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A COMPARISON OF SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS  
OF EARLY AND NON-EARLY READERS AS FOUND  
IN FIFTY-NINE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS  
IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM OF DAVIE  
COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

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Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School  
Appalachian State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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By

Janet Leigh Hoyle Towell

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Janet Leigh Hoyle Towell

Approved by:

Maguire J. Farris

Chairman, Thesis Committee

Gerald Lee Parkes

Professor of Reading

Maguire J. Farris

Chairman, Department of Reading

Ron Tuttle

Dean of the Graduate School



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Janet H. Towell

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Today more children are learning to read prior to entering first grade than ever before. Two factors influencing the abundance of "Early Readers" are the availability of statewide kindergartens and the Children's Television Workshop's production known as "Sesame Street". A child who attends kindergarten or watches "Sesame Street" on a regular basis is introduced to letters, numbers, and a certain number of sight words.

The purpose of this study is to discover what happens to these early readers - to determine if children who read prior to first grade continue to achieve higher than their classmates in reading throughout the eighth grade. Assuming the above statement is true, the study will be an attempt to find out some of the characteristics of these "early readers" and how or why they are different from those of the non-early readers.

For the purpose of this study, reading will be defined as "the ability to recognize and understand words". The definition of "early reading" will be clarified further by determining at what age the child learned to read and whether he could read a few words (under ten), many words (about



twenty), simple sentences, simple stories, or easy reading books.

Previous longitudinal studies have shown that early readers remain ahead of their classmates in reading as high as the sixth grade level (Durkin, 1966; McKee and Brzienski, 1966). Little, if any, significant research exists about early readers in the years between sixth grade and college freshmen, however. In Lawrence M. Kasdon's study on college freshmen, fifty superior readers were questioned to determine those who could read before entering first grade. Of the twenty-seven students who answered in the affirmative, it is questionable exactly how much they could remember about their preschool reading experiences.<sup>1</sup>

There are many limitations in a research study of this nature, which involves a time period of as long as eight years. According to existing laws regarding information in cumulative folders, permission must be obtained from parents and students (if they are eighth graders) before the folders can be examined. Even if permission is granted to look at the folders, little information other than test scores is available.

Records such as "Continuous Placement" cards kept on students in the Davie County school system were not in existence eight years ago. Readiness test scores did not specify which children were early readers nor was there a list of books completed by children during primary years. Words did not appear on standardized tests until the middle of the second year in school.

Only children who had been in the county for eight years could be used in the study so that scores could be compared on similar tests. In addition to the other limitations, some states (such as Maryland) have laws stating that no names or addresses of parents can be released to obtain the necessary permission forms, nor can any questionnaires be distributed. The guidance counselor could report the test scores of fifty randomly selected eighth graders in the school but no background information could be obtained on these students to determine if they were actually early readers (except for their parents' educational levels and occupations).

A possible solution to the problem of deciding which children were early readers would have been to contact their first grade teachers. However, after eight years many of the teachers had moved or retired. Those who remained would probably not remember how many words a specific student could read when he entered first grade without some kind of test record.

The following characteristics will be analyzed from the information on the parent surveys and cumulative folders of the research sample of early readers: (1) the percentage of boys versus girls in the group of early readers; (2) the family background of the early readers, including the educational level and occupations of the parents; (3) the number of working mothers; (4) if and when the early readers became bored in school and what caused the loss of interest;

(5) the preschool experiences of the children including placement in nursery school or day care, frequency of viewing "Sesame Street", and amount of exposure to books; (6) who or what was the greatest influence on their early reading; (7) the materials or methods used to teach reading; (8) the number of family members, specifically older brothers or sisters, and finally (9) the personalities of the early readers. The same characteristics will be examined in the research sample of non-early readers to determine if any significant differences exist in the two groups.

There is more research available on the factors influencing early reading than on the later consequences of early reading, particularly beyond the primary years. This study is an attempt to show, through research, that children who read early (previous to first grade) have an advantage academically over their classmates throughout the eighth year in school. The eighth year was specified in order to keep the study on the elementary level. Information would be much harder to obtain from cumulative folders if the students had transferred from other schools (for instance, from elementary or middle schools to a high school). The research sample would be narrowed considerably since the student had to have been in the Davie County school system for the entire time they were in school. Also, the information on the parent surveys would have been less valid concerning the preschool reading experiences of their children over a ten year rather than an eight year period of time, particularly



if there were younger brothers and sisters.

The following goals and objectives were established for the research study:

Hypothesis One: To determine if the children who were ahead of their classmates in reading ability in first grade remained ahead throughout the eighth grade in school.

Objective:

- A. According to the results of the following tests used by the Davie County school system in grades one, three, five, and seven, the children who were early readers remained ahead of their classmates in subsequent years throughout elementary school.
1. Metropolitan Readiness Test - grade one.
  2. American Guidance Service First Grade Screening Test.
  3. Metropolitan Achievement Test - grades three, five, and seven.
  4. Primary Mental Abilities Test - grade three.
  5. California Achievement Test - grade seven.

Hypothesis Two: To make a comparison of the family backgrounds of early and non-early readers.

Objective:

- A. The educational backgrounds of the parents showed that a large percentage of early readers had parents who completed the twelfth grade in school.
- B. A larger percentage of the early readers had older brothers or sisters.

Hypothesis Three: To determine if the occupations (approximate socio-economic level) of the parents were related to their educational levels.

Objective:

- A. A greater percentage of early readers had parents who could be classified as "White Collar" rather than "Blue Collar" workers.
- B. The parents who were classified as being in the "White Collar" category had a higher level of education than those who were in the "Blue Collar" category.

Hypothesis Four: To make a comparison of the preschool experiences of the early and non-early readers.

Objective:

- A. A larger percentage of preschool children who were early readers stayed at home with their mothers rather than attending nursery school or day care.
- B. A larger percentage of preschoolers who were early readers watched "Sesame Street" before entering first grade.
- C. A larger percentage of parents of the early readers read to their children before they went to school and/or took them to the library.

Hypothesis Five: To determine if, when, and why the early readers lose interest in school.

Objective:

- A. A lower percentage of early readers became bored or lost interest eventually in elementary school.

## Chapter 2

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Much research has been done on the factors influencing early reading, including the