study will be submitted to peer-reviewed journals providing national and international exposure.

5. Participant Summaries (vitae attached)

Dr. Patricia L. Scharer (Co-PI) is Associate Professor in the School of Teaching and Learning at OSU. Dr. Scharer is a trainer for the Literacy Collaborative and a member of the Literacy Collaborative's national research committee. Her research on early literacy and teacher change has been published in such journals as Research in the Teaching of English, Reading Research Quarterly, The Reading Teacher, Language Arts, The New Advocate, and Reading Research and Instruction and recognized through national awards from the College Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English. She recently completed a federally-funded research project on phonics teaching and learning in whole language classrooms with Dr. Karin Dahl published in the most recent volume of Reading Research Quarterly. Both received the Senior Researcher Award from the School of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University in 1999 in recognition of their scholarly achievements.

Dr. Gay Su Pinnell (Co-PI) is Professor in the School of Teaching and Learning at OSU. She works closely with the Literacy Collaborative initiative providing national leadership and support for related research. Dr. Pinnell has extensive experience in field-based research, including large field studies of literacy methodologies sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Charles A. Dana Foundation. She was awarded International
Reading Association’s Albert J. Harris Award for research, and the Charles A. Dana foundation Award for pioneering contributions to education. She also received the Ohio Governor's Award for implementation of Reading Recovery. She is the author of numerous books and research articles and is a member of the International Reading Association’s Reading Hall of Fame.

References


6. Budget Narrative

Personnel - Faculty and Graduate Associate

The research team will include Professors Scharer and Pinnell and two Ph.D. students. The OSU Literacy Collaborative will contribute Drs. Scharer and Pinnell's time for this project. One GRA will begin the project during Autumn quarter to assist in data collection, develop the teacher and parent questionnaires, and analyze pretest data. A second GRA will be funded by the OSU Literacy Collaborative and added to the research team during Spring quarter to assist with data collection in the 18 classrooms and contribute to data analysis and final write-up. All four researchers will continue to work during summer and autumn quarters to complete data analysis, write the final report, and submit manuscripts for peer review.

Research or Teaching Expenses

Funds in this area will support $200 stipends for each teacher in this project and costs associated with two training sessions during September and April. Additional funds will support copying costs for questionnaires and pre/post testing instruments.

Consulting Fees

Not Applicable.

Supplies/materials

A set of 48 KEEP Books will be purchased for each kindergarten student in 18 classrooms. Each child will also receive a special container to store their KEEP Books at home and paper and markers to write responses to their books as they read. In addition, each teacher will receive a classroom set of KEEP Books, a set of Big Keep Books, and related children's literature supporting the introduction of KEEP Books titles.
Patricia Louise Scharer
Vita

PRESENT POSITION:

Associate Professor, School of Teaching and Learning
The Ohio State University College of Education

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

Ph.D. Reading, Literature, Language Arts
       The Ohio State University  1990

M.A. Reading
       The Ohio State University  1987

B.S. Elementary Education
       The Ohio State University  1972

GRANTS AND AWARDS:

1999  Senior Researcher Award, OSU School of Teaching and Learning
1995  Outstanding Faculty Scholar of the Year Award, Lima Campus
1993  Proposal funded by an Elva Knight Research Award sponsored by the International Reading Association
1991  Recipient of The Outstanding Dissertation of 1991 Award presented by the College Reading Association
1991  Finalist (one of eight) for NCTE Promising Researcher Award Competition sponsored by the National Council of Teacher of English

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

Articles and Book Chapters


Journal Editorship


Scharer, Patricia L. (Guest Editor) (Spring 1992). Literacy Matters issue on implementation of literature-based reading instruction, "Can you get there from here? One school's journey from basals to books."
Gay Su Pinnell
Vita

PRESENT POSITION:
Professor, School of Teaching and Learning
The Ohio State University, College of Education

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:
Ph.D. The Ohio State University 1975
M.A. The Ohio State University 1968
B.A. Eastern New Mexico University, summa cum laude 1966

AWARDS:
Elected Member, Reading Hall of Fame (1999) – for contributions to literacy education.

Ohio State University Distinguished Teaching Award (1996) – Presented by The Ohio State University.

Charles Dana Award (1993) – Presented by the Charles Dana Foundation for Pioneering Achievement in Health and Education.

Albert J. Harris Award (1991) – Awarded annually by the International Reading Association, for significant contributions to the study of reading disabilities.

Governor’s Award, State of Ohio (1989) – Presented for outstanding service to the state of Ohio in a variety of areas, including education, medicine, sports, and entertainment.

Pi Lambda Theta Award (1990) – Presented for outstanding service to the professional growth of teachers by the educational honorary fraternity, Pi Lambda Theta.

Distinguished Alumni Award (1990) – Presented annually by the Alumni Association of Eastern New Mexico University for outstanding contributions by one of the university’s graduates.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:
Books and Monographs


**Articles**


*Chapters in Books*


