

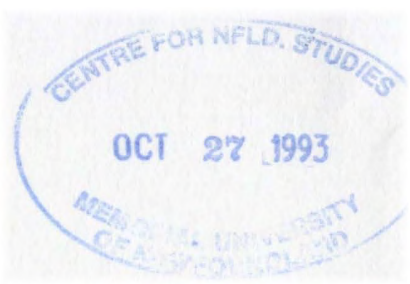
THE IDENTIFICATION OF HOME LITERACY FACTORS
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO MIDDLE GRADE STUDENTS'
READING ACHIEVEMENT

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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RELATIONSHIP TO MIDDLE GRADE STUDENTS' READING ACHIEVEMENT

By

@ Dianne Elizabeth Bolt, B.A.(Ed.)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present investigation was to explore the relationship between selected home literacy factors and reading achievement in the middle grades and to determine whether there were significant differences according to school location (rural/urban), gender, grade level, age, and parental education. The following home factors were examined: parental reading habits, parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials.

Researchers highlight the role played by parents in children's reading development and suggest that reading ability is strongly influenced by the importance of reading to the family, parent-child interactions, and the availability of home literacy materials (Greaney, 1986; Lee, 1984; Morrow, 1983). However, existing studies on home and parental variables and reading have usually focused on preschool, primary, or elementary school children. Thus, a study of middle grade students in Newfoundland and Labrador was undertaken.

Participants in the study were 530 fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students and their parents from five randomly selected rural schools and two selected schools in an urban centre. A standardized test was used as a measure of reading ability and a parent questionnaire was developed to

identify the nature of support provided for home literacy. Complete information was obtained on 314 parents and their children. Means, standard deviations, Pearson product-moment correlations, and multiple regression coefficients were used to analyze the data.

Important conclusions emanating from this study revealed that the quality of the home literacy environment and the kinds of interactions that occur in the home have a positive influence upon middle grade students' reading achievements. Parents' level of education showed significant but low correlations with parental reading habits, accessibility and use of reading materials, and parental expectations. Overall, urban students outperformed rural students of the same age and grade.

The findings of this study suggest the need for educators to recognize the importance of the home in influencing students' reading achievements and to encourage greater parental participation in children's educational development. Consideration should also be given to improving the social, cultural, and economic status of Newfoundland families through a long-range program of adult education.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Over the past several years much research has focused on literacy experiences in the home and the importance of parent-child interactions in fostering reading ability. Thus, there are descriptions of parental reading habits (Cousert, 1978; Dix, 1976; Greaney, 1986; Kontos, 1986; Lee, 1984); of parental assistance with reading (Newson & Newson, 1977; Todd, 1973; Watson, Brown, & Swick, 1983); of parent-child interactions with books (Clark, 1976; Cousert, 1978; Durkin, 1966; Morrow, 1983); of parental expectations (Marjoribanks, 1983; Newson & Newson, 1977; Rankin, 1967); of children's reading habits (Brett, 1964; Crocker, 1967; Greaney, 1980; Long & Henderson, 1973; Morrow, 1983, 1985); of children's leisure activities (Berry, Fischer, Parker, & Zwier, 1971; Olson, 1984; Starkey & Starkey, 1981); and of accessibility and use of reading materials in the home (Lamme & Olmsted, 1977; Napoli, 1968; Newson & Newson, 1977; Polhemus, 1955).

This research has shown that home literacy and the kinds of activities parents and children engage in within the home have a significant and positive effect on children's reading achievement. The dominant focus of the research on literacy experiences has been on preschool, primary, and elementary school children. Very few studies have investigated the impact of home literacy on middle grade students. So, there is a definite need for such a

study to be undertaken. It is important to know what factors in the home environment contribute to middle grade students' reading achievement. There is little reason to expect that parents would not continue to have a powerful effect on the reading achievement levels of their children as they proceed through the grades. However, such an expectation remains to be confirmed.

Statement of the Problem

The Home Literacy Study proposed here is the first study known to me, to be conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador. The objective of the present investigation was to ascertain whether there is a significant relationship between a selected number of home literacy factors and the reading achievement of students in the middle grades; and whether there are significant differences according to school location (rural/urban), gender, grade level, age, and parental education.

More specifically, this study examined the relationship between the following home variables: parental reading habits, parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, accessibility and use of reading materials, and the level of reading achievement attained by fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students. The importance of this kind of study in

Newfoundland and Labrador is the subject of the next section.

Significance of the Study

The results of the Newfoundland Department of Education's Standard Testing program in past years have revealed consistently that Newfoundland students have not ranked favourably in comparison to students in other Canadian provinces, in the area of reading, on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (King-Shaw, 1989). Also, students from urban centres in Newfoundland typically outperform students from rural communities on this standardized test (Education Statistics, 1990). As well, the Southam News Survey (1987) reported that Newfoundland had the highest rate of basic and functional illiteracy in Canada (approximately 44%).

The results of the Early Literacy Intervention Project of Phillips, Norris, Mason, and Kerr (1990) on the effects of the use of Little Books on kindergarten children's literacy development, showed that Newfoundland children perform about 1 SD below the U.S. norm. Thus, generally, Newfoundland children entering kindergarten, in comparison to U.S. kindergarten children, are at a disadvantage even from the beginning of their school careers and are at risk of school failure. If Newfoundland children are behind when they start school, then one would expect that as these children proceed through the grades, the differences in

performance between U.S. and Newfoundland students, and between Canadian and Newfoundland students will be even greater. It was important, therefore, that an intensive study of middle grade students in one school district in Newfoundland and Labrador be conducted with the aim of providing evidence to assist us in understanding further the many factors that contribute to the low performances of our Newfoundland students.

Previous research concerning home environments, carried out in Newfoundland, investigated only status variables such as father's occupation, mother's education, and the size of the family (e.g., Roe, 1970). Very few studies (Phillips et al., 1990) focused on interactive family experiences and their effect on children's literacy development. The focus of the study reported here concerns the home literacy environment and parents' role in promoting their children's reading abilities. It is widely known that parents play a significant role in the development of children's reading interests and abilities. Within the home, however, substantial differences exist in family lifestyles, parental schooling practices, and the quantity and quality of parental interactions with children. A closer examination of the home literacy environment of Newfoundland students has helped to identify some of the important factors in the home that promote children's literacy development.

Questions under Investigation

My experiences with the wide variations of reading ability of children from different home environments coupled with an extensive review of the literature pertaining to home literacy in the early years, prompted the following questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the level of reading achievement of fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students and the following factors in the home environment: (a) parental reading habits, (b) parental assistance, (c) parental expectations, (d) children's leisure reading habits, (e) children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and (f) accessibility and use of reading materials?

2. Is there a significant relationship between parents' level of education and each of the six home factors (a-f in Question 1)?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the gender of the child and each of the five home factors selected: parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials?

4. Does parental assistance decrease as student age increases and as grade increases?

5. Are there rural/urban differences in students' reading achievements by gender, age, and grade?

6. Are there rural/urban differences in the amount of support provided for home literacy?

Definition of Terms

This section contains a brief definition of each of the variables used in the study.

Reading Achievement

Reading achievement refers to the score on Test R: Reading Comprehension of The Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (King-Shaw, 1989) attained by students in grades four, six, and eight.

Middle Grade Students

Middle grade students are those students in grades four, six, and eight.

Mother's Education

Mother's or guardian's education refers to the highest grade level successfully completed in an institution of formal learning.

Father's Education

Father's or guardian's education refers to the highest grade level successfully completed in an institution of formal learning.

Literacy Variables

Literacy variables reflect the kinds of reading experiences that the child and/or other family members are

engaged in within the home. They also include the kinds of interactive family experiences that occur outside the home that may influence the child's reading achievement. The present research focused on six literacy variables: parental reading habits, parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials.

Parental Reading Habits

Parental reading habits refer to the extent of reading a parent does in the home for the purpose of gaining knowledge, information, or for entertainment. It includes the use made of books, magazines, newspapers, reference materials, library facilities, and so forth.

Parental Assistance

Parental assistance refers to the availability and quality of educational guidance provided by parents. It includes help with school-work, assistance with school-related reading assignments, and specific efforts to assist the child with reading. It also reflects how often parents read aloud to their children, both before and after their children started school.

Parental Expectations

Parental expectations refer to the parents' aspirations for the child's success in school and in future educational endeavours.

Children's Leisure Reading Habits

Children's leisure reading habits refer to the amount of reading a child does voluntarily in his or her free time within the home. It includes the use made of books, magazines, newspapers, reference materials, library facilities, and so forth. It does not include assigned reading for homework.

Children's Participation in Cultural and Extracurricular Activities

Participation in cultural and extracurricular activities is defined as the number of times the parents have taken the child to various outside events or to places of cultural interest. It also includes the child's involvement in special lessons, groups, or organizations.

Accessibility and Use of Reading Materials

Accessibility and use of reading materials is defined as the quantity and quality of reading materials available in the home for the parents and children.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to seven schools in one school district in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Subjects for this study included students in grades four, six, and eight in each of these schools and the students' parents. The results obtained in this study may not be representative of other schools and grade levels in the district or indeed in the province.

Data collected in the study was also limited by the parents' willingness to complete and return the questionnaires to the school. The accuracy of the information obtained from the parents may also have been limited by the parents' desire to portray a favourable family environment. For example, the parents may report on the questionnaire that they read or they help their children with homework daily because they feel they should, but in fact the occurrence of these activities may be much less frequent than parents report. In addition, the study focused on a select number of factors in the home environment. Many other factors related to reading achievement could have been investigated but only those variables deemed to be most important for this study were examined.

reading habits, parental reading to children, and parental assistance with reading are positively correlated with children's achievement in reading (Cousert, 1978; Lee, 1984; Newson & Newson, 1977). Parents also help to facilitate children's proficiency in reading by providing appropriate reading materials in the home for the child and by encouraging frequent use of books and library facilities. Studies have revealed that the availability of books in the home and visits to public libraries are positively related to children's progress in reading (Lamme & Olmsted, 1977; Napoli, 1968).

The remainder of this chapter examines the major findings and implications from the literature concerning home influences on children's reading achievement. The emphasis of this review will be on parent-child interactions and home literacy. The review is organized around the following headings: (a) home environmental influences on reading achievement; (b) the effects of home variables on reading achievement; (c) characteristics of early readers and the home reading environment; (d) socioeconomic status, parental education, and achievement; and (e) summary.

Home Environmental Influences on Reading Achievement

This section of the review examines the literature to ascertain if there is any empirical and conceptual evidence, to help explain the importance of the home environment to reading achievement.

Traditionally, researchers during the 1960's most often included indices of social status as measures of the home environment. These variables, however, account "for only a small proportion (about 10%) of the variation in children's educational achievement" (Kalinowski & Sloane, 1981, p. 86). In other words, social status variables do not account for many of the variations within each social class, for example, not all lower-class students are low achievers and not all higher-class students are high achievers. In addition, indices of social status only provide circumstantial evidence of the environmental effects on achievement. Status variables do not provide specific clues as to what parents might do in the home to improve the situation for the child (Bloom, 1980).

Researchers attempted to examine more refined measures of the home environment that would reveal the nature of parent-child interactions. Bloom (1964) and two of his doctoral students (Dave, 1963; Wolf, 1964) have made significant contributions to the body of literature pertaining to the influence of the home environment on children's intelligence and achievement. Bloom proposed that "it is what parents do in the home, rather than their status characteristics which are the powerful determiners in the home environment" (pp. 124-125).

Following a review of the theoretical and empirical literature, Dave (1963) proposed that specific aspects of

the home environment "press" for or stimulate the child's academic achievement. On the basis of this theoretical framework, Dave identified six process variables in the home which he thought were related to school achievement. They are as follows:

1. Achievement Press--the parents' aspirations for the child and for themselves; their interest in, knowledge of, and rewards for, the child's educational achievement;

2. Language Models--the quality of the parents' language and the parents' standards concerning the child's language;

3. Academic Guidance--the availability and quality of educational assistance provided in the home;

4. Activeness of the Family--the extent and quality of indoor and outdoor activities of the family and the use made of reading materials, library facilities, and media such as TV;

5. Intellectuality in the Home--the quality of educational toys and games in the home and the opportunity provided for intellectual stimulation within the home; and

6. Work Habits in the Family--the degree of routine in home management and the preference for educational activities over other pleasurable activities.

Dave (1963) and Wolf (1964) then took each of these six variables, broke them down into more specific process characteristics, and devised an interview schedule known as

the Index of Educational Environment (I.E.E.). Results from parent interviews showed a very high correlation (.800) between home environment and fourth-grade total achievement test scores. Total achievement scores refer to the standard scores on seven tests of the Metropolitan Achievement Battery (Durost, 1959) added together for each child. The six process variables correlated the highest with tests of word knowledge (.788) and reading (.729), and the least with tests of arithmetic computation (.556). These results suggest that the quality of the home environment, the kinds of activities that occur in the home, and the interactions between parents and children are most influential in the development of the child's language and reading ability but are least effective in promoting specific skills taught in school.

The research by Dave (1963) is most beneficial, since it shows that specific characteristics of the home environment and what parents do in the home are highly correlated with children's reading achievements. Thus, the variations in children's reading achievements that teachers encounter in their classrooms may be explained, at least in part, by the differences in the children's home environments.

The conceptual framework proposed by Dave and that used in subsequent research was applicable to this study, in that many of the same variables were investigated but the

terminology and specific process characteristics are somewhat different. It was important to examine separately a number of the process characteristics suggested by Dave rather than group them together under one variable because the focus was on discovering how each of the process characteristics related to children's reading achievements. For example, the variable "Activeness of the Family" was broken into three variables: children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, parental reading habits, and children's leisure reading habits.

The next section examines the empirical literature to locate evidence of factors in the home reading environment that contribute to children's success with reading. The review takes a closer look at each of the following home variables selected for study: parental reading habits, parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials. The focus will be on what parents do in the home with their children and the kinds of materials and experiences they provide which may enhance reading growth in middle-grade students.

The Effects of Home Variables on Reading Achievement Parental Reading Habits

Research suggests that having adult reading models in the home influences children's literacy acquisition

(Greaney, 1986). Many theorists and educators believe that parents who have developed the habit of reading in their own daily lives influence their children to want to read (Clark, 1976; Gibson & Levin, 1975; Pickering, 1977; Roberson, 1970). For example, Pickering recommends that if you want to motivate children to want to learn to read, one way is to have children observe parents and significant others in the home engaged in reading. He suggests that

Children should see their parents and others reading regularly and enjoying what they read. Children have a strong tendency to imitate parents and others they love and admire. Thus, if children consistently see their parents reading, they too will want to read. If they sense that their parents truly enjoy reading, they will expect to enjoy reading also. (p. 11)

Gibson and Levin (1975) also recommend that parents model good reading behaviours and show children reading is fun. If children observe their parents truly absorbed in reading and reacting to their reading by means of their facial expressions or emotions, children will surely be curious to want to know what they are reading and may come to realize that reading is a pleasurable pastime they too may enjoy. However, it is not enough for children to observe their parents reading, parents should discuss what they are reading and encourage children to talk about their

reading also. Pickering (1977) suggests that a certain time should be set aside each day for children to read to their parents and for parents to read to their children. When reading is a "family affair" children will see its importance and will want to read.

Parental reading habits not only appear to be an important influence on children's reading habits but they also have a strong impact on children's reading achievements. Since a number of studies have shown a strong positive relationship between parental reading habits and children's achievements in reading (Cousert, 1978; Dix, 1976; Lee, 1984), then the relationship between parental reading habits and children's reading achievements in rural/urban areas of Newfoundland is worthy of investigation.

Dix (1976) examined the relationship between parental reading habits and children's reading performances. A 36-item questionnaire was sent to the homes of 213 children in grades one through six who were participating in the STARR (Students Are Reading Right) program. Of the 184 questionnaires that were returned, 148 were analyzed and divided into two groups: parents of "good" readers (those who had a gain in total reading of 1.5 grade levels or more during the 1975-76 school year) and parents of "poor" readers (those who had a gain in total reading of less than 1.5 grade levels during the same year). Reading ability was

determined according to achievement on the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test.

The findings show that in comparison to parents of "poor" readers, parents of "good" readers were more likely to consider themselves avid readers, to spend at least one hour a day reading, and to place a high priority on reading in the home. Parents of "poor" readers more often encouraged participation in organized sports, used the public library less frequently, read more pragmatic reading materials such as books on homemaking or arts and crafts, and tended to see reading as mainly a skills process. In conclusion, Dix suggested that parents who consider themselves good readers and are good reading role models for their children are likely to have children who are good readers. In other words, this study showed that the reading habits of parents influence the reading performances of children.

Similarly, Cousert (1978) found a significant and positive relationship between the amount of time the mother, and father spend in personal reading and grade three students' achievement in reading. Significant effects for boys and girls were reported. Father's personal reading habits and boy's achievement showed the strongest relationship. The results seem to suggest that parental reading habits facilitate both boys' and girls' reading abilities. However, the boys' reading achievements are

especially affected when their fathers model good reading behaviours.

The majority of studies reviewed show that the mothers were most often good readers in comparison to the fathers (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966). Perhaps if more fathers developed the reading habit more boys would become interested in reading and there would be fewer boys with reading problems. Since, most of the students who attend remedial reading classes in Newfoundland and Labrador are boys (Education Statistics, 1990) then the encouragement of male reading models seems to be important.

A more recent study by Lee (1984) also examined the effects of parental modelling of reading behaviours on 27 average readers and 27 superior readers in grades two, three, and four. The results of the study revealed significant differences between the two groups on four of the five home factors--Parental Modelling; Language Interaction; Structuring of Time, Materials and Experiences; and Parental Assistance. Parental Involvement in school issues did not contribute significantly to the differences between the groups. Parental Modelling of reading activities was the greatest contributor to the student's reading achievement. Parents who scored high on the Parental Modelling factor placed a high value upon reading in the home, used written materials on a regular basis, read and discussed reading materials

with their children. Parents of superior readers were more likely to engage in reading themselves than were parents of average readers. Lee's study shows just how important it is for children to observe their parents reading. Parental reading had an even greater impact on children's reading success than did parental assistance with reading or provision of reading materials in the home.

Parental reading appears to also have a long-term predictive ability for children's school achievements. Krus and Rubin (1974) investigated the use of specific aspects of the pre-school home environment to predict the educational outcomes of five-to-seven-year-olds over a three year time span. A 120-item home environment questionnaire was administered to the mothers of 1,206 subjects. The findings revealed that the family history variable that was the most highly associated with educational measures was the reading background of the mother. These results seem to suggest that mothers' reading habits during early childhood have a significant and positive influence on children's reading achievement, three years later. Similarly, Freshour (1972) contends that "reading needs to be important in the home. If the child sees the parent read, reading becomes important" (p. 516).

Kontos (1986) conducted a review of current literature pertaining to how young children learn about written language. She suggests that "parents who read and

write in their own daily lives usually have children who easily learn to read in the early grades" (p. 59). Only when children know why people read and what they do during reading can they become readers themselves.

In conclusion, the literature indicates that parental reading habits have a strong positive influence on children's reading achievements. Parent models of the same or opposite sex can have differential effects on children's reading abilities. However, most of the research concerning parental reading habits has investigated only the mothers' reading backgrounds.

In addition, the majority of studies concerning parental reading habits have been conducted with the parents of preschool, primary, or elementary school children. Very few studies have examined parental influence on middle grade students. Do children respond to different factors in the home environment at various stages in their reading development? Some factors may be important throughout the middle grades, while others may diminish in their contribution to reading growth.

Next, the literature pertaining to parental assistance is reviewed to assess whether parents can help their children directly by assisting with homework and various reading-related activities.

Parental Assistance

"Originally, reading was taught as an apprenticeship skill by one who could read to one who wanted to learn" (Mead, 1961, p. 91). It was only when societies wanted to increase the proportions of literate individuals that schools were needed so that children of non-literate parents could learn to read and write. With the arrival of formal education, the task of teaching reading to children was no longer considered the role of parents but was delegated to those who had the training and the expertise to teach it in school.

Teachers and administrators did not want parents to become involved in educational matters and thus conveyed to parents a message of "we know what's best for your child". The common practice in Newfoundland schools during the late sixties and seventies, of not permitting children to take their readers home, may have been interpreted by some parents to mean that they were incapable of helping their children with reading. However, over the past decade, there has been a shift in educators' feelings about parental participation. Educators have been more cognizant of the role that parents can play in assisting their children's progress in school. Moreover, by all accounts the schools alone are not having the anticipated success in teaching students to read.

Research has shown that parents play a crucial role in their children's educational progress. However, educators disagree as to the kind of role parents should play and whether or not reading instruction should begin at home. Some educators, such as Freshour (1972), believe that "parents can be a strong positive or negative influence on their children's progress in school" (p. 513). He suggests that parents should not be trained to teach reading to their children. However, they are capable of helping in many other ways, such as in the development of language and self-concept and in encouraging interest in reading. Professionals in the field of reading advocate the values of early reading instruction in the home (Brzeinski & Howard, 1971; Todd, 1973). For example, Todd believes that parents should be encouraged and trained to teach reading at home to their children. He feels that a child may be able to "get ready" to read at home faster and better than at school because children are familiar with their surroundings and reading "materials" are always available in the home in the form of newspapers, books, grocery boxes, and so on.

Reading materials may be available in the home, but some parents fail to use them because they feel they have inadequate skills to teach reading or other school subjects to their children. Because of a lack of confidence in their abilities, parents often feel it is best not to help the child at home, so as not to interfere with the school. In a

series of longitudinal studies of early readers (Durkin, 1966), parents of non-early readers felt it was best to leave the reading instruction to the professionals for fear of confusing the child. Other parents prefer not to assist their children because they feel it is not their responsibility to teach school subjects but rather the responsibility of the professionals.

Despite the inconsistent advice by professionals, the majority of parents do attempt to help their children with their school-work, at least in the primary and elementary grades. Newson and Newson (1977), in a survey of parents of seven-year-olds, found no significant gender or social class differences in the percentage of middle and working class parents who helped their children with reading; 81% of both groups of parents were helping their child with reading or had done so in the past. It appears that both mothers and fathers from different social backgrounds assist their children with reading. However, this willingness to help is often mis-directed because of lack of advice and encouragement from teachers.

Newson and Newson (1977) suggest that if the vast majority of parents are trying to help their children, and if most of them don't know how to, then "schools are surely not only failing dismally in their educative role, but wasting the most valuable resource they have. A revolution in literacy could be sparked off and fuelled by parents and

teachers in determined co-operation" (p. 164). If teachers met with parents more often and demonstrated to parents specific strategies they could use to help their children with reading, then perhaps the quality of parental assistance would improve and so would children's reading abilities.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that parents' direct tutorial help with children's reading, termed "parental involvement", has resulted in reading gains (see Pickett, 1983, for a comprehensive review). For instance, Breiling (1976) developed a parent program to assist disadvantaged children from kindergarten to fourth grade in Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland. The program consisted of Parents in Reading meetings, Individual Parent Work, and a Reading at Home program.

The Parents in Reading program involved a series of approximately five meetings on alternate weeks, whereby the parents and children met with the school reading teacher or specialist. Some activities introduced at the meetings included making and playing reading games that could be taken home at the end of the meeting, sharing experiences that parents had helping their children at home with previously supplied materials, and having the children read for a few minutes, with a "reading party" at the end of the program for all children who participated in the meetings.

The Individual Parent Work aspect of the program was designed to involve those parents who could not come to the Parents in Reading meetings. The group leader met individually with parents and their children at school and helped with problems. The Reading at Home program consisted of the children taking home a book at their reading level and reading ten minutes each night for their parents. The children were tested at the beginning and at the end of the program with the Botel Word Recognition Test. Results showed that the majority of children experienced reading gains, more than would ordinarily be expected in a two-month interval. In a few instances, more than an entire grade level of growth had been shown in sight vocabulary.

Watson, Brown, & Swick (1983) sought to determine if a number of home environmental factors, in particular, neighbourhood support, home support (parental involvement), income, and parental education would have an effect on children entering grade one. Analysis of the data revealed a number of significant findings. For instance, the amount of parental support given a child was significantly related to the child's achievement in first grade; if the home was not supportive, there was little the school or the neighbourhood could do by itself to assist the child's achievement; and no matter what the income and/or educational level of the home, the home was effective in helping the child achieve.

Two types of parental support, active and passive, were investigated in the study by Watson et al. Active-supportive parents help their children directly, by reading to children or enrolling them in quality preschool. Passive-supportive parents help their children indirectly, for example, they encourage them to read but they do not become actively engaged in the learning process with their children. The children of active-supportive parents scored higher on the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (CSAB) (Boehm & Slater, 1974) than did the children of passive-supportive parents. The children of non-supportive parents scored the lowest on all areas of the CSAB.

Generally, the results from these studies seem to indicate that parents make a positive difference in children's school progress, especially in the area of reading achievement. However, the parents' level of education or income does not appear to influence parental assistance. Rather, it is the kind and quality of the parental support that determine the amount of success children achieve in reading.

The value of parents' reading to children before they start school and its effect on children's reading achievement in the primary, elementary, and middle grades are discussed next.

Parents who frequently read to young children provide children with early experiences with written and spoken

language. Parental reading can stimulate children's imaginations and can help them understand the meanings of words long before they are able to read the words themselves (Greaney, 1986). So, it is important that parents read to their children at a very early age.

Many studies have shown that interest in books (Morrow, 1983) and performance on measures of reading proficiency (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966) are related to being read to while young. Even as early as the 1950's researchers advocated the valuable contribution parents can make to the reading performances of their children (Polhemus, 1955). Polhemus discovered that in a sample of 119 sixth grade children, a high proportion of good readers and a low proportion of poor readers had been read to frequently in their preschool years. In other words, most of the children who were experiencing success with reading had parents who read to them before they started school, whereas few of the children who were having problems with reading had been read to before they entered school. These findings provide evidence that parental reading to children during early childhood has a significant and positive influence on children's reading achievement even six or seven years later.

Similarly, Newson and Newson (1977), in a survey of parents of seven-year-olds, discovered a significant positive relationship between how often parents read to

their children at age four and reading proficiency at age seven. As a measure of parental reading, mothers were asked to describe a typical bedtime for their children. Any mention of reading to children was taken to mean that this was a regular bedtime activity. The results showed that forty-four per cent of the children who were good readers at age seven had been read to when they were four, as compared with only twenty-two per cent of the non-readers at age seven.

Cousert (1978) studied the relationship between a selected number of home environmental factors and reading achievement for a group of grade three students. The results indicated that reading to the child during the preschool years was positively related to achievement for both boys and girls. It seemed to make no difference whether the mother or father read to the child; both parents influenced the children's achievements; and both male and female students' reading achievement improved as a consequence of the interaction.

In conclusion, the results of these studies point to the importance of parents' reading to young children before they attend school. Parental reading to children during the preschool years appears to contribute to children's reading achievements throughout the primary and elementary grades. However, no studies on this topic were located for middle grade students.

Following, is a review of studies pertaining to parental expectations for their children and whether parents' expectations influence children's school achievements.

Parental Expectations

The studies reviewed show that parental expectations are positively related to children's reading achievements (Dave, 1963; Rankin, 1967). For example, Rankin (1967) attempted to discover relationships between parental behaviour, parental attitude, and academic achievement for inner city elementary school children. Analysis of the data showed that in relation to parental interest taken in children's school activities, significant behaviour differences exist between high and low achievers' parents.

High achievers' parents more often talked with their children about school-work; attempted to discover why their child was doing poorly in school and to help with corrections in school assignments; desired their child to attend college; and "required for their satisfaction" that the child attain high grades in school than did low achievers' parents. Rankin, however, does not explain how the parents "required" their children to achieve high marks. Perhaps by parents communicating with their children about school problems and assisting them at home, trying to correct those problems, they assured their children's success in school. However, correlation does not determine

causation. It is difficult to ascertain whether parents' expectations influence children's achievements or children's achievements determine parents' expectations. Parental expectations and children's reading progress are affected by many other factors in the home, school, and community.

Studies have revealed that parents of different socioeconomic status vary significantly in their expectations for their children's achievements in school. For instance, in a survey of parents of seven-year-olds, Newson and Newson (1977) found significant social class differences in parental expectations for their children. Middle-class mothers had higher hopes for their children than did working-class mothers and professional-class mothers were more ambitious than white-collar mothers. Upon closer examination of the transcripts other differences emerged. The two upper classes' professional ambitions tended more often to be expressed as "expectations" for their children, whereas in the working-class they were more likely to be expressed as "hopes". It seems that the upper-class mothers expect their children to further their education and obtain good jobs but the working-class mothers are more unsure of their children's future. In addition, the upper-class mothers tend to assume that their children could do certain jobs but the question is whether they "would want to or not", whereas the lower-class mothers hope

their children will obtain certain occupations if they have the "ability" to do so.

Parents' desires that their child do well in school and receive a post-secondary education are not enough. Parents need to take an active role in their children's education. They must show an interest in and concern for their children's school progress. Parents also need to support their children through definite actions such as assistance with school-work, help with career planning, and assistance with finances so their children are able to attain their career goals. However, not all parents are able to provide the support that their children need. For example, working-class families may not be able to give the financial assistance needed to help their children enter into certain career fields. Thus, these parents may have to lower their expectations for their children and set more realistic goals.

Parental expectations, termed parental aspirations, were also examined in a family learning environment model constructed by Marjoribanks (1983). The model included two other dimensions, namely, parent-child learning interactions and parents' concern for their children's independence. The model's effectiveness was determined by analyzing correlations between home environment and academic performance of children. The study involved 900 Australian families that had an eleven-year-old child attending an

urban elementary school. The results of the study indicated social class differences among the variables. For example, in the intermediate and working-classes, parents' aspirations showed little, if any, relation to children's achievements. Service-class parents' aspirations revealed moderately positive associations with children's word comprehension scores. It appears that in the lower classes children are relatively unaffected by their parents' aspirations but in the upper classes parental expectations have a greater influence over their children's achievements.

What factors could account for these social class differences? One possible explanation might be that upper-class families are better able to provide the support needed to ensure their children's success in school than are lower-class families. For example, there may be more educational resources such as toys, games, and reading materials available in the homes of upper-class families. In addition, lower-class families may not have the education needed to assist their children with school-work. Also, there may be differences in educational values between the two classes. Lower-class parents may place less emphasis on the importance of an education in comparison to upper-class parents. Generally, most studies reveal the complexity in the relations among the variables parental expectations, social class, and children's achievement.

The next section examines whether or not children's reading habits at home have an impact on reading achievement in school.

Children's Leisure Reading Habits

Children's leisure reading habits reflect the amount of reading children engage in for their own personal interest and enjoyment. It includes reading from books, magazines, reference materials, and so forth, but it does not include reading that has been assigned for homework.

Although there is widespread support concerning the importance of fostering life-long reading habits, a substantial number of students do not choose to read for pleasure. For example, Greaney (1980) investigated what proportion of grade five students' leisure time is devoted to reading for pleasure. Students were asked to record in their diaries how they spent their leisure time on each of three days (Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday) for one week. Half-hour periods were blocked out in the diaries from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. for Tuesday and Thursday and from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. for Sunday. Analysis of the data revealed that 22 per cent of the students reported no voluntary reading. Out of the 78 per cent who reported voluntary reading, only 5.4 per cent of the students' leisure time was devoted to reading. In addition, of the nine major leisure categories identified in the study, reading was ranked seventh.

A number of factors may contribute to students' infrequent voluntary reading. One factor may be the level of literacy in the home environment (Hansen, 1969). Hansen discovered that the most significant factor contributing to children's voluntary reading habits was the home literacy environment as indicated by the availability of books, the amount of reading done with the child, the amount of reading guidance provided, and the extent to which parents model good reading habits. Another possible factor is that developmental reading programs are skills-oriented and fail to promote students' voluntary reading (Morrow, 1985). Schools generally spend a great deal of time teaching reading skills but leave very little time for students to practice those skills.

The findings are inconclusive concerning the relationship between social class and children's reading habits. Hansen (1969) found that father's occupation and education showed no relationship to children's voluntary reading habits. Long and Henderson (1973) reported that time spent reading by grade five students was positively related to socioeconomic status. In other words, the higher the level of social status of the family, the greater the amount of time students spend reading. A study of kindergarten children (Morrow, 1983) also discovered that children who have an interest in voluntary reading tend to

come from families whose parents have a college education or a graduate degree.

Research has shown that voluntary or "recreational" reading, as it is sometimes called, is related to reading achievement (Long & Henderson, 1973). Long and Henderson investigated fifth-grade students' reading behaviours by requesting the students to record all spare-time activities over a two-week period. A series of tests were administered to determine students' reading abilities and attitudes. Analysis of students' records revealed that less than two hours was spent reading each week. Approximately one third of the students, (forty-seven out of one hundred and fifty), reported no reading during the two-week interval. Time spent reading was positively related to all four scores from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Survey D. Students who frequently read in their leisure time were most often high achievers in reading, whereas students who were infrequent voluntary readers were most often low achievers in reading. So, the amount of time students devote to leisure reading at home has a major impact on reading performances in school.

However, not all students who demonstrate skill in reading are necessarily voluntary readers. Morrow (1983) suggests that a child who knows how to read but is not provided with a supportive literacy environment both at home and at school, may not develop the habit of life-long

reading. In contrast, a child who is exposed to an environment rich in literacy experiences both at home and at school may develop a strong desire to read voluntarily in spite of low academic ability. The child's reading skills may improve over time by becoming involved with reading and reading-related activities.

A recent study that investigated process variables in the home environment which may be related to children's leisure reading habits was conducted by Neuman (1986). Subjects were the parents of 84 students who were willing to complete a home environmental questionnaire by means of a phone interview. Process variables included students' work habits; parental academic guidance; leisure activities outside the home; parental expectations; independence and responsibility given to children; and parental encouragement of reading.

The findings revealed that the children read an average of 2.33 books per month, with girls reading significantly more than boys (2.60 and 2.02, respectively). Approximately 15 minutes per day was spent on leisure reading. The strongest relationship identified was between parental encouragement of reading and students' leisure reading habits. Parents who encouraged their children to read for pleasure and who read to their children when they were young clearly had a positive influence on their children's reading habits. An important and relevant question is whether

parents' encouragement for and influence on children's reading habits decline as children get older?

Most of the studies dealing with reading habits have investigated primary and elementary students' reading habits. The leisure reading habits and interests of high school students in Newfoundland have been the subject of a few studies (Brett, 1964; Crocker, 1967).

Brett (1964) investigated the leisure reading interests and habits of grade nine students in Newfoundland in an attempt to discover to what degree Newfoundland students were reading in their leisure time; their choice of reading materials; their reading interests; and the factors that influenced students' reading habits and attitudes toward reading. Brett found that grade nine students enjoyed reading because it was a quiet pastime and because their teachers had encouraged them to read. Few students attributed their interest in reading to the influence of the home. This finding is at variance with the conclusion reported by others that the availability of books in the home and parental reading habits have a strong impact on children's reading interests and habits. Thus, Brett wondered whether "those students who reported strong home influence came from homes where they were surrounded by books and where other members of the family read and if, on the other hand, there are many homes where books are not available" (p. 128). Lack of interesting reading material

in the home, in the community, and in the school, and too little time to read were major deterrents to reading reported by the students.

Crocker (1967) studied the relationships between the leisure reading interests, preferences and habits of high school graduates, and factors within the school and the home. He found that the home environment was significantly related to the amount of leisure reading done by the students. Students whose fathers were professionals read the highest number of books. Crocker concluded that the influence of the home environment "on the reading of children is much greater than that of the school in Newfoundland" (p. 244).

This conclusion differs from the findings reported in the previous study (Brett, 1964), in which students attributed their enjoyment of reading to the influence of teachers, not parents and the home reading environment. The differences in the results of the two studies may be attributed to the differences in ages of the two samples. Brett studied the leisure reading of grade nine students while Crocker (1967) investigated high school graduates. The students in Brett's study may not have realized or perhaps did not wish to acknowledge the important influence that their parents and the home environment may have had on their enjoyment of reading. Another consideration may be the different variables used in each study in examining the

effects of home environment. For instance, Crocker investigated factors in the home such as social status of the family and the number of books in the home in comparison to factors in the school such as school size. Brett examined variables in the home such as factors that contribute to students' interest in reading and the amount of reading done by the students and variables in the school such as whether there is an organized leisure reading program in the school and teachers' evaluation of the present literature program. Differences in the age of the samples and the types of variables investigated may account for the different conclusions reached in each study.

In summary, parents and the home literacy environment appear to be most influential in the development of primary and elementary students' reading habits. Leisure reading was shown to be positively related to children's academic abilities, such that, high achievers read more often than low achievers. The influence of social status was inconclusive. Some studies found social class to be a contributing factor to the reading habits of students, while other studies reported no relationship.

Another home variable that may have a positive effect on children's reading achievement is the amount of time children spend taking part in cultural and extracurricular activities outside the school and the home. The next section examines the research on the two.

Children's Participation in Cultural and Extracurricular Activities

Children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities is defined as the number of times the parents have taken the child to various outside events or to places of cultural interest, for example, trips to a museum, movie, or sporting event. It also reflects the child's participation in extracurricular lessons, such as music or dance. The child's involvement with special groups or organizations, such as Boy Scouts and Brownies will also be included since these activities have been endorsed by the parents.

Few studies examined the influence of children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities on reading achievement. Most involved primary and elementary students, and only one included students in grades seven and eight.

Berry, Fischer, Parker, & Zwier (1971) examined the relationship between reading achievement and a number of home influences including parental, educational, and social factors for two groups of fifty-four students in grades two to eight. The two groups of students were identified as "average" and "superior" by their teachers. Subjects for the study were chosen from students ranked in the upper 50 percentile of their class. Students in the "upper quartile" were called "superior readers" or high achievers, and those

in the third quartile were called "average" or typical achievers" (p. 272). Berry et al. attempted to ascertain characteristics that differentiate the two groups of readers.

They found that at the second, third, and sixth grade levels superior readers reported attending more cultural activities during the week prior to the study than did the average readers [$(t = 3.78; p = .05; N = 16)$ ($t = 2.39; p = .05; N = 12$) ($t = 2.31; p = .05; N = 16$)]. At the eighth grade level, the superior readers reported engaging in a greater number of extracurricular activities such as church groups, organizations, and music lessons than did the average readers ($t = 3.41; p = .05; N = 16$). However, caution should be taken in the interpretation of the findings since the sample size is small at each grade level.

Starkey and Starkey (1981) also attempted to discover differences between 210 grade three students who were reading at or above expected levels (achievers) and 147 grade three students who were reading below expectancy (underachievers). All students had an IQ score of 95 or above. Each student was interviewed privately and asked a number of questions on various topics. Analysis of the data revealed a number of significant differences between achievers and underachievers. In answer to the question, "What activities, such as scouting, church, Little League, dancing lessons, music lessons, etc. do you do?" (p. 3) all

of the achievers listed one or more activity, while only 50 of the 147 underachievers named an outside activity in which they were involved. In other words, children who were reading up to expectancy were more likely to participate in a wider variety of outside activities than were students reading below expectancy.

Olson (1984) conducted a 3-year investigation into the effects of parenting and the home environment on student achievement and growth in reading and mathematics in grades three to five. Data were collected on 198 students and their parents from two middle-size urban and two small-town rural areas in Wisconsin. A number of instruments were used to gather information about the children and a lengthy interview was conducted with one of the parents of each student, usually the mother, to assess a number of different aspects of the students' home environment. Several of the home environment variables made significant contributions (both positive and negative) to the prediction of student's scholastic progress. For example, the number of sports activities (organized community recreational activities) in which students participated was negatively related to the prediction of reading achievement for all students. The number of club activities (organized extra-scholastic activities) was positively related to girls' growth and achievement in reading. Girls who engaged in a greater number of activities outside the home were higher achievers

in reading than were girls who engaged in fewer such activities. No significant relationship was reported for boys. It is difficult to say why involvement in organized activities has a positive influence on girls' achievement and not on boys'. Perhaps the kinds of activities in which girls partake are of a more educational nature than those selected by boys. One possible explanation why involvement in sports has a negative influence on achievement is that students who become involved in team sports seem to spend a lot of time improving their skills. Thus, valuable time is taken away from studies which in turn results in lower reading achievement scores. Another consideration might be that students who take part in sports' activities are not good students academically.

These studies suggest that exposure to a wide variety of activities provides children with a background of knowledge, skills, and experiences that are likely to be useful to their educational development. However, participation in extracurricular activities does not ensure a child's success in school or, indeed, proficiency in reading. It is perhaps likely that a combination of factors in the home environment along with the child's participation in outside activities influences the child's reading ability. For example, parents who encourage and support their child's participation in outside activities may also be involved in the child's school experiences, assisting

with homework, reading to the child, and providing reading materials in the home.

Social class and family size also appear to be significantly related to children's participation in cultural activities. Newson and Newson (1977) investigated cultural participation with seven-year-old children. They showed that social class and family size were significant contributing factors to an index of "general cultural interest (GCI)" (p.101). They found that 57% of middle-class families took part in a variety of cultural activities compared with only 23% of working-class families. Children from small families (containing three or fewer children) were more likely to obtain a high score on the GCI index than were children from larger families (four or more children).

Middle-class families engage in twice as many cultural activities as working-class families. However, lack of participation for the latter group may stem from the financial expense of some of these activities; working-class families would perhaps partake of more cultural activities if they could afford the cost but a limited budget restricts their involvement. For example, taking the family to see a movie (if there is one available in the community) can be quite an expensive outing. Many Newfoundland communities do not have a movie theatre so there is the additional cost of transportation. Also, many areas of Newfoundland do not

offer special lessons such as dance, skating, or music in the community. So, only those families who can afford the time and the expense of travel, in addition to the cost of the lessons, are able to take part. Thus, if participation in extracurricular activities is positively related to students' reading scores, then students from working-class families are at a disadvantage in comparison to children from middle-class homes. However, it must be borne in mind that extracurricular participation is but one of the many factors reported to influence reading achievement.

The next section examines the influence of available reading materials in the home.

Accessibility and Use of Reading Materials

A number of studies have shown that the opportunity to use reading materials at home is related to proficiency in reading for preschool children (see Hess & Holloway, 1984 for a review). Parents who read to and interact with their children influence children's interest and skill in reading.

Studies have found that the availability and use of reading materials in the home is positively related to reading ability for school-aged children. For instance, the early research effort by Sheldon and Carrillo (1952) on the relationship of a number of home factors and children's reading ability revealed a significant and positive relationship between the number of books in the home and

children's progress in reading. As the size of the home library increased, so too did the number of good readers.

Similarly, Polhemus (1955) attempted to determine the accessibility and use of reading materials in the homes of 119 sixth grade students. Information collected from questionnaires showed that homes with 100 or more books had a slightly lower percentage of poor readers than did homes with fewer books. Pupils who didn't possess any books of their own tended to be poor readers. In addition, the frequency of reading to children during the preschool years was positively correlated with children's reading success in later years. The amount of time the child spent in recreational reading showed a definite relationship to the amount of time a parent or some other adult read to the child.

Napoli (1968) examined the availability and use of reading materials with two groups of grade eight students. One group consisted of twenty honours students while the other group was composed of twenty regular class students, most of whom were low achievers in reading. Reports from the students and parents indicated that honours students had more reference material in their homes than did the homes of low regular achieving students. In addition, honours students visited the public library more often and checked out more books than did the low regular achieving students.

Seventeen of the honours students indicated that their

parents always or nearly always encouraged them to read whereas only seven of the low group responses fell into these two categories. Low regular achieving students seldom or never discussed books with the family while nine students from the honours group reported that they sometimes discussed reading material and four indicated that they nearly always did. Honours students devoted more leisure time to reading than did low regulars. Eleven honours students reported reading for pleasure on the weekends while no low regular achieving students reported any leisure reading on the weekends. The author concluded

The number of books in the home might not always determine a good or poor reader, but in this survey the honours students or the good readers generally had more books and reading matter at home....All the results seem to point out that the home environment greatly influences the child's reading habits and ability. (pp. 557, 607)

Lamme and Olmsted (1977) also discovered that the availability of books from different sources (for example, library, bookstore) when combined, was positively related to grade one students' reading achievements. The results of these studies reveal a significant positive relationship between availability and use of books in the home and children's success in reading. Students who were high reading achievers had a greater number of books available

for their use at home in comparison to low reading achievers. This finding, however, is not surprising. One would expect to find more books in the homes of those who read, than in the homes of those who do not read since good readers would naturally purchase more books in order to pursue their reading interests.

Social class differences were also apparent in terms of the amount of reading material in the home and the amount of reading done by the students. Crocker (1967) found that the quantity of books available in the homes of high school students was directly related to the occupations of the fathers. Students from homes in the professional category had significantly more books than did students from homes in the management, trades, or labour categories. Also, the amount of reading done by the students was positively correlated with the occupations of their fathers. Students whose fathers were professionals read the highest number of books and magazines. So, students from the homes of professionals had more books available for their use and read more books than did students from the homes of nonprofessionals.

Similarly, Newson and Newson (1977), investigating the ownership of books by seven-year-old children, found that twice as many children (124) from the homes of professionals owned 26 or more books in comparison to the number of working-class children (66) who owned 26 or more books.

Generally, research indicates that the higher one's social status the greater the number of books available for use in the home. One factor that may account for class differences in book ownership may be that children's books take a low priority in homes where there is a limited budget. Parents cannot afford to buy books for their children. Another reason may be that parents in the upper classes appreciate the importance of having reading material in the home and they try to encourage their children to develop the habit of reading, whereas, working-class parents fail to see the necessity of having a large book collection at home. Perhaps they are unaware of the valuable contribution books can make to their children's reading performances in school.

The home is not the only source for reading material, books may be borrowed, without any charge, from the public library, if there is one available in the community. However, research shows that nearly twice as many middle-class children visit the public library in comparison to working-class children (Newson & Newson, 1977). It appears that even when the cost factor is eliminated working-class children do not avail themselves of the opportunity to borrow books.

In conclusion, evidence exists in the literature to support the premise that reading achievement is facilitated by factors in the home environment and parent-child

interactions. The following home variables were reported to be positively related to children's success with reading: parental reading habits, parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials.

The next section of the review examines characteristics of early readers and their home environments to determine which, if any, factors in their home environment influence these children to read before they enter school. Perhaps the same factors are present in the homes of school-aged children who are successful readers.

Characteristics of Early Readers and the Home Reading Environment

Research has found that characteristics of early readers correlate significantly with factors in the home environment (Briggs & Elkind, 1977; Durkin, 1961, 1963, 1964, 1966; King & Friesen, 1972). For example, early readers are read to more frequently by parents and siblings than are non-early readers (Briggs & Elkind, 1977; Durkin, 1966). Early readers who develop the habit of leisure reading tend to have parents who themselves are avid readers (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966; Morrow, 1983). Early readers receive help from their parents with writing, spelling, and definitions (Briggs & Elkind, 1977). Also, parents of early readers more often discuss pictures and point out words to

their children than do parents of non-early readers (Durkin, 1966).

While a literacy-rich environment fosters early reading ability, researchers have found that direct instruction is not necessarily a part of early reading development (Clark, 1976; Torrey, 1973). Many of the children in Clark's and Torrey's studies had learned to read themselves. Few of the parents had deliberately attempted to teach their children. In fact, some parents were embarrassed at their children's early progress toward literacy--"a task which they saw as the prerogative of the school" (Clark, 1976, p. 49).

What appears to be a more important factor in the backgrounds of early fluent readers is not direct instruction but rather the home literacy environment (Clark, 1976; Elkind, 1975). Parents of early readers are sensitive to the needs and interests of their children. They provide rich and stimulating materials for their children and encourage frequent use of public libraries. Homes where parents frequently read to their children and provide an abundance of books and magazines give children early experiences with written language.

Briggs and Elkind (1977) discovered that parents of early readers entering kindergarten were more achievement-oriented. They provided more reading and writing materials for their children than did parents of non-early readers. One finding that was unexpected in Briggs' and Elkind's

study (1977) was that early readers were not significantly different from non-early readers on the Child Interest in Reading factor which examined the child's interest in learning to read, the age at the time of this interest, how often someone read to the child, and the amount of television viewed. One would expect that the parents' interest in reading and the child's motivation to read would together help to facilitate the acquisition of reading by young children. However, the results seem to suggest that the parents' achievement orientation, not the child's interest in reading, is the dominant factor in determining early reading. Thus, a rich literacy environment appears to be essential for fostering early reading.

In conclusion, factors in the home environment such as the reading habits of parents, the frequency of reading to children, and the amount of reading materials in the home are influential in promoting young fluent readers. These same factors were also found to be positively correlated with the reading achievement of school-aged children. Thus, research with early readers provides further evidence of the importance of the home literacy environment and the significant role parents play in facilitating children's attainment of reading skills.

The socioeconomic status of the family is another factor shown to positively affect the quality and extent of

parental influence on children's academic achievement. This will be examined in the next section.

Socioeconomic Status, Parental Education, and Academic Achievement

Another factor that has been widely studied has been the influence of socioeconomic status on the educational accomplishments of children (Cook, 1980). Typically, research has shown that children of different social classes vary in their readiness for learning to read and in their school achievement (Hanson & Robinson, 1967; Miller, 1969, 1970; Marjoribanks, 1982).

For example, Miller (1969) discovered that middle-class children in grade one engaged in the greatest number of activities, lower-class children not as many, and lower-lower class children participated in the fewest activities. Very few lower-lower class children had taken trips, dramatized stories they had heard, interpreted pictures in books, or recognized the letters of the alphabet. The results suggest that middle-class children are the most prepared of the three groups for beginning reading. This is perhaps due to the fact that middle-class children had participated in a greater number and variety of activities such as, dramatizing stories, learning to recognize the alphabet, "pretending" to read from books, handling of books, and interpreting pictures in books. These kinds of

experiences are considered helpful in the development of reading readiness.

Similarly, Miller's (1970) study showed that kindergarten children from middle-class families participated in a wider variety of activities and interacted more with their parents than did lower-lower class children. In general, children from the lower-lower class performed the poorest of the three groups on tests of reading readiness and reading achievement. The poor reading performances may be attributed to the fact that the lower-lower class children interacted less with their parents and engaged in fewer prereading experiences such as dramatizing and listening to stories in comparison to the middle-class children.

A clear association between reading and social class was confirmed by a survey of parents of seven-year-olds conducted by Newson and Newson (1977). They reported that the child of an unskilled manual worker was four times more likely to be a poor reader at age seven than the child of a professional. The reading environments of the various social classes were also found to differ substantially: twice as many children from lower-working-class homes as from professional homes were never read to by their parents. Middle-class children, especially those from professional homes, were more likely to have sizeable collections of books. Even when the consideration of cost was removed by

looking at the number of children who were members of the public library, 64% of the middle-class children were library members compared to only 34% of the working-class children. However, the survey revealed no significant gender or social class differences in the percentage of middle and working class parents who helped their children with reading, 81% of both groups of parents reported helping the child with reading or had done so in the past.

Studies of socioeconomic status typically include parental education as an index of social status. Research has demonstrated that superior readers most often come from homes where parents are highly educated (Berry et al., 1971). Similarly, Briggs and Elkind (1977) noted that, in comparison to parents of non-early readers, parents of early readers were more often professionals and had achieved higher levels of education. In a study of 144 first-grade boys and girls, Porter (1982) found that the number of years the mothers spent in high school was a significant contributor to the prediction of the children's reading ability. The higher the mothers' level of education, the higher the children's reading performance.

Although status variables such as father's occupation or mother's education have been shown to be positively related to reading achievement, they do not explain how the home environment is conducive to learning. Kifer (1976) recommends that further research should focus on what

parents do either directly or indirectly to encourage children to achieve in school. These variables offer clues as to how the home can be organized so as to ensure that optimal learning is occurring.

The main focus of the study undertaken in this report was on home variables and parent-child interactions and how these factors are related to children's reading achievement. Research by Thompson (1985) revealed that within the home, the parents themselves and not the material possessions exert the greatest influence on children's reading achievement. Additionally, the study showed that parental behaviours not parental attitudes were most important predictors of educational performance. Thus, it seems that it is what parents do that makes a difference in children's achievements and not what they profess to think or feel. For example, parents may believe that reading to children is a good practice but if they never do it, the children can not benefit. Or, parents may report that reading aloud to children is unimportant but yet they never fail to read a bedtime story to their children.

Summary

In conclusion, evidence is available in the literature to support the premise that reading achievement is facilitated by factors in the home literacy environment and parent-child interactions at least in the early years of schooling. Many of the earlier environmental studies

stressed status characteristics of the home including such variables as parental education, parental occupation, and the number of children in the family. More recently, researchers are focusing on what parents and children do in the home and the nature of parent-child interactions. The following home variables were reported to be significantly related to children's success with reading: parental reading habits, parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials.

However, much of the research has concentrated on preschool and primary school children and studies of early readers. Very few studies of the home environment have focused specifically on elementary school children and even fewer have been concerned with middle grade students. There is a definite need for more research on the middle grade population. Parents have an important contribution to make, both to the development of children's reading skills and to the encouragement of their leisure reading habits. The nature of that contribution at the middle grade level is the subject of this study, the design of which follows.

CHAPTER III

THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the present study was to determine whether there was a significant relationship between selected home literacy factors and middle grade students' reading achievement. Chapter II has been a guiding chapter for the design of this study. The research evidence provided in Chapter II has shown that specific home variables such as parental reading habits, parent-child interactions with books, and children's reading habits have a significant and positive influence on preschool, primary, and elementary school children's reading achievement. On the basis of the research reported in Chapter II, a questionnaire was developed to investigate the home environments of middle grade students. The variables selected for study were those found to be important contributors to reading achievement in previous research: parental reading habits, parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials.

This chapter is organized into three major sections: method, final data collection, and coding the data. The method provides a description of the sample, the instruments used to collect the data, and the pilot studies of the parent questionnaire. Final data collection reports on the

gathering of data from the students and parents. Coding the data provides information on how the students' Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) scores and parent responses to a questionnaire were analyzed.

Method

Sample

Participants in this study were fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students selected from one school district in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Access in principle to all 21 schools in the district was granted. Out of this total, 17 schools were eligible, that is, there were students in grades four, six, or eight enrolled in the school. The schools were then classified as either rural or urban depending upon the population of the community in which the school was located and the type of services provided within the community. Communities with less than 3,000 people and with only a few small businesses were classified as rural. Communities with 3,000 or more people and with a number of services commonly associated with urban centres such as a medical clinic or hospital, bank, and shopping centre were classified as urban.

The rural communities in this district with populations of less than 2,000 people are mostly fishing villages. The majority of people are employed in the fishing industry. However, some people work at businesses such as local stores, post office, and service station within the

community while others commute to work in an urban centre nearby. Only one urban community is located within the district. This urban centre with a population of approximately 3,000 is small in comparison to many urban communities. However, it is typical of most, in that many services are available such as a fire hall, a hospital, a medical clinic, a public library, two banks, two shopping centres, and other conveniences associated with an urban centre.

Three schools are located within the urban centre. Two of these schools, a primary and elementary school, were selected for the sample. The urban primary school had two grade four classes and the urban elementary school contained two grade six classes and three grade eight classes. Of the 15 eligible rural schools in the district, 5 schools were randomly selected. The rural schools had one class each of grades four, six, and eight students. In all, 530 students in 22 classes (286 males, 244 females) from 7 schools participated. Classes in both rural and urban schools were described by their teachers as heterogeneous. All students present on the day of testing were included in the study.

Students in grades four, six, and eight were chosen because CTBS scores were readily available for comparison purposes and very little research has investigated family literacy and its relationship to middle grade students' reading achievement. For instance, do parents continue to

assist children with homework assignments as they proceed through school or does this help decrease? If so, why? Are middle grade students' leisure reading habits related to reading achievement? In the middle grades, most word attack skills have been taught and students are developing independent reading habits. Also, influences outside the home and school are not as great as those that develop in high school where the broadening of social interests compete for students' leisure time. Therefore, it was decided that grades four, six, and eight would be appropriate for this investigation. CTBS scores were not available for grades five and seven.

Instruments

To obtain the required information, Test R: Reading Comprehension of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) (King-Shaw, 1989) was used to measure students' skill in reading and a parent questionnaire was developed to learn about children's literacy experiences in the home. Each is discussed in turn.

The Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS)

The Canadian Tests of Basic Skills are widely used group tests designed to provide for comprehensive and continuous measurement of growth in the fundamental skills: vocabulary, reading comprehension, the mechanics of writing, methods of study, and mathematics. These tests are organized into six overlapping levels of skills development

which may be used with different grade levels. The CTBS is designed for students in grades kindergarten through twelve. Only the reading comprehension test was selected because I was interested in discovering if factors in the home environment are related to students' reading achievement. Test R: Reading Comprehension measures skills in three major areas: "literal meaning", "interpretative meaning", and "evaluative meaning". The test requires forty-two minutes of actual working time.

Normative data for the CTBS were secured from a large national sample chosen to be representative of all Canadian provinces and different school sizes. Norms were established from approximately 3,200 students per grade from grades K to 12. Internal consistency of the CTBS for the five main area scores range from .83 to .96 with a composite reliability of at least .97 for all grades. The reliability score for the reading comprehension test was not stated in the teacher's guide. Based upon the range given for the tests overall, then it may be assumed that the reliability for reading comprehension would fall within an acceptable level.

The Home Literacy Parent Questionnaire (HLPQ)

The Home Literacy Parent Questionnaire (HLPQ), developed for this study, is designed to get an understanding of the nature and extent of support for literacy in the home environment of students in the middle

grades. This questionnaire focuses upon six home variables. The rationale for selecting each of these home factors is discussed next.

1. Parental Reading Habits--Research has shown that having adult models for reading activities influences children's literacy acquisition (Cousert, 1978; Greaney, 1986; Lee, 1984). Parents of superior readers are more likely to read in their leisure time than are parents of average readers. In addition, parents of early readers, especially the mothers, are usually avid readers (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966). Thus far, the effects of parental reading on emergent readers have been examined. However, little has been done on the effects of parental reading on middle grade students.

2. Parental Assistance--Parents who become actively involved in reading activities at home by reading to their children or helping with reading work have been found to positively influence their children's achievement in general (Watson, Brown, & Swick, 1983) and to promote their performance on measures of reading proficiency (Clark, 1976; Cousert, 1978; Newson & Newson, 1977). Does parental reading to children before and after they begin school have any significant long-term effects on middle grade students' reading achievements? Additionally, does parental assistance decline as children get older because they are capable of helping themselves when they get in the middle

grades or do parents feel they do not have sufficient skills to assist their children as they get older? These are important questions that have not been addressed in previous studies.

3. Parental Expectations--Studies have found that parental expectations are positively related to children's reading achievement (Dave, 1963; Rankin, 1967). Parents of high achievers more often expect their children to achieve high grades in school, to attend college, and to support their children's career decisions than do parents of low achievers. Little research has been undertaken in this area especially for middle grade students. Are there differences in parental expectations according to middle grade students' reading achievement?

4. Children's Leisure Reading Habits--Elementary school children who are voluntary readers tend to be high achievers in school and are particularly successful in reading performance (Greaney, 1980; Long & Henderson, 1973). In addition, parents who encourage their children to read for pleasure, who read to their children, and make reading materials available have a positive influence on their children's reading habits (Neuman, 1986). Parental influence appears to decline as students get older (Brett, 1964). However, since so few studies have been conducted with older students it is unwise to draw any definite conclusions or to speculate about when parental influence

starts to wane. Is there a significant relationship between middle grade students' leisure reading habits and their reading achievements?

5. Children's Participation in Cultural and Extracurricular Activities--Very few studies have examined the influence of children's involvement in cultural and leisure activities. Some evidence on primary and elementary students suggests that superior readers attend more cultural activities and participate in a wider variety of activities than do average readers (Berry, Fischer, Parker, & Zwier, 1971; Olson, 1984; Starkey & Starkey, 1981). Will participation in recreational activities have an effect on middle grade students' reading performances?

6. Availability and Use of Reading Materials--A number of studies have shown that preschool children who have access to reading materials at home tend to become more proficient readers than do children lacking such materials (see Hess & Holloway, 1984 for a review). Similar studies have found significant and positive relationships between availability and use of reading materials and reading ability for school-aged children (Lee, 1984; Napoli, 1968; Newson & Newson, 1977). However, very little research has examined the availability factor from a rural/urban perspective. Are there rural/urban differences in the amount of reading materials available in the home and in how often parents and children use the materials? This is a

pertinent question examined in the Home Literacy Parent Questionnaire.

The present form of the HLPQ is the result of four phases of growth in design and development. The following section will provide a description of the initial development of the questionnaire as well as details of the modifications to the questionnaire, including a rationale for the revisions.

Pilot Studies

Pilot Study 1

The initial questionnaire design consisted of 43 items including both short-answer and multiple-choice questions. Most of the multiple-choice questions involved making a choice of the following alternatives: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Occasionally, and Never. A number of the items contained sub-questions intended to elicit a detailed account of children's literacy experiences in the home. The questionnaire included questions pertaining to the reading habits of parents and children; parental assistance with school-work and, in particular, reading; parent-child interactions with books; parental expectations for their children; accessibility and use of books in the home; the leisure activities of parents and children; family size, ordinal position, and parental education.

In the construction of the survey instrument standard procedures were followed as outlined by Borg and Gall

(1983). These include: (a) make the questionnaire attractive; (b) arrange and organize the questions in a logical sequence; (c) number questionnaire items and pages; (d) write brief, clear instructions; (e) begin with interesting non-threatening items; and (f) include enough information in the questions so that the items are meaningful to the respondent (p. 422). A copy of the instrument appears in Appendix A.

Sample and procedure. Upon completion of the initial questionnaire design (version 1), the questionnaire was given to ten of my colleagues (three primary, two elementary, two junior high, two specialist teachers, and the principal) with a request to make any revisions they deemed necessary and to provide additional questions that they felt were pertinent to the study.

Results. On the basis of feedback from colleagues and through a number of consultations with my advisor, the questionnaire was revised and edited several times. The number of items on the questionnaire was increased from 42 to 56. Changes are in boldface type in version 2 (see Appendix B).

Questionnaire revisions. The introduction at the beginning of the questionnaire was omitted. Information about the child such as his/her name, birthdate, and parents' names was replaced by an identification code number for confidentiality. Items 2 and 37 (version 1), involving

the child's reading preferences, were omitted since item 11 also dealt with this topic.

Additional subquestions were included so that if parents responded positively or negatively to the questions they were asked to explain their response. For example, item 48 (version 2) asks "Has the amount of help that you've given your child decreased over the years? Yes/No". The subquestions then ask "If yes, why? If no, why not?". Question 7 (version 1) concerning subscription to children's magazines was revised so that the options were eliminated and space was provided to list the names of the magazines. Also, if parents responded "no" to the question they were asked to say why they didn't subscribe.

A number of questions were revised because they were written as yes/no questions and not multiple-choice questions as intended. For example, item 9 (version 1) "Does your child ever discuss with you what he/she has read? Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never" was modified to "How often does your child discuss with you what he/she has read? Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never" (version 2). Some questions were changed because certain assumptions were made that were incorrect. For example, question 6 (version 1) "How often does your child borrow books from the public library?" assumes that there is a public library in the community and that the child borrows books. Many communities in Newfoundland do not have a public library.

Thus, the question was modified "Is there a public library in your community? Yes/No" with two sub-questions "How often does your child borrow books from the public library? Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never" and "If never, why doesn't your child borrow books?" (item 7 version 2).

Item 40 (version 1), concerning family size and ordinal position was deleted since these questions were not relevant to the nuclear family of the 90s. Question 38 (version 1) was also eliminated since item 39 addressed a similar issue. In addition, the sequence of the questionnaire was rearranged so that questions pertaining to a similar topic were clustered together.

A letter was written to accompany the questionnaire explaining the purpose of the study to the parents and providing directions for completion of the questionnaire. Parents were assured that any information they provided would be confidential. The letter was revised and edited before it was given to parents in the second pilot study.

Pilot Study 2

Following completion of the revisions to the initial questionnaire design and letter, the second pilot study was conducted. The purpose of this trial administration was to check the clarity of directions, questionnaire length, and potential question ambiguity.

Sample and procedure. Four parents of students in grades 4, 6, and 8 participated. Two parents with children

in grade 6, one parent with a child in grade 4, and one parent with a child in grade 8 took part. I telephoned each of the parents explaining the nature of the study and requesting their assistance in piloting the questionnaire. All parents agreed to participate. The questionnaires were delivered to the parents' homes with the request that parents complete the instrument following the directions outlined in the letter.

The directions were not explained to the parents as I wanted to determine if the instructions were self-explanatory. Parents were also asked to make a note of any questions they didn't understand, to include comments about the survey instrument, and to consider whether the questionnaire was too lengthy to complete. I collected the questionnaires the following night and listened to parents' comments.

Results. All questionnaires were completed by the mothers. The reactions from parents were very positive. All parents reported that they understood each of the items on the questionnaire and they experienced minimal difficulties in following the instructions. They reported completing the questionnaire in a reasonable time period (approximately 30 minutes).

Questionnaire revisions. Upon further examination of the parents' answers a number of revisions were necessary. An additional subquestion was included in item 6 (version 3)

which states "If your child borrows books from the school library, how often does he/she read the books?". It was noted from the response of one parent that her child borrowed books weekly from the school library but in answer to item 11 it was stated that this child did not like to read. Thus, whether children read the books they borrowed was an important point.

Item 10 (version 2) "Does your child like school? Yes/No Why or why not?" was modified, since 2 of the 4 parents misinterpreted the subquestion and answered it in terms of the importance of school. For instance, one parent responded "to get a good education". The subquestion was revised to "If yes, what does he/she like about school? If no, what does he/she dislike about school?". Question 24 (version 2) concerning parents' interests and hobbies was deleted since parents were providing similar responses to item 23.

The subquestion "What does he/she (husband/wife) usually like to read?" in item 26 (version 2) was modified to "If your husband/wife reads, what does he/she usually like to read?", since one of the parents responded that her husband never read. One of the subquestions in item 34 (version 2), which required two answers, was written in two separate questions. Additional space was also provided for answers to item 35 (version 2).

Upon completion of the revisions based on the results of Pilot Study 2, the number of items on the questionnaire for Pilot Study 3 was 55.

Pilot Study 3

The third Pilot Study was completed to determine if the revisions made in Pilot Study 2 remedied the problems inherent in the initial trial of the questionnaire; to identify any further question ambiguities resulting in misinterpretations; and to determine other potential problems.

Sample and procedure. Seven parents of students in grades 4, 6, and 8 participated. Two parents with a child in grade 4, two parents with a child in grade 6, and three parents with children in grade 8 took part. Five mothers, one father, and a mother and father completed the questionnaire. The same procedure was followed as in Pilot 2.

Results. The initial response from parents was again positive. All parents indicated that they understood the directions and questionnaire items. However, closer examination of the parent responses revealed that problems were still evident in the questionnaire.

A number of subquestions (version 2) were not answered by one or more parents: items 11, 17, 39, 40, 51, 53, and 54. Each of these subquestions with the exception of items 17 and 54 was stated in the form "Why or why not?". For

instance, item 53 read "Do you think your child will finish school? Yes/No" with the subquestion "Why or why not?". The subquestion in item 54 was stated as "Why?". The subquestion for item 17 was "On the weekends?", referring to the kinds of things children and parents do together.

Three questions were misinterpreted by the parents and answered incorrectly: items 25, 39, and 40 (version 2). The subquestions for items 39 and 40 were also "Why or why not?". Item 25 was misinterpreted by 3 of the 7 parents. The question read "How often do you read at home?" with the subquestion "What do you usually like to read?". Parents responded to the question in terms of their child's reading habits, not their own, thus making erroneous responses such as "fairy tales". This error was probably due to the fact that a number of questions prior to item 25 asked about the child's involvement in sports, clubs, and various activities outside the home and thus, parents were still thinking about their child when they answered the question.

Revisions made following Pilot 2 did not present problems in Pilot 3.

Questionnaire revisions. (See boldface print version 4 in Appendix D) Because of such a high number of non-responses from the subquestion "Why or why not?", items 38, 39, 40, 50, and 52 (version 4) were revised, broken into two questions with a stem at the beginning of each. For example, item 50 was modified "Is your child getting a good

education in this school? Yes/No" with two subquestions "If yes, what makes you think your child is getting a good education? If no, what makes you think your child is not getting a good education?". Item 53 with the subquestion "Why?" was left unchanged. Since only one parent omitted the question, it was probably an oversight. Item 24 was interchanged with 25 so that the question "How often does your spouse read at home?" was asked first followed by the question "How often do you read at home?". As stated previously, the term "you" was misinterpreted by a number of parents to mean the "child" rather than the "parent". Several questions (#36, 37) and (#40, 41) were re-sequenced as #37, 36 and #41, 40 so that the question about the spouse was asked first. Item 8 was reworded to read "If yes to number 7, how often do you, the parents, borrow books for yourselves from the public library?" to eliminate any ambiguity caused by the term "you". The phrase "husband/wife" was replaced by the word "spouse" in a number of questions so that the wording was less awkward. Also, the term "you" was revised to "you and your spouse" in several items so as to include both parents in the question. Items #42, 43 were re-ordered as #43, 42. In addition, items #10 through 15 were resequenced as #15, 12, 10, 11, 13, and 14 so that questions pertaining to the child's reading were grouped together and there was a better flow to the questions. Several questions (#23, 26, 28) were

rewritten in two parts (a) and (b) so that both parents' leisure habits were included in the question.

Following revisions based on the results of Pilot 3 the number of subquestions had increased considerably, but the number of items on the HLPQ for Pilot 4 remained the same.

Pilot Study 4

Sample and procedure. Only two families were involved in this tryout. However, they represented the typical family of the 90s. In each family both parents were working. One family had two children, one in grade eight and the other in grade twelve. The second family had one child in grade four. Both mothers completed the questionnaires. The same procedure was followed as in the previous two trials.

Results. Both parents reported no difficulties with the questionnaire. They followed the directions given and completed all questions. This time no subquestions were omitted. An examination of the parents' answers also revealed that the parents understood the items and answered the questions appropriately. Thus, no further modifications to the questionnaire were necessary. The questionnaire was then printed and ready to be distributed to the parents participating in the study.

Final Data Collection

Permission to administer Test R: Reading Comprehension of the CTBS (King-Shaw, 1989) to students in grades four,

six, and eight was obtained from the Superintendent of Schools of the district. Permission to distribute parent questionnaires by means of the students in each of the aforementioned grade levels was also approved. The principal in each school was contacted by telephone and arrangements were made with grades four, six, and eight teachers to administer the Reading Comprehension Test to the students.

Students were informed of the purpose of the study and that their scores on the Reading Comprehension Test would be confidential. Then test booklets and answer sheets were distributed to the students with the assistance of the classroom teacher. The directions, sample paragraph, and sample question were discussed with the students. They were to choose the best answer for each of the corresponding questions and to record their answers on a separate answer sheet. The test was started when all student inquiries were resolved. Testing took approximately 42 minutes at each grade.

Twenty-two classes in 7 schools were tested. All students who were present on the day of testing were given Test R: Reading Comprehension of the CTBS. Five hundred thirty students in grades 4, 6, and 8 participated: 150 in grade 4, 199 in grade 6, and 181 in grade 8.

About a week later, I revisited each of the schools to distribute parent questionnaires. Students in grades 4, 6,

and 8 who completed the Reading Comprehension Test were given a questionnaire to take home to their parents or guardians. If a student had a brother or sister in grades 4, 6, or 8, then only one child received a questionnaire so that one survey per family was distributed. A letter (see Appendix E) accompanied each questionnaire explaining the purpose of the survey along with directions for completing the instrument. Parents were assured that all information provided would be confidential. Questionnaires were sent to 475 homes.

One week before the collection date each principal was contacted to remind students to return the questionnaires to their classroom teachers. About a week after questionnaires were distributed, I revisited each of the schools and collected the returns from the students and teachers. Follow-up telephone calls from the schools were made to the homes of the non-respondents. Some schools were revisited several times in an effort to obtain all returns.

Of the 475 questionnaires distributed, 325 or 68 per cent were returned, indicating a good response from the parents (see Table 1). The rate of return from the rural centres (76%) was much higher than from the urban centres (58%).

Eleven of the 325 returned questionnaires were not used in the final analysis because respondents answered only 10 to 20% of the questions. Thus, the descriptive and statistical

Table 1

Distribution of the Home Literacy Parent Questionnaire and
Percentage of Returns

School Location	Number Distributed	Number Returned	Percentage Returned
Urban	201	117	58
Rural	274	208	76
Total	475	325	68

analysis discussed in Chapter IV report data on 314 students and their parents.

Coding the Data

Parent responses on the Home Literacy Parent Questionnaire and CTBS results provided the primary data for the study. Information from the parent questionnaire was tabulated using a point system of numerical values where (5) indicates a high degree of parental reading, parental assistance, parental expectations, children's reading, children's participation, and access to reading materials and (1) represents minimal parent/child input in these activities. Students' answers to questions on Test R: Reading Comprehension on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (King-Shaw, 1989) were recorded on computerized answer

sheets and analyzed. Secondary data such as gender, age, and grade level were obtained from the students at the time of testing.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to investigate the relationship between selected home literacy factors and the level of reading achievement of middle grade students and to determine whether there are significant differences according to school location (rural/urban), gender, grade, age, and parental education. In this chapter an attempt will be made to answer the questions which guided the study. The questions are as follows:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the level of reading achievement of fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students and the following factors in the home environment: (a) parental reading habits, (b) parental assistance, (c) parental expectations, (d) children's leisure reading habits, (e) children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and (f) accessibility and use of reading materials?

2. Is there a significant relationship between parents' level of education and each of the six home factors (a-f in Question 1)?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the gender of the child and each of the following five home factors : parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation

in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials?

4. Does parental assistance decrease as student age increases and as grade increases?

5. Are there rural/urban differences in students' reading achievements by gender, age, and grade?

6. Are there rural/urban differences in the amount of support provided for home literacy?

Parent responses to a questionnaire developed solely for this study and students' reading comprehension scores on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (King-Shaw, 1989) provided the primary data for the study. Secondary data such as gender and age were collected from the students. All data were coded and analyzed. Pearson product-moment correlations and multiple regression correlations were computed between reading achievement and each predictor variable. The predictor variables comprised each of the six home factors, school location (rural/urban), gender, grade, and age. Correlations were also computed between selected home factors and school location (rural/urban), gender, age, and parental education. The significance level was set at $p < .05$.

This chapter is organized into two major sections: preliminary analysis and final analysis. The preliminary analysis reports on and discusses the parents' responses to particular items on the questionnaire. The final analysis

examines the correlations between the variables and discusses the findings.

Preliminary Analysis

A number of questions were excluded from the final statistical analysis of the data. Each will be discussed in turn in subsequent sections. The questions, although eliminated for purposes of the final analysis, provide valuable insights into the kinds of literacy experiences available in the home such as the kinds of parent-child social activities, parental assistance, and reading habits. The parents' responses to the questions and the reasons the questions were deleted are provided. Three categories of reasons for the question deletions are: same response to questions, minimal response to questions, and varied responses to questions.

Same Response to Questions

A very high percentage of parents provided the same response to certain questions, indicating that there was much agreement. Therefore, further analysis was not necessary because the answers would offer no distinctions on the factors under study, for instance, rural/urban communities.

Nearly all parents (99%) reported helping their child to recognize letters and words before entering school. However, very few parents (51.9%) reported helping daily or weekly with homework, with the remainder suggesting that

they help only occasionally or never. It seems that middle grade students receive little help from their parents with homework. Those parents who provide assistance suggested that they help by asking questions, providing explanations, and finding information.

While only about half the parents helped with homework, even fewer parents helped with reading. About 20% of the fathers and 30% of the mothers helped their children with reading on a daily or weekly basis. Approximately half of the mothers and fathers helped occasionally and the remainder never helped with reading. These results raise the question "Why are the parents not helping?" Of the 55 mothers who completed this question, nearly all (94.5%) felt the child was capable of doing his/her own work. Reasons given by the 74 fathers included responses such as the child is capable of doing the work (58.1%); I am unable to help due to a limited education (20.3%); I am not available (14.9%); or the other parent helps (6.8%).

There are many ways that parents could assist older children such as helping to locate information, reviewing material, ensuring through questioning that children "understand" what they think they understand, and most importantly providing praise and encouragement for the child's efforts. It seems that the parents who participated in this study hold narrow views about how they can provide assistance to their children. The parents reportedly helped

their children when they were younger but this assistance decreased as the children got older.

In response to the question "Do you want to help your child?" 294 of the 303 respondents said "yes". It is interesting to find that so many parents report that they want to help their child but the findings show that parents are not helping with homework. Why then is there a discrepancy between what the parents desire and what they do for their children? Is it that parents are uncertain as to the kind of assistance that is needed? Maybe some parents would like to help their children but are unable to help because of a limited education. Or, perhaps they prefer to delegate the responsibility for their children's education to teachers and the school system. Parents should be encouraged to play a more substantive and proactive role in their children's education. Education is a joint responsibility between parents and teachers and neither partner should shirk that responsibility.

Nearly all parents (98.1%) believe their child will finish school because the child is ambitious and wants to finish; the child has a good attitude towards school; the child shows potential; and the parents insist that their child will finish school. This belief is unrealistic for many children, since research on early school leavers has revealed that approximately 50% of all children enrolled in schools in Newfoundland and Labrador will drop out before

completion of their high school program (Pope, Davis, Kelleher, Parrell, Day, Coombs, 1984). Parents are apparently unaware of the statistics on school dropouts or perhaps they believe "this won't happen to my child".

In response to the question "How often do you take your child to plays, concerts, and movies?" most parents (96.4%) reported that they are involved in these activities only occasionally or never. The reason for such a low occurrence of these activities is that few plays and concerts are performed in the geographic area except for special occasions in school, church, or at social functions. Most families living within both rural and urban areas rely on video rentals for entertainment, since the nearest movie theatre is approximately 150-200 kilometres away. However, recently a theatre opened in the urban centre.

Given that there are so few cultural opportunities available in the rural areas and even in the urban centre, children in these communities are at a definite disadvantage. Such opportunities provide exposure to different forms of language and expression, and increase the breath and depth of knowledge, concepts, and experiences for the children. The social and cultural facets of society can have a dramatic influence on children's literacy development.

In homes without an encyclopedia (117), 92 parents (80.7%) reported that there were times when their child

needed an encyclopedia. Of the 86 parents who responded to how they managed without an encyclopedia, 82 of them (95.3%) answered that they borrow one from a friend or neighbour. In other words, approximately one fourth of the 314 parents, indicated a need to borrow an encyclopedia. All 314 children in the survey have access to library facilities in their schools and are permitted to take books home. Three hundred and four parents reported that a newspaper was regularly available in the community.

Not so long ago, many schools in rural Newfoundland and Labrador did not have library facilities. Furthermore, people in many rural communities did not have access to a local or daily newspaper. The availability of a newspaper on a regular basis in almost all the communities surveyed and access to school library facilities for all children suggest that improvements have occurred in the availability of literacy materials in Newfoundland.

Greater access to reading materials does not necessarily mean that parents and children are reading the available materials. In response to the question "How often do you or your spouse read the newspaper?" 79 of the 304 respondents (26%) indicated that they read daily while 198 parents read weekly (65.1). Thus, it seems that most parents read the newspaper on a weekly basis.

With regard to the children's reading, 132 of the 309 parents who responded (42.6%) indicated that their children

occasionally or never borrow books from the school library. Furthermore, 57 respondents (18.7%) reported that their children sometimes or never read the books that they borrow from the school library. Furthermore, many children do not borrow books from the public library. In communities where public library facilities are available, 70.9% of the children occasionally or never borrow books. Results of the questionnaire show that even when children have access to reading materials in schools and public libraries, they do not avail themselves of the opportunity to borrow books. This indicates that reading is not seen as an important part of life by either the children or their parents.

Thirty-nine children were receiving special help in school. Of the 39 children receiving help, most were receiving assistance because of difficulty with school-work (89.5%). Other kinds of assistance provided include counselling, building self-confidence, and working with gifted children. Twenty-five parents felt their child needed special help but was not receiving any. The majority of the 25 parents felt their child needed help with school-work (84.0%). Two hundred thirty-nine parents of the 264 who responded (90.5%), believe their children are capable of doing the work without assistance.

All respondents (312) believe it is important that their children learn to read and write. The parents reported that reading and writing are important for a good

education, for a good future, to function in today's society, to achieve the child's full potential, and to discover the pleasures of reading and writing. It seems that parents profess to value the importance of reading and writing but do little to convey this importance to their children. For instance, are parents good reading and writing models for their children? Do they purchase literacy materials for themselves and their children? It is important that parents show children that they value reading in their own lives.

In response to the question "Do you feel your own reading and writing abilities are good enough to help your child?" most parents (92.6%) replied "yes". One hundred and eighteen parents felt help from the school was not needed. Of the 104 parents who responded, most (90.4%) felt school help was not needed because their child had no problems with the school-work or they were capable of helping their child. Other parents suggested that teachers were responsible for their child's education, the school was unable to help, or they did not have time to receive help from the school.

Most parents (93.8%) believe the school encourages parents to participate in their child's education. They suggest schools do this through parent-teacher meetings, parent-teacher communications, invitations to special school functions, and requests to help out in school activities. This finding is inconsistent with how parents responded to

the parental assistance question. It seems that schools are encouraging parents to get involved with their children but parents are not following the advice of the teachers. Perhaps parents are unsure how to best help their children, or maybe the parents are relinquishing their role as educators now that the children are in the middle grades.

In response to the question "Is your child getting a good education in this school?" 87.3% of the parents replied "yes". Parents believe that their children are receiving a good education because of the quality of the child's work and abilities, the quality and concern of teachers, and the quality of school programs. It seems that parents may be in "their own little world" when they speak so favourably of the Newfoundland school system, since all outside indicators (Education Statistics, 1990) are that Newfoundland students are not doing well in comparison to students in other Canadian provinces. The results of these standardized tests, however, are not well publicized. Additionally, parents are not informed often of the progress of their children on such tests. Thus, the parents may be unaware of the many shortcomings in the Newfoundland education system.

The foregoing questions were deleted from the final data analysis because the high similarity of responses on the part of parents precluded further data discriminations.

Minimal Response to Questions

Some questions were eliminated because of a low frequency of response so that any differences reported would not be significant. For instance, only 4 parents reported that they did not read the newspaper either because they were not interested or the paper was not delivered to the home.

When asked the question "If you never help (with homework), why not?" only 19 parents responded. Fourteen of them suggested the child was capable of doing the work. Other responses included I do not have enough education; I'm not available; I do not believe in doing the child's work; the child is receiving help from a tutor; and the child seldom has homework. Few parents responded to the question in light of the fact that 148 parents had reported helping occasionally or never with homework. The low response may be due to the way the question was stated. Not many parents feel that they "never" help with homework.

Only 3 parents reported not helping their child to recognize letters and words before entering school. Two parents suggested they did not help because the child learned from TV and one parent did not want to pressure the child. Ten parents did not want to help their child with school-work because the child does not require help, the child likes to be independent, and the parents have a limited education.

Forty-three of the 309 parents who responded (13.9%), suggested that their child did not like to read. When asked why not, about half of the 36 parents reported that their child was not interested in reading. Other responses included the child had a reading problem, preferred other activities, or was busy with homework.

Of the 12 parents who reported not having a dictionary in the home, 9 suggested that their child needed a dictionary, 2 claimed a dictionary was not needed, and 1 parent did not state whether a dictionary was needed. When asked how they manage without a dictionary, the parents suggested that they borrow one from friends and neighbours, or the child uses the school dictionary.

As mentioned previously, a large number of children (42.6%) occasionally or never borrow books from the school library. When parents were asked why their children didn't borrow books, only 4 parents responded. Responses included the child doesn't like to read, uses the public library, and has books at home.

Twenty-three parents felt their own reading and writing abilities were not adequate to help their children. When asked to explain, the typical answers included "My child can read and write better than me"; "My child can write better than me"; "My reading and writing abilities are only good up to a certain level"; "I have difficulty with spelling"; "I don't read a lot"; and "The way things are taught in school

has changed dramatically". Thus, only a few parents either reported that their own reading and writing skills are not adequate to help their child or disclosed such information in the questionnaire.

Only 18 parents felt schools do not encourage parent participation. Reasons given were that the school is unclear of the parents' role, the teaching staff sees parents as a threat, the teachers lack interest in the students, and the school assumes that parents participate at home.

The preceding items were eliminated from the final data analysis because of a low frequency of response from the parents. Any differences identified would not be significant.

Varied Responses to Questions

There was such a wide range of responses to a number of questions that only a very low percentage of parents provided the same response, therefore, it is unlikely that any of the sets of responses would be significant. For instance, the fathers' reading preferences were quite varied with newspaper reading being the most popular choice (26.9%); responses grouped together under the category "other" such as folktales/fairytales, religious/newspaper, and informational/magazines the second most popular (18.1%); and a combination of newspaper and magazines the third favourite (17.6%).

The mother's reading preferences showed a similar range of choices to those reported by the fathers. Responses grouped together under the label "other" such as comics/humour, novels/religious, and novels/informational formed the largest category of choices (26.9%); novels were the second most popular choice (16.4%); and newspaper reading a third favourite (15.7%). These findings suggest that the mothers typically engage in more lengthy pieces of reading such as novels but also enjoy reading the newspaper, while the fathers prefer the shorter informational and news' items found in magazines and newspapers. Seventy-six fathers (24.2%) and 46 mothers (14.6%) did not answer the questions, indicating that perhaps either those parents did very little reading and had no reading preferences or maybe they read but chose not to reveal their preferences on the questionnaire.

The children's reading preferences as reported by parents also showed a wide range. Approximately one third of the 300 respondents (34.3%) reported that their child preferred to read novels. Combinations of responses grouped under the label "other" such as informational/magazines, novels/romance, and nature/sports comprised the second largest category (23.7%). A third favourite was novels in combination with comics/humour (14.3%). No reading preferences were reported for twenty-three children and

fourteen parents omitted the question, indicating perhaps that their children did little reading.

The majority of students (84.9%) like school, according to reports by the parents. When parents were asked what their children like about school, the most popular responses included favourite school subjects, the educational benefits, being with friends, and extracurricular activities. Things they disliked most were the school-work, the homework, and the routine.

Parents reported a variety of ways they help their children with reading such as listening to the child read, reading to the child, providing reading materials, and checking the child's work. The majority of the 169 respondents (68%) reported that the fathers were instructing their children. The type of instruction included explaining things to the child, helping to pronounce words, providing meanings, correcting errors as the child read, and questioning the child about what was read. Similar findings were reported for the mothers.

When asked the question "How important is reading to you and your spouse?" two thirds of the 308 respondents (66.9%) reported that reading is very important, with the remainder suggesting that reading is fairly or not very important. One hundred and forty-three of the 215 parents who responded (66.5%) feel that reading is important because of the educational benefits of knowing how to read. Some

other responses included that it provides relaxation and entertainment, is important for your future, is a part of everyday life, and is a way of communicating.

The types of magazine subscriptions held by the parents showed a wide response range. Responses grouped together under the label "other" such as science/space, news/current events/nature, and sports/Reader's Digest formed the largest category (56.1%). When the responses in the "other" category were examined, 34 parents listed Reader's Digest in combination with other types of magazines. Thus, in total 58 of the 171 respondents (33.9%) subscribed to Reader's Digest. This magazine consists mostly of condensed stories, jokes, riddles, advertisements, how-to suggestions, and some health and educational items. Generally speaking, Reader's Digest is not good quality literature but it does appear to be popular among the parents in this study.

Few parents provide magazines for their children to read. One hundred and eight of the 314 respondents (34.4%) reported that they subscribe to children's magazines. The types of subscriptions were quite varied. Most reported magazines of an informative and educational nature (59.4%) such as Highlights, Ranger Rick, and World. Others included teen magazines, popular fictional characters, and hobbies and handicrafts. Four parents reported that they subscribe to children's book clubs.

When parents were asked "What kinds of things do you and your child do together during the weekdays?", the most frequent response for the mothers (27.2%) and the fathers (30.1%) was hobbies and crafts. This category included a number of activities such as fishing, camping, boating, knitting, sewing, watching TV, and reading. The most frequently mentioned of these activities was watching TV. Many of the parents listed a variety of family activities such as socializing/helping with school-work, playing games/helping with school-work, and working around the house/socializing. These combinations of responses were grouped together under the label "other" and formed the second highest category for both the mothers (22.2%) and the fathers (18.3%).

The third highest response for the fathers was a combination of hobbies and crafts and playing games, and for the mothers it was a combination of hobbies and crafts and socializing. Socializing included family talks, visiting friends and relatives, and attending social functions. Similar kinds of responses were given for weekend activities. The favourite response was again hobbies and crafts with a slightly higher percentage of the parents involved in these activities on the weekends. Thirty-five mothers (11.1%) and 85 fathers (27.1%) omitted the question. Not completing the question may indicate that these parents

take part in few activities with their children and thus had little to report.

In response to the question, "How do you or your spouse encourage your son or daughter to do well in school?" one third of the 275 respondents stated that they provide encouragement and did not elaborate. Other responses included they inform the child of the importance of an education, reward the child for good marks, help the child with school-work, provide praise, show love and understanding, and keep informed of the child's progress in school.

More than half of the 274 parents who responded (56.9%) would like the school to show them how they can help their child with his/her school-work. A large percentage of the respondents (46.6%) would like to see Parent Education Programs offered in the school such as upgrading courses, computer courses, and information about courses that their children are doing in school so they can better assist them at home. A number of parents reported that they had difficulty helping their children with mathematics. Other responses included better parent-teacher communication, access to help when needed, help with gifted children, a homework list for parents, and encouragement from the school. Some of the parents were very vague in their responses and simply stated "whatever is required that will benefit my child". Such a response may be interpreted to

mean that these parents have an uninformed view of an education. They are perhaps uncertain as to the kinds of help that would be beneficial to the child.

In answer to the question "How are you responsible for your child's education?", approximately one third of the 238 respondents indicated that they show interest and concern in the child's education. Other answers included to provide help with school-work, to keep informed of the child's progress in school, and to provide financial assistance. Seventy-six parents (24.2%) omitted the question. Perhaps they were uncertain as to the kind of role parents should play in their child's education, or maybe they feel it is not their responsibility but the teacher's to help their child in school.

When parents were asked what aspirations they have for their children upon completion of high school, 189 of the 268 respondents (70.5%) were reluctant to state any particular career choice. They believed it was the child's future and therefore it was his/her decision to make. Some parents suggested they would support the child's decision and would provide guidance in helping the child make the right choice. Similar findings were reported by Newson and Newson (1977) in their interviews with parents of seven year-olds in England. Some mothers believed that they "very definitely had no right to pre-empt the child's decision, even so far as to express an opinion on it," (p. 167) and

many stressed that it was important that the child should choose.

Fifty-eight parents selected a particular occupation for their child. Forty-eight of the parents chose a professional career such as a doctor, lawyer, teacher, or nurse, while others selected occupations such as a tradesperson or a military person. Parents chose these occupations for a number of reasons such as for the job benefits, enjoyment, a rewarding career, and the child would do a good job. Some parents did not state a particular career choice but they commented that they wanted their child to continue his/her education, to reach his/her potential, or to have a rich and rewarding future.

Many parents did not seem to be well-informed about career choices for their children. With the technological advances in society, changes in work-force demands, and the ever-increasing importance of an education, it is imperative that parents be knowledgeable about the career opportunities that are available so as to be better able to provide guidance to their children in making appropriate career choices.

In summary, middle grade students receive little help from their parents with homework and reading. Many parents feel their children are capable of doing the work themselves and do not need their assistance. It seems that parents are unaware of ways to help older children. Approximately one

third of the parents who responded suggest they are responsible for their children's education by showing interest and concern in their education. However, parental interest and concern may not be enough for some children. Parents need to take a more active role in their children's literacy development.

Parents also seem to be uninformed about the state of education in Newfoundland and Labrador. They believe that their children are performing well and attending good quality schools, when in fact the findings show that Newfoundland students are not performing well in comparison to their Canadian counterparts (Education Statistics, 1990). In addition, many parents hold unrealistic expectations for their children's education in view of the research (Pope et al., 1984) which reported that approximately 50% of all children enrolled in schools in Newfoundland and Labrador will not complete their education. The Learning Well...Living Well Report by the Federal Government (1991) laments that there is no public outcry that schools in Canada turn out as many dropouts as it does university graduates. The report further encourages a stronger learning culture among all Canadians, if we are to adapt to a rapidly-changing world economy, an aging work-force, and a more entrepreneurial work-force than has been the case traditionally. The parents also appear to be lax with regards to their children's future. They are not well-

informed about the factors that influence sound career choices, and are giving their children sole responsibility for the making of career decisions.

The next section examines the correlations between the variables and discusses the findings. The questions and responses discussed in the preliminary analysis are not considered in the final analysis.

Final Analysis

The analysis and discussion that follow attempts to provide answers to the six questions proposed in Chapter I. Each question is presented, followed by a report on the findings, and a discussion.

Question 1

Is there a significant relationship between the level of reading achievement of fourth, sixth, and eighth grade students and the following factors in the home environment: (a) parental reading habits, (b) parental assistance, (c) parental expectations, (d) children's leisure reading habits, (e) children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and (f) accessibility and use of reading materials?

Findings and discussion. When the home variables were combined, there was a multiple regression coefficient of .44 between the home variables and reading comprehension for grade 4 students, .46 for grade 6 students, and .48 for grade 8 students, significant at the .001 level for grades 4

and 6 and .01 for grade 8. Together, the six home variables accounted for approximately 20% of the variance in reading comprehension for grade 4, 21% for grade 6, and 23% for grade 8. Thus, the home variables account for slightly less than one quarter of the variance on reading ability at each grade level.

When each of the home variables was examined independently using standardized beta weights, the following home variables showed a statistically significant relationship with reading comprehension for grade 4: parental assistance (-.228) and access (.283); for grade 6: parental reading (.262) and parental assistance (-.255); and for grade 8: parental reading (.219), parental assistance (-.353), and access (.232) (see Table 2).

Accessibility and use of reading materials (access) in this investigation reflects the quality and quantity of reading materials available in the home for the parents and children. Factors related to this variable include the number of child and adult books in the home, the availability and use of a dictionary and encyclopedia, subscriptions to child and adult magazines, and access to a public library in the community.

Access showed a significant and positive relationship to reading for grades 4 and 8. This finding indicates that grades 4 and 8 students who are high reading achievers as defined by performance on the reading comprehension subtest

Table 2

Multiple Regression Coefficients and Standardized Betas
between Home Variables and Reading Comprehension by Grade

HOMEVAR	Grade					
	4		6		8	
	-----		-----		-----	
	B	Beta	B	Beta	B	Beta
P. Read	.361	.153	.668	.262**	.515	.219*
Assist	-.477	-.228*	-.558	-.255**	-.822	-.353***
Expect	-.295	-.074	-.328	-.075	-.834	-.185
C. Read	-.085	-.023	.242	.055	.318	.082
Active	.357	.080	.332	.063	-.760	-.162
Access	.779	.283**	.412	.154	.577	.232*

Note. HOMEVAR = Home Variables; P. Read = Parental Reading Habits; Assist = Parental Assistance; Expect = Parental Expectations; C. Read = Children's Leisure Reading Habits; Active = Children's Participation in Cultural and Extracurricular Activities; Access = Accessibility and Use of Reading Materials.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (King-Shaw, 1989) have greater access to books, magazines, and reference materials at home and in the community and use them more often than students who are low reading achievers. Surprisingly, access was not significant for grade 6 students. Perhaps at this grade level, the reading interests and the amount of suitable reading material available in the home may drop off. There may be more reading material present in the home for grade 8 students to use since the books, magazines, and so forth that their parents read may now be suitable for and of interest to them.

The results of the present study are consistent with research which has found that exposure of preschool children to reading materials at home is related to proficiency in reading (Hess & Holloway, 1984). Similar studies with school-aged children have shown that successful readers had more reading materials at home, visited the public library more frequently, and devoted more time to leisure reading than did unsuccessful or low regular readers (Lamme & Olmsted, 1977; Lee, 1984; Napoli, 1968; Polhemus, 1955).

Parental assistance refers to the availability and quality of educational guidance provided by the parents. It includes help with school-work, assistance with school-related reading assignments, and specific efforts to assist the child with reading skills. It also reflects how often

parents read aloud to their children, both before and after their children started school.

Parental assistance revealed a significant but negative relationship to reading achievement for grades 4, 6, and 8. This finding indicates that greater parental assistance is provided with homework and reading in the homes of low reading performers than in the homes of high reading performers. Additionally, the strength of the negative relationship between parental assistance and reading performance increases with grade level. High achievers receive less help from their parents with school-work as they progress through the grades than do low reading achievers.

High achievers may receive less assistance as they progress through school but at the outset of their education the high achievers' parents must have devoted a great deal of time to their children. The parents probably read stories to the children, listened to the children read, interacted with their children through play and games, and encouraged the children to become independent. Thus, a strong foundation was built in the preschool and primary school years so that the children are now competent and independent in the middle grades.

These findings are not necessarily in conflict with those reported in the review of the literature (Pickett, 1983; Watson, Brown, & Swick, 1983). Pickett did a

comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to parent involvement in children's reading. Twenty-six of the twenty-seven projects that measured children's reading reported reading gains, with twenty of these reporting that reading gains reached significance. In other words, parents' direct tutorial help with children's reading resulted in improvements in reading by the children.

Watson, Brown, and Swick (1983) also discovered that the amount of parental support given a child was significantly and positively related to the child's achievement in first grade. Many children when they first learn to read, enjoy reading aloud to their parents so as to show off their new skills. Indeed, most primary children read aloud rather than silently. Even when asked to read silently young children will whisper or subvocalize the words. Furthermore, children who are skillful with reading perhaps are more receptive to their parents' help and because they are successful, this is an incentive to the parents to continue to help the child to develop his/her reading skills.

The reading experiences for older children are somewhat different from those for younger children. Older children prefer to read silently and will usually only read aloud if something is difficult to comprehend. The amount of assistance that parents provide is also perhaps less than when their children were younger. The findings in this

study showed that middle-grade students who are performing well in reading receive little assistance from their parents because according to the reports from the parents, they are able to do the homework that is required and prefer to work independently. Students who are experiencing difficulties with homework and reading still need assistance from their parents and were more likely to ask for help in order to get their homework completed.

The findings of this study appear to accurately reflect what was happening in the home. Typical comments from parents were: "My child doesn't need help", "My child is old enough to do the work himself", "My child is good at reading", and "My child doesn't ask for help". These comments by parents probably do not reflect a lack of caring about the children's school-work but rather show confidence in their children's ability to complete the work. The findings in the present study concur with those of Lee (1984), who discovered that average readers in grades two, three, and four receive significantly more assistance from their parents than did superior readers.

The variable parental assistance also included questions pertaining to parental reading to children, both before and after the children started school. How often the fathers read to their children during the preschool years was positively related to the children's reading achievement in later years (.14), significant at the .01 level. How

often mothers read to their children showed no significant relationship to their children's reading ability. Additionally, parental reading after the child commenced school was not significant.

It seems that mothers of both successful and unsuccessful reading achievers reportedly read aloud to their children when they were young. Typically, parents read a bedtime story to their children. What appears to be more significant is whether the fathers read to their children in the preschool years. If the fathers, and mothers read to their children, then the parents are conveying a message that reading is important for both males and females. Children seem to imitate the behaviours of their parents. Thus, boys and girls will want to emulate their parents' actions.

The findings in the present study are both consistent and inconsistent with the findings reported by Cousert (1978). Cousert found that whether the father, and mother read in the preschool years was significantly related to the child's reading achievement ($p = .001$). In the present study, how often the father read to the child during the preschool years was significantly related to the child's reading ability ($p = .01$). However, how often the mother read to the preschooler showed no significant relationship.

Additionally, Cousert reported that whether the mother read to the child at present showed a significant

relationship to the child's reading ability ($p = .01$). Father's reading was not significant when computed for the entire population, but when computed for boys and girls separately, the results were significant ($p = .05$). In the present study, how often the mother or father read to the child after he/she began school was not significant.

The inconsistencies in the findings may be due to the fact that Cousert studied the home environments of a sample of grade three students and the present study examined the home environments of middle grade students. Also, different questions were asked in each study. Cousert looked at how often the mother, and father read to the child in preschool and how often the mother, and father read to the child at present. This study investigated how often the mother, and father read to the child before starting school and how often the mother or father read to the child after he/she started school. No specific grade level was mentioned in the last question. Thus, parents may have been thinking about different grade levels when they answered this question. Also, the results may be inaccurate because the parents were asked to report on what they did at least 6 or more years ago.

Parental reading habits reflect how often parents read books, magazines, newspapers, and reference materials and how often parents frequent the public library. The variable parental reading revealed a significant and positive

relationship to reading performance for students in grade 6 ($p < .01$) and grade 8 ($p < .05$). In other words, parents of students who are proficient in reading more often borrow books from the public library, read books, magazines, and so forth, and discuss what they read with their children than do parents of students who are low reading achievers. Parental reading was not significant for grade 4 students.

The finding that parental reading showed no significant relationship to grade 4 reading achievement is difficult to explain since the research presented in Chapter II indicates that the amount of time parents spend in personal reading is significantly and positively related to students' reading achievement (Cousert, 1978; Dix, 1976; Lee, 1984). These studies were conducted with students in grades one through six. The findings, however, were not reported by grade but rather for groups of students such as superior and average readers. Thus, the differences in samples and the groupings for analysis may account for the findings reported in the present study which are discrepant with those reported in the work of others.

When the home factors were examined independently, three of the six home factors (children's reading, children's participation, and parental expectations) did not contribute significantly to reading achievement for grades 4, 6, and 8. It should be noted, however, that the variable children's reading, examined a number of reading habits,

some of which showed significant and positive correlations. For instance, how often children read material other than school-work and children's likes or dislikes for reading revealed positive relationships with children's success in reading (.310 and .169 respectively), significant at the .001 level. Whether the children borrow books from the public and school library did not have a significant relationship to children's reading achievement.

In summary, only three of the six home factors examined showed a significant relationship to children's reading performance, namely, accessibility and use of reading materials, parental assistance, and parental reading habits. Children whose parents devote a great deal of time to reading and provide an abundance of literacy materials in the home are more successful with reading than are children whose parents do not devote much time to reading and do not purchase many educational reading materials for the home. Also, low reading achievers in the middle grades receive more parental assistance with homework and reading than do high reading achievers. Parents of successful readers more often expressed confidence in their children's abilities to complete the work independently than did parents of unsuccessful readers.

Question 2

Is there a significant relationship between parents' level of education and each of the six home factors selected for this study?

Findings and discussion. Multiple regression analyses revealed a statistically significant relationship between mother's education and three of the six home variables, namely, parental reading (.261) and access (.412), significant at the .001 level and parental expectations (-.100), significant at the .05 level (see Table 3). Father's education has a positive relationship to parental reading (.324) and access (.375), significant at the .001 level.

These findings suggest that middle grade students have greater access to reading materials and they use reference materials more often in homes where the parents are highly educated than in homes where the parents have a lower level of education. Additionally, parents with higher levels of education devote more time to reading than do less well educated parents. Thus, educational level has a positive influence upon the parents' reading habits and the value they place upon reading in the home. These results are consistent with those reported in other research which found that the quantity of books available in the homes of high

Table 3

Multiple Regression Coefficients between Home Variables,
Parental Education, and Gender

HOMEVAR	Mother's Education	Father's Education	Gender
Parental Reading	.261***	.324***	—
Parental Assistance	-.051	.052	-.121*
Parental Expectations	-.100*	-.055	.010
Children's Reading	-.066	-.002	.034
Children's Participation	-.015	-.012	.049
Access	.412***	.375***	.091

Note. HOMEVAR = Home Variables.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

school students was positively related to the occupations of the fathers (Crocker, 1967). As well, higher socioeconomic status parents read more than do lower status parents (Neuman, 1986). Thus, social class and occupation do make a difference in parents' reading habits.

Mother's education revealed a significant but negative correlation with parental expectations (-.100). The findings at first seemed to indicate that mothers with lower education tended to have higher career aspirations for their

children than did other mothers in the sample. However, higher-educated mothers expect their children to select professional careers. It is not a question of whether their son or daughter will attend university but which field he or she will enter. Thus, many well-educated mothers preferred not to select a particular career choice for their children.

Lower-educated mothers wanted their children to become professionals such as doctors, lawyers, nurses, and teachers. These aspirations are perhaps unrealistic, since most professional careers require high finances for the many years of training needed to become a doctor, lawyer, and so forth. Lower-educated mothers would unlikely be able to provide the financial assistance if their children completed school. Also, given the high drop-out rate in Newfoundland and Labrador (Pope et al., 1984), about half of the students will not obtain their high school diploma. Thus, many children from poorly educated families will follow in their parents' footsteps. Father's education showed no significant relationship to parental expectations.

The findings reported in Chapter II concerning parental expectations have not been consistent with each other. Newson and Newson (1977) found significant and positive social class differences in parental expectations for their children. Middle-class mothers had higher professional ambitions for their children than did working-class mothers. Neuman (1986) discovered no significant correlations between

social class and parental expectations. Both of these studies examined socioeconomic status as determined by the parents' occupations. The present study examined parental expectations in relation to the mother's and father's education. Thus, the different variables used in the studies may account for the different findings, nonetheless, parental expectations are difficult to measure. It seems that parents from various social classes and with different levels of education profess to have high expectations for their children. All parents would like to believe that their sons and daughters will succeed in school and get good jobs, even though these expectations may be unrealistic for about half of the children.

Three of the six home variables, namely, parental assistance, children's reading, and children's participation showed no significant relationship with mother's or father's education. Similar findings were reported in the literature for parental assistance. Newson and Newson (1977), in a survey of parents of seven-year-olds, found no significant social class differences in the percentage of middle and working class parents who helped their children with reading. They found that 81% of both groups of parents were providing assistance with reading. In the present study, the educational level of the mothers and fathers appeared to make little difference to the amount of support provided in the home with school-work and the number of cultural and

recreational activities in which children are engaged. As well, children's leisure reading habits appeared not to be affected by the educational level of the parents. It appears that even though parents may say it is important to help their children at home and to encourage them to read, parents are not actually doing what they profess.

Research evidence concerning children's reading and participation in extracurricular activities provides conflicting evidence with the findings of this study. Miller (1970) found that kindergarten children from middle-class families participated in a wider variety of activities and interacted more with their parents than did lower-lower class children. Newson and Newson (1977) also reported that social class was a significant contributing factor to an index of "general cultural interest (GCI)". Their findings revealed that 57% of middle-class families took part in a variety of cultural activities in comparison to only 23% of the working-class families. Social class appears to have been an important influence upon children's recreational and cultural activities in the 1970s. In the 1990s social class differences are still quite evident. However, greater opportunities are available for children to become involved in sports activities in schools. The cost of travel or enrolment in special lessons such as piano is a factor that may exclude some children from participation.

The findings are also inconsistent with evidence reported by others on children's leisure reading habits. Crocker (1967) reported that the amount of reading by the students was positively related to the occupations of the fathers. Morrow (1983) also found that children who have an interest in voluntary reading tend to come from families whose parents have a college education or graduate degree. Additionally, time spent reading by grade five students was positively related to socioeconomic status (Long & Henderson, 1973). The present study supports the findings presented by Hansen (1969). He discovered that father's occupation and education showed no relationship to children's voluntary reading habits. Thus, a good occupation and education alone will not ensure that the children will become good readers. It matters more what the parents do in the home environment and the interactions they have with their children such as reading to children, conversing with children about what is read, purchasing literacy materials, and encouraging children to read.

In summary, mother's education showed a significant and positive relationship to parental reading, and access, and a significant but negative relationship to parental expectations. Father's education revealed a significant and positive correlation with parental reading, and access. Thus, highly educated parents provide more literacy materials in the home and devote more time to reading than

do less well educated parents. Additionally, many of the highly educated mothers did not indicate which career they would like their children to pursue. The choices that more well-educated people are willing to consider are often sophisticated and highly professional careers. Often, it is from among these that parents expect their children to choose.

Question 3

Is there a significant relationship between the gender of the child and each of the five home factors selected: parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials?

Findings and discussion. Multiple regression coefficients between gender and each of the five home variables selected showed no significant relationships for four of the five home factors: parental expectations, children's reading, children's participation, and access (see Table 3). These findings suggest that there are no significant differences in the kinds of expectations parents have for boys or girls, the amount of leisure reading by boys and girls, the number and kinds of leisure activities by boys and girls, and the availability of reading materials in the home for boys and girls. Thus, many home variables are unaffected by the child's gender.

One home factor, namely, parental assistance revealed a significant but low negative correlation with gender ($-.121$), significant at the .05 level. Boys received significantly more help with homework and reading than did girls. This result is perhaps not surprising since the majority of students receiving remedial assistance in schools today are boys (Education Statistics, 1990). Thus, it is likely that remedial students would also need greater guidance from their parents in completing homework assignments than would students who are capable of doing the assigned work.

While few studies have examined the relationship between gender and factors in the home environment, the information presented here concurs with most of the findings reported by Neuman (1986) for grade five students. Neuman found no significant correlations between gender and a number of home environmental process characteristics: work habits, parental guidance, diverse leisure activities, parental expectations, independence and responsibility, and parental encouragement of reading. Children's leisure reading showed a significant but low correlation to gender, with girls reading more books than boys ($r=.25$) and girls discussing their reading materials more often with other family members ($r=.25$).

In the present study children's leisure reading revealed no significant gender differences. One explanation

for the inconsistency may be that the present study includes students in grades 4, 6, and 8. At the higher grade levels, gender differences in reading habits may not be as pronounced as with younger students. Another difference between the two studies is in relation to the parental assistance factor. Neuman reported no significant differences in parental guidance, whereas, the present study found a significant but low negative correlation with gender ($-.121$). This finding is consistent with the results of Test R: Reading Comprehension of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (King-Shaw, 1989) in the present study, on which, male students scored significantly lower than did females. Thus, if males are experiencing difficulties with reading, then they will also need greater parental assistance with homework and reading than will the females.

The results of the present investigation are consistent with many of the findings reported by Dave (1963). He devised an interview schedule known as the Index of Educational Environment (I.E.E.) to measure process characteristics of the home. Six process variables were examined: achievement press (parents' aspirations for the child and for themselves), language models, academic guidance, activeness of the family, intellectuality in the home, and work habits in the family.

The means and standard deviations of the I.E.E. were computed separately for sub-groups of boys and girls. The

differences between the means of the I.E.E. for the two sub-groups was not significant. Also, the mean for each of the sub-samples was not significantly different from the mean for the whole group. Thus, there was no significant influence of gender differences on the means of the Index of Educational Environment. The amount of support provided in the home, the parents' expectations for the child, and the extent and quality of indoor and outdoor activities of the family were not affected by the gender of the child. The only inconsistency with the present study is again the parental guidance variable. Dave (1963) reported no significant gender differences in parental guidance whereas the present study showed a low negative correlation with gender.

In summary, no statistically significant relationships were found between gender and four of the five home factors: parental expectations, children's reading, children's participation, and access. Parental assistance was the only factor which showed a significant but negative relationship with gender. Parents provided significantly more help to boys with homework and reading than to girls.

Question 4

Does parental assistance decrease as student age increases and as grade increases?

Findings and discussion. Pearson product-moment correlations between parental assistance and age of the

student revealed a low negative correlation coefficient (-.132), significant at the .01 level (see Table 4). This is evidence that as the age of the student increases, the level of parental assistance decreases. In other words, the older students receive less help from their parents with homework and reading than do the younger students. Pearson correlation coefficients also showed a significant negative relationship between parental assistance and grade (-.176), significant at the .001 level. This finding suggests that as the student's grade level increases, the amount of help provided by the parents decreases.

Similar findings were reported in the questionnaire. In response to the question "Has the amount of help given by you or your spouse decreased over the years?" 175 of the 309 respondents (56.6%) replied "yes". Parents were

Table 4

Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Parental Assistance, Grade, and Age

Home		
Variable	Grade	Age
Parental Assistance	-.176***	-.132**

p < .01. *p = .001.

asked to explain why help has decreased. Most of the 159 parents (75.5%) who provided reasons felt less help was required. Typical comments from parents were "He can now handle the school-work and can do it on his own", "She has an excellent degree of independence and has very little trouble doing assigned work", or "As he gets older he understands more work and is more capable". Twenty parents felt they were unable to help because of their limited education, changes in the school curriculum, or because the work is too difficult now that the child is older. Other reasons for not helping included the parents are unavailable because they are both working; there's not as much homework; and the child needs to learn independence. It seems that some parents believe that not helping their children will foster independence. However, children cannot become independent if they are unable to do the work. If parents provide assistance in the beginning of their child's education, then this support will help nourish the child's independence.

No research was located which examined whether there is a decline in parental assistance in relation to the age and grade of the child. Thus, the findings presented in this study provide some new evidence concerning the availability of parental assistance for middle grade students.

In summary, the present study has shown that parental assistance decreases as the age and grade of the student

increases. As students progress through the grades, parents do not help their children with school-work as often as they did when they were in the lower grades. Many parents reported that less help is needed since the children are capable of doing the work themselves.

Question 5

Are there rural/urban differences in students' reading achievements by gender, age, and grade?

Findings and discussion. Means, standard deviations, and sample sizes for Test R: Reading Comprehension of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) by gender are presented in Table 5. Test results showed a significant correlation between CTBS scores and gender. Female students outperformed male students on the reading test, significant at the .01 level. No significant gender by school location correlation for reading achievement was found (see Table 6).

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for Test R: Reading Comprehension (CTBS) by Gender

Gender	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Male	27.00	12.34	159
Female	30.55	10.70	155

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for Test R:
Reading Comprehension (CTBS) by Gender and School Location

Gender	Urban			Rural		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Male	30.75	12.34	55	25.02	11.92	104
Female	31.60	10.53	58	29.93	10.80	97

Analysis of the data by age did not reveal any significant differences in reading scores for urban students (see Table 7). For instance, 13-year-olds did not perform significantly better than 10-year-olds and vice-versa. However, the data for rural students did show significant age differences in reading scores. Fourteen-year-olds performed significantly better than 9- and 10-year-olds; 13-year-olds scored significantly higher than 9-, 10-, and 12-year-olds; 12-year-olds achieved significantly higher scores than 10-year-olds; and 11-year-olds scored significantly higher than 9- and 10-year-olds.

Table 7

Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for Test R:
Reading Comprehension (CTBS) by Age and School Location

Age	Urban			Rural		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
9	29.16	10.00	31	22.58	10.27	36
10	29.80	9.37	15	20.04	10.18	27
11	33.75	13.99	16	29.40	11.44	35
12	35.76	10.12	21	26.95	10.98	41
13	30.00	11.96	15	33.74	11.69	34
14	31.31	12.68	13	31.07	9.97	28

The findings also revealed a significant ($p < .05$) 3-way interaction between age and school location for students' reading performances. Nine-, ten-, and twelve-year-old urban students outperformed 9-, 10-, and 12-old rural students, significant at the $p < .01$ level. No significant rural/urban differences were located for 11-, 13-, and 14-year-olds.

Means, standard deviations, and sample sizes for Test R: Reading Comprehension of the Canadian Tests of Basic

Skills (CTBS) (King-Shaw, 1989) by grade and school location are presented in Table 8. Overall, urban students achieved higher scores (31.19) than did rural students (27.39), significant at the $p = .001$ level. Analysis of the data by grade also showed significant differences in reading scores at the $p < .001$ level. Grade 8 mean scores (32.09) were significantly better than grade 4 mean scores (24.68). In addition, grade 6 students scored significantly higher (30.07) than grade four students (24.68). No significant differences were found between grades 6 and 8.

Examination of urban students' mean scores revealed a very interesting finding. Grade 6 students' mean

Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for Test R:
Reading Comprehension (CTBS) by Grade and School Location

Grade	Urban			Rural		
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
4	29.37	9.70	46	21.31	10.25	64
6	34.89	11.81	37	27.78	11.19	78
8	29.40	12.54	30	33.46	10.37	59

scores (34.89) were significantly higher than were grade 8 mean scores (29.40). In both cases, the two urban schools, a primary and an elementary/junior high school are collector schools, that is, students are bussed in from a number of small communities beginning in kindergarten. Thus, the performance by the grade eight urban students cannot be explained by an influx of students into the school at the grade eight level. The test was administered towards the end of the school year and the students knew that their performance on the test had no influence on their school reports. Thus, the students may have performed better under different circumstances. Or perhaps, the scores merely reflect a large number of weak students in these grade eight classes and is not a reflection upon the school or its location, since the grade six students attending the same school achieved higher scores than did their rural counterparts.

The grade level trend was upheld for rural students. Grade eight students scored significantly higher than did students in grades four and six. In addition, grade six students performed significantly better than did students in grade four. Thus, rural students' reading performances improve as the students progress through school.

The findings also revealed a significant ($p < .001$) 3-way interaction between grade and school location for

student's reading achievement. Grade 4 urban mean scores (29.37) were considerably higher than grade 4 rural mean scores (21.31). As well, grade 6 urban students outperformed their grade 6 rural counterparts (34.89 and 27.78 respectively). In grade 8 there were no significant differences between urban and rural students.

Grade equivalents and percentile ranks also indicate a number of rural/urban differences (see Table 9). The grade-equivalent of a given score indicates the grade level at which the typical pupil makes this raw score. The first digit represents the grade and the second digit the month within the grade in which a typical student makes this raw score. A grade equivalent score of 4.9 for grade four's would indicate that students are performing at grade level if the students were tested in May. Results indicate that grade 4 urban students with a grade equivalent of 4.7 are performing about 2 months behind grade level while grade 4 rural students with a grade equivalent of 4.0 are performing approximately 9 months below grade level, all other things being equal.

Percentile ranks indicate the status or relative standing of a pupil in comparison to other pupils. The national percentile rank compares each pupil tested with all other pupils at that grade level. The findings reveal that students in grades four, six, and eight who participated in

Table 9

Grade Equivalents and Percentile Ranks for Test R: Reading Comprehension (CTBS) by Grade and School Location

Grade	Urban		Rural	
	GE	PR	GE	PR
4	4.7	44	4.0	22
6	6.5	39	5.8	19
8	7.8	23	8.3	34

Note. GE = Grade Equivalent; PR = Percentile Rank

this study do not compare favourably with national norms. The scores were well below the Canadian norms. For instance, the percentile rank of 19 for grade 6 rural students, indicates that 81 percent of Canadian students scored as well or better than did the grade 6 rural students in this study. In other words, only 19 percent of the pupils across Canada scored lower.

The rural/urban differences in reading achievement reported in the present study concur with previous investigations of Newfoundland students. Nagy, Banfield, and Drost (1982), investigating the effect of community isolation on student achievement in grade six, discovered

that community isolation was significantly related to achievement in the province. Students in isolated communities achieved significantly lower scores on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills than did students in urban centres. Rural students are at a definite disadvantage in comparison to urban students. The poorer performances of rural students may be attributed to many factors such as the size of the school, the availability of resources, the quality of school programs, the qualifications of school personnel, the socioeconomic status of the family, the support for literacy in the home, and the availability of recreational and cultural facilities in the community.

Robert Crocker (1989) headed a Task Force on Mathematics/Science Education appointed by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to examine the levels of achievement and participation in mathematics and science programs throughout the province's educational system. Differences in achievement were analyzed by school size, rural/urban setting, and school district. The results of the analyses revealed that students in large schools and schools in urban centres, particularly those on the Avalon Peninsula, performed better on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills and on public examinations than did students in small schools and those in rural settings. However, the differences were not especially large, ranging from two to four percentage points.

The results of the Early Literacy Intervention Project of Phillips, Norris, Mason, and Kerr (1990) showed that, on average, urban kindergartners scored higher on measures of reading readiness, listening ability, and knowledge of concepts than did village and collector rural students. Thus, if urban students are outperforming rural students at the outset of schooling, then the differences in performances between rural and urban students are probably the result of factors in the home environment rather than the school environment since kindergarten children have had little opportunity to be influenced by the school.

In addition, the recent results of the Newfoundland Department of Education's Standard Testing program has revealed that students from urban centres in Newfoundland continue to outperform students from rural communities on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (Education Statistics, 1990). Changes in the quality of the education system in Newfoundland may have occurred over the years but much more needs to be done, especially in rural areas, in order to raise the educational performance of rural students. Improvements are needed not only in education, but in the social, cultural, and economic facets of rural life.

In summary, there are noticeable differences in middle grade students' reading achievement that are related to gender, age, grade, and school location. Test results showed that female students significantly outperformed male

students on the reading comprehension test. However, no significant gender differences between rural and urban schools were identified. As expected, significant age differences were found for rural students, with the older students performing better than did the younger students. However, age was not a significant factor for urban schools. Age differences between rural and urban schools were also evident, with 9-, 10-, and 12-year-old urban students achieving significantly higher scores than did rural students of the same age. Overall, middle grade students attending urban schools outperformed students in rural schools. Grade level differences were also evident. Overall, that is regardless of school locations, students in higher grades scored significantly better than did students in lower grades, with the exception of grades 6 and 8, where no significant differences were found. An interesting finding was revealed for urban students, where grade six students outperformed students in grade eight. The older students' attitudes toward taking the test and the time of year may have influenced performances.

Question 6

Are there rural/urban differences in the amount of support provided for home literacy?

Findings and discussion. Pearson product-moment correlations between school location and each of the six home factors revealed significant negative correlations for

three of the six home factors: parental reading ($-.115$), children's participation ($-.169$), and access ($-.232$) as shown in Table 10. These findings indicate that parents from urban centres read books, newspapers, reference materials, and magazines more often and visit the public library more frequently than do parents in rural areas. Children attending urban schools are more likely to be involved in team sports; to belong to clubs, organizations, or church groups; to take special lessons; and to participate in sports activities with their parents than children attending rural schools. In addition, urban children have greater access to books, reference materials, and magazines in the home and public library facilities and use them more often than rural children. No significant rural/urban differences were found for parental assistance, parental expectations, and children's leisure reading.

No studies were found which examined the effect of location on the amount of support provided for home literacy. For example, Dave (1963) studied dwelling area (urban, suburban, rural) but he included this variable with three other status characteristics: occupation, source of income, and house type as an Index of Social Class. Thus, information pertaining to dwelling area and the educational environment in the home is not provided. Most studies chose a sample from one particular area, for example, Cousert (1978) selected grade three students from four elementary

Table 10

Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Home Variables and School Location

Home Variables	School Location
Parental Reading	-.115*
Parental Assistance	.014
Parental Expectations	.024
Children's Reading	.011
Children's Participation	-.169**
Access	-.232***

*p < .05. **p = .001. ***p < .001.

schools in a midwest suburban area. Thus, information pertaining to rural/urban differences in the amount of support provided at home that may influence the children's educational development are not available. Any information presented in this study will provide some new evidence concerning the effects of location on home support for middle grade students.

In summary, three of the six home variables showed significant rural/urban differences in the amount of support provided for home literacy: parental reading, children's

participation, and access. Parents in urban centres read more often and they provide more reading materials in the home for their children than do parents in rural centres. In addition, urban children participate in more sports, clubs, organizations, and special lessons than do rural children. No significant rural/urban differences were evident for parental assistance, parental expectations, and children's reading.

The substantive value of these results will be discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, a summary of the research study will be presented. It will be followed by conclusions drawn from the study, and recommendations for parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders.

Study in Review

Typically, students in Newfoundland and Labrador have not ranked favourably on tests of reading ability in comparison to students in other Canadian provinces (Education Statistics, 1990). Even at the outset of schooling, Newfoundlanders perform below their U. S. counterparts (Phillips, Norris, Mason, & Kerr, 1990). Furthermore, a recent Southam News Survey (1987) reported that Newfoundland had the highest rate of basic and functional illiteracy in Canada (approximately 44%). Thus, it was important to discover what factors may be contributing to the low performances of Newfoundland students.

The review of the literature on the home environment and reading achievement has shown that home literacy and the quality of parent-child interactions within the home have a positive influence on children's reading development (Cousert, 1978; Greaney, 1980; Holloway, 1984; Lee, 1984; Morrow, 1983; Newson & Newson, 1977). Much of this research, however, has involved preschool, primary, and

elementary school children. Very few studies have examined factors in the home environment that may enhance reading growth of middle grade students. Hence, the importance of a study on middle grade students and home literacy.

The aim of the present investigation was to determine whether there was a significant relationship between a select number of home literacy factors and the reading achievement of middle grade students and whether there were significant differences according to school location (rural/urban), gender, grade level, age, and parental education. The following home factors were examined: parental reading habits, parental assistance, parental expectations, children's leisure reading habits, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials.

Five hundred thirty students in grades 4, 6, and 8 from one school district in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador participated. This sample included students from five randomly selected rural schools and two schools in an urban centre. Data collection took place in May and June of 1990. Test R: Reading Comprehension of the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) was used as a measure of reading achievement and a Home Literacy Parent Questionnaire (HLPQ) was developed to understand the amount and kinds of support provided for literacy in the home.

Questionnaires were sent to 475 homes, so that only one survey per family was distributed. A complete set of data was obtained for 314 students and their parents. Means, standard deviations, Pearson product-moment correlations, and multiple regression coefficients were used in the descriptive and statistical analyses as reported in Chapter IV.

Results of the study showed that three of the six home factors were significantly related to middle grade students' reading achievement, namely, parental reading habits, parental assistance, and accessibility and use of reading materials. Mother's and father's education correlated significantly and positively with parental reading, and accessibility and use of reading materials while mother's education correlated significantly but negatively with parental expectations. Only one factor, namely, parental assistance, revealed a significant negative relationship with gender. Parental assistance also showed a significant negative correlation with students' age and grade. School location (rural/urban), gender, grade, and age revealed significant differences in students' reading performances. As well, three of the six home variables showed significant rural/urban differences in the amount of support provided for home literacy: parental reading, children's participation in cultural and extracurricular activities, and accessibility and use of reading materials.

Conclusions

Literacy improvement is a complex area. For instance, at one time, researchers (Brett, 1964; Crocker, 1967) believed that literacy would improve in rural communities if there were books available. The present study has shown that reading materials are available in homes, schools, and libraries but, people are not using them. If improvements are to be realized in students' reading achievement, then parents and their children need to see the importance of an education in today's competitive technological society. Changes must occur in the fabric of life in many rural Newfoundland communities if changes in literacy levels are to be noted. Whether or not such changes should occur is an important philosophical question.

Conclusions drawn on the basis of findings must be interpreted in the context of the present study. The conclusions of the study are as follows:

1. The quality of the home literacy environment and the kinds of parent-child interactions that occur in the home have a positive influence upon middle grade students' reading achievements. High achievers' parents were more often good readers, placed a high value upon reading, frequented the public library, and purchased a variety of literacy materials for the home in comparison to low reading achievers' parents. Parents' educational and occupational expectations for their children; children's participation in

sports, clubs, and organizations; and children's leisure reading habits did not have a significant effect upon reading performance.

This suggests that parents in these communities hold similar expectations for their children even though many of the expectations may be unrealistic for some children considering the high drop-out rate in Newfoundland and Labrador (Pope, Davis, Kelleher, Parrell, Day, Coombs, 1984); high and low achievers showed little differences in extracurricular participation and leisure reading habits. Perhaps most students in rural communities are poor readers and thus differences in reading achievement were not significant.

2. Parental education showed significant but low correlations with three of the six home factors, namely, parental reading habits, accessibility and use of reading materials, and parental expectations. The correlations are low, perhaps because there are not many highly educated parents in these areas.

3. Home literacy factors are not significantly affected by the gender of the child. Only one factor, parental assistance, showed a significant but low negative correlation with gender. Boys receive significantly more parental assistance with homework and reading than do girls.

4. The amount of parental assistance provided to children in the home decreases as student age and grade increase.

5. School location has a significant effect on students' reading achievements. Overall, urban students significantly outperformed rural students of the same age and grade.

6. There are rural/urban differences in the amount of support provided for home literacy. There is some evidence that parents in urban centres read more often, and purchase more literacy materials for the home than do parents in rural communities, and that urban children participate in more recreational and cultural activities than do rural children. The reasons for these differences may be that reading materials are more accessible in urban centres in bookstores, shopping malls, drugstores, and public libraries than in rural communities. Also, more recreational facilities, sports organizations, special lessons, and opportunities to engage in cultural activities are available in urban centres than in rural communities.

Recommendations

The identification of factors in the home that are conducive to children's literacy development could be especially beneficial to parents, teachers, administrators, and leaders of community organizations. The implications emanating from this study are as follows:

Parents

1. This study provides some evidence that parents who are good readers, who read aloud to their children, and who provide an abundance of stimulating educational materials for their children to read and enjoy have a positive impact on their children's reading achievement. Imparting this information to parents is important.

2. The present study found that few parents provide assistance with homework and reading-related activities to middle grade students. Also, the level of parental assistance decreases as the students' age and grade increase. Many of these middle grade students are encountering content area subjects for the first time. Parents need to be given guidance so they will be able to assist their children with the technical vocabulary, the text format, skimming and summarizing skills, and other study skills associated with content subjects.

3. A long-range program in adult education needs to be implemented in an effort to increase parental literacy and raise the socio-economic and cultural levels of families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Teachers/Administrators

1. Knowledge of the children's home environments would prove useful to classroom teachers in understanding the differences in reading achievements among children. To counterbalance any deficiencies in the children's home

literacy environment, teachers should read aloud daily to their students and become good role models for their students.

2. Teachers should encourage children's leisure reading habits by setting aside school time for independent reading. Most often when children reach the middle grades, teachers provide little time for children to read, maintaining that the curriculum is so overcrowded they are unable to devote much time to reading. Yet, it is during this time that children have developed sufficient reading skills to discover the pleasures of reading. Teachers need to encourage children to become readers.

3. Information about the students' home backgrounds would also be helpful to reading specialists in planning remedial strategies for students with reading problems. These plans should include ways that parents can help to foster their children's reading development at home.

4. School administrators need to encourage greater home-school contacts. Information can be shared with parents through parent-teacher associations, publications for parents, school newsletters, articles in local papers, and bulletins from the school board.

5. School libraries should be accessible to parents as well as school children since few rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador have public libraries and parents

have little or no opportunity to obtain reading materials in the community.

Community Leaders

1. Researchers have found that superior readers attend more cultural activities and engage in a greater number of extracurricular activities than do average readers (Berry, Fischer, Parker, & Zwier, 1971). The present study has shown that children in urban centres participate in more recreational and cultural activities than do children in rural communities. Thus, community leaders, especially in rural areas, need to be made aware of the important influence such activities can have on students' school achievements. Meetings of School Board representatives, administrators, teachers, and community leaders should be arranged.

2. Recreational planning committees could be set up in the community to decide what types of facilities and organizations are needed and to discuss ways of raising the necessary funds to build such facilities.

3. More efficient use should be made of existing facilities such as church halls, lions clubs, and school gymnasiums. Available facilities and specialists such as, music teachers could be shared with nearby communities.

Concluding Remarks

The success of the recommendations proposed are predicated upon a value being placed upon education beyond

that which is currently evidenced in Newfoundland and Labrador. Successful reform aimed at improving the educational levels must begin at home, at school, and in the community. In the final analysis, a learning culture must be developed, and development must be undertaken by all Canadians.

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Appendix A
Home Literacy Environment Study
May/June 1990
Parent Questionnaire
(version 1)

This study concerns children's learning experiences in the home and in particular children's reading development. The questions will be centered around the kinds of activities that you and your child do within the home. Think about your grade____child when completing these questions.

Please read each item carefully and fill in the blanks or circle the choice which best describes your family. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. All the information you provide will be kept confidential. Please make a special effort to answer this questionnaire. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Child's Name:

Telephone number:

Birthdate:

Address:

Parents' Names:

1. About how many children's books do you have in your home?
over 100 75-100 50-75 25-50 less than 25
2. What would you say is your child's favorite book?

3. About how many adult books do you have in your home?

over 100 75-100 50-75 25-50 less than 25

4. Do you have an encyclopedia at home? Yes/No

If yes, how often does your child use the encyclopedia?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

5. Do you have a dictionary at home? Yes/No

If yes, how often does your child use a dictionary?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

6. How often does your child borrow books from the public library?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

7. Do you subscribe to any children's magazines? Yes/No

If yes, circle the ones below:

Owl Chickadee Ranger Rick Highlights World

List others: _____

8. Apart from the reading that your child does for school assignments, how often does he/she read at home?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

9. Does your child ever discuss with you what he/she has read?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

10. Do you ever suggest that your child read a book, magazine, newspaper, or some other reading material?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

11. Describe the kinds of books your child likes to read:

12. What kinds of activities do you and your child engage in during the weekdays?

On the weekends? _____

13. What are some activities your husband/wife and the child do on weekdays?

On the weekends? _____

14. Does your child belong to any clubs, organizations, or church groups? Yes/No If yes, list them:

15. Do you pay for any special lessons for your child such as music or dance? Yes/No If yes, specify:

16. Does your child participate in any team sports after school?

Yes/No If yes, list them:

17. How often do you take your child to plays, concerts, or movies?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

18. How often do you and your child take part in sports activities, such as, skating, skiing, swimming, and bicycling?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

19. When you have some free time at home, what do you usually like to do?

20. How often do you read at home?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

What do you usually choose to read? _____

21. How often does your child see you reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

22. Do you ever discuss what you have read with your child?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

23. Do you borrow books from the public library?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

24. How often do you read texts, reference materials, and so forth, for a course or to gain information about a particular subject?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

25. How often do you read the newspaper?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

26. Do you subscribe to any professional magazines? Yes/No

If yes, list them:

27. How often does your husband/wife read at home?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

28. How important is reading in your life?

extremely very fairly not very not at all
important important important important important

29. Do you help your child with homework?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

In what way(s) do you help? _____

30. Do you help your child with reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

In what way(s) do you help? _____

31. Does your husband/wife help your child with reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

In what way(s) does he/she help?_____

32. Did you help your child to recognize letters and words before he/she started school?

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	Never
-------	--------	---------	--------------	-------

33.Did you read to your child before he/she started school?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

34. Did your husband/wife read to your child before he/she started school?

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	Never
-------	--------	---------	--------------	-------

35. At what age was your child when you first began reading to him/her?

1 yr old	2 yr old	3 yr old	4 yr old	5 yr old
or less				or more

36.Did you read to your child after he/she started school?

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	Never
-------	--------	---------	--------------	-------

37. What were some of your child's favorite books that you read to him/her?

38. How far would you like your child to continue with his/her education?

39. When your child finishes school what do you think he/she will be? Why?

40. How many children are there in the family? _____

How many are younger than your grade _____ child? _____

How many are older? _____

41. What is the highest level of education completed by the child's mother and father? Put a check in the blank.

	Mother	Father
Elementary School	_____	_____
Junior High School	_____	_____
High School	_____	_____
University	_____	_____
Post-graduate degree	_____	_____
(Master's, Ph.D., M.D., etc.)		

42. The answers to this questionnaire were given by: (check one)

Mother _____ Father _____

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.
If there are any additional comments or information about
your child that you feel is important to know, please
include below:

Appendix B
Home Literacy Environment Study
May/June 1990
Parent Questionnaire (version 2)

ID# _____

1. About how many children's books do you have in your home?

over 100 75-100 50-75 25-50 less than 25

2. About how many adult books do you have in your home?

over 100 75-100 50-75 25-50 less than 25

3. Do you have a dictionary at home? Yes/No

If yes, how often does your child use a dictionary?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If no, are there times when your child needs one? _____

How do you manage? _____

4. Do you have an encyclopedia at home? Yes/No

If yes, how often does your child use the encyclopedia?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If no, are there times when your child needs one? _____

How do you manage? _____

5. Do you subscribe to any children's magazines? Yes/No

If yes, list them _____

If no, why don't you subscribe? _____

6. Does your child's school have a library? Yes/No

If yes, are children permitted to take books home? Yes/No

If no, why aren't children permitted to take books home?

If yes, how often does your child borrow books from the school library?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If never, why not? _____

7. Is there a public library in your community? Yes/No

If yes, how often does your child borrow books from the public library?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If never, why doesn't your child borrow books? _____

8. If yes to number 7, how often do you borrow books from the public library?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

9. How often does your child trade books with a friend?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

10. Does your child like school? Yes/No

Why or why not? _____

11. Does your child like to read? Yes/No

Why or why not? _____

12. How often does your child read things other than school-work?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

13. Describe the kinds of books your child likes to read:

14. How often does your child discuss with you what he/she has read?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

15. How often do you suggest that your child read a book, magazine, newspaper, or some other reading material?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

16. What kinds of things do you and your child do together
During the weekdays? _____

On the weekends? _____

17. What kinds of things does your husband/wife and the child do during the weekdays? _____

On the weekends? _____

18. How often do you take your child to plays, concerts, or movies?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

19. How often do you and your child take part in sports activities, such as skating, skiing, swimming, and bicycling?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

20. Does your child take any special lessons, such as, music or dance? Yes/No

If yes, specify: _____

If no, why not? _____

21. Does your child belong to any clubs, organizations, or church groups? Yes/No

If yes, list them _____

If no, why not? _____

22. Does your child participate in any team sports after school? Yes/No

If yes, list them: _____

If no, why not? _____

23. When you have some free time at home, what do you usually like to do? _____

24. Do you have any special interests or hobbies? Yes/No

If yes, list them _____

If no, why not? _____

25. How often do you read at home?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

What do you usually like to read? _____

26. How often does your husband/wife read at home?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

What does he/she usually like to read? _____

27. How often does your child see you reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

28. How often do you discuss what you have read with your child?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

29. How often do you read to get information about a particular topic?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

30. Is the newspaper regularly available? Yes/No

If yes, how often do you read the newspaper?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If never, why don't you read the newspaper? _____

31. Do you subscribe to any magazines? Yes/No

If yes, list them: _____

If no, why don't you subscribe? _____

32. How important is reading in your life?

[extremely [very [fairly [not very [not
important] important] important] important] important]

Why? _____

33. Is it important that your child learn to read and write?

Yes/No

Why? _____

34. Does your child receive any help in school? Yes/No

If yes, why? _____

If no, do you think your child needs special help and why? _____

35. How often do you help your child with homework?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

How do you help? _____

If you never help, why not? _____

36. Who mostly helps the child with his or her homework?

37. How often do you help your child with reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

In what way(s) do you help? _____

If you never help, why not? _____

38. How often does your husband/wife help your child with reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

In what way(s) does he/she help? _____

If your husband/wife never helps, why not? _____

39. Do you feel your own reading and writing abilities are good enough to help your child? Yes/No

Why or why not? _____

40. Did you help your child to recognize letters and words before he/she started school? Yes/No

Why or why not? _____

How often did you help?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

41. Did you read to your child before he/she started school?

Yes/No

Why or why not? _____

How often?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

42. How often did your husband/wife read to your child before he/she started school?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

43.If you or your husband read to your child, at what age was your child when you first began reading to him/her?

1 yr old	2 yr old	3 yr old	4 yr old	5 yr old
or less				or more

44. How often did you read to your child after he/she started school?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

45.How do you encourage your son or daughter to do well in school?

46.Does the school encourage you to participate in your
child's education? Yes/No

If yes, how?

If no, why do you think the school doesn't encourage you to participate?

47. Would you like the school to show you how you can help
your child with his/her school-work? Yes/No

What kinds of help wold you like?_____

If no, why don't you want help from the school?_____

48. Has the amount of help that you've given your child decreased over the years? Yes/No

If yes, why? _____

If no, why not? _____

49. Do you want to help your child? Yes/No

If yes, what concerns do you have? _____

If no, why don't you want to help? _____

50. How are you responsible for your child's education?

51. Is your child getting a good education in this school?

Yes/No

Why or why not? _____

52. Why is your child's education important to you? _____

53. Do you think your child will finish school? Yes/No

Why or why not? _____

54. When your child finishes his or her education what do you want your child to be? Why? _____

55. What is the highest level of education completed by the child's mother and father? Put a check in the blank.

	Mother	Father
Elementary School	_____	_____
Junior High School	_____	_____
High School	_____	_____
University	_____	_____
Post-graduate degree (Master's, Ph.D., M.D., etc.)	_____	_____

56. The answers to this questionnaire were given by: (check one)

Mother _____ Father _____ Mother and Father _____
 Guardian _____ Friend _____ Older child _____

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. If there are additional comments or information about your child that you feel is important for me to know, please write it below:

Appendix C

Questionnaire Revisions (version 3)

6. If your child borrows books from the school library, how often does he/she read the books?

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

(additional subquestion)

10. Does your child like school? Yes/No

If yes, what does he/she like about school? _____

If no, what does he/she dislike about school? _____

25. How often does your husband/wife read at home?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If your husband/wife reads, what does he/she usually like to read? _____

(Item 26 version 2)

33. Does your child receive any help in school? Yes/No

If yes, why? _____

If no, do you think your child needs special help?

Yes/No

Why or why not? _____

(Item 34 version 2)

Appendix D
Home Literacy Environment Study
May/June 1990
Parent Questionnaire (version 4)

ID# _____

1. About how many children's books do you have in your home?
over 100 75-100 50-75 25-50 less than 25

2. About how many adult books do you have in your home?
over 100 75-100 50-75 25-50 less than 25

3. Do you have a dictionary at home? Yes/No

If yes, how often does your child use a dictionary?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If no, are there times when your child needs one? _____

How do you manage? _____

4. Do you have an encyclopedia at home? Yes/No

If yes, how often does your child use the encyclopedia?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If no, are there times when your child needs one? _____

How do you manage? _____

5. Do you subscribe to any children's magazines? Yes/No

If yes, list them _____

If no, why don't you subscribe? _____

6. Does your child's school have a library? Yes/No

If yes, are children permitted to take books home?

Yes/No

If no, why aren't children permitted to take books home?

If yes, how often does your child borrow books from the school library?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If never, why not? _____

If your child borrows books from the school library, how often does he/she read the books?

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

7. Is there a public library in your community? Yes/No

If yes, how often does your child borrow books from the public library?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If never, why doesn't your child borrow books? _____

8. If yes to number 7, how often do you, the parents, borrow books for yourselves from the public library?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

9. How often does your child trade books with a friend?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

10. How often does your child read things other than school-work?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

11. Describe the kinds of books your child likes to read:

12. Does your child like to read? Yes/No

If yes, why does he/she like to read? _____

If no, why not? _____

13. How often does your child discuss with you what he/she has read?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

14. How often do you suggest that your child read a book, magazine, newspaper, or some other reading material?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

15. Does your child like school? Yes/No

If yes, what does he/she like about school? _____

If no, what does he/she dislike about school? _____

16. What kinds of things do you and your child do together during the weekdays? _____

On the weekends? _____

17. What kinds of things does your spouse and the child do during the weekdays? _____

On the weekends? _____

18. How often do you take your child to plays, concerts, or movies?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

19. How often do you and your child take part in sports activities, such as skating, skiing, swimming, and bicycling?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

20. Does your child take any special lessons, such as music or dance? Yes/No

If yes, specify: _____

If no, why not? _____

21. Does your child belong to any clubs, organizations, or church groups? Yes/No

If yes, list them _____

If no, why not? _____

22. Does your child participate in any team sports after school? Yes/No

If yes, list them: _____

If no, why not? _____

23a. When your spouse has some free time at home, what does he/she usually like to do? _____

23b. When you have some free time at home, what do you usually like to do? _____

24. How often does your spouse read at home?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If your spouse reads, what does he/she usually like to read? _____

25. How often do you read at home?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If you read, what do you usually like to read? _____

26a. How often does your child see your spouse reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

26b. How often does your child see you reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

27. How often do you or your spouse discuss what you have read with your child?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

28a. How often does your spouse read to get information about a particular topic?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

28b. How often do you read to get information about a particular topic?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

29. Is the newspaper regularly available? Yes/No

If yes, how often do you or your spouse read the newspaper?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

If never, why don't you read the newspaper? _____

30. Do you subscribe to any magazines? Yes/No

If yes, list them: _____

If no, why don't you subscribe? _____

31. How important is reading to you or your spouse?

[extremely [very [fairly [not very [not
important] important] important] important] important]

Why? _____

32. Is it important that your child learn to read and write?

Yes/No

Why? _____

33. Does your child receive any special help in school?

Yes/No

If yes, why? _____

If no, do you think your child needs special help?

Yes/No

If yes, what kind of help is needed? _____

If no, why not? _____

34. How often do you or your spouse help your child with
homework?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

How do you help? _____

If you never help, why not? _____

35. Who mostly helps the child with his or her homework?

36. How often does your spouse help your child with reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

In what way(s) does he/she help? _____

If he/she never helps, why not? _____

37. How often do you help your child with reading?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

In what way(s) do you help? _____

If you never help, why not? _____

38. Do you feel your own reading and writing abilities are
good enough to help your child? Yes/No

If yes, why? _____

If no, why not? _____

39. Did you or your spouse help your child to recognize

letters and words before he/she started school? Yes/No

If you helped your child to recognize letters and words,
why did you? _____

If you didn't, why not? _____

How often did you help?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

40. Did your spouse read to your child before he/she started
school? Yes/No

If your spouse read to your child, why? _____

If your spouse didn't read, why not? _____

How often did your spouse read to your child?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

41. How often did you read to your child before he/she
started school?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

42. How often did you or your spouse read to your child after
he/she started school?

Daily Weekly Monthly Occasionally Never

48. Do you want to help your child? Yes/No

If yes, what concerns do you have? _____

If no, why don't you want to help? _____

49. How are you responsible for your child's education?

50. Is your child getting a good education in this school?

Yes/No

If yes, what makes you think your child is getting a good education? _____

If no, what makes you think your child is not getting a good education? _____

51. Why is your child's education important to you? _____

52. Do you think your child will finish school? Yes/No

If yes, why do you think your child will finish school?

If no, why do you think your child will not finish school?

53. When your child finishes his or her education what do you want your child to be? Why? _____

54. What is the highest level of education completed by the child's mother and father? Put a check in the blank.

	Mother	Father
Elementary School	_____	_____
Junior High School	_____	_____
High School	_____	_____
Vocational School	_____	_____
University	_____	_____
Post-graduate degree	_____	_____
(Master's, Ph.D., M.D., etc.)		

55. The answers to this questionnaire were given by:

(check one)

Mother_____	Father_____	Mother and Father_____
Guardian_____	Friend_____	Older child_____

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. If there are additional comments or information about your child that you feel is important for me to know, please write it below:

Appendix E

June 6, 1990

Dear Parents:

I am a graduate student at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am interested in learning more about children's literacy experiences in the home. To learn more about children's literacy experiences, I need your help. Everything you tell me will be confidential. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in the kinds of things that you and your child do together in the home. Would you please complete the attached parent questionnaire?

If you are willing to help me learn about children's literacy in the home, then the following points are important:

1. One parent, both parents, or guardians may answer the questions. If the parents or guardians are unable to complete the questionnaire, then a friend or older child may record the answers.
2. Think especially about your child in grade _____ when answering the questions.
3. Please read each item carefully and fill in the blanks or circle the choice which best describes your family.
4. Try to answer all questions.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at the number below or contact the school and I will return your call as soon as possible. When the questionnaire is completed, please return it to the school prior to June 13.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Dianne Bolt

P. O. Box 37
Arnold's Cove, NF
AOB 1AO
(phone 463-8025)

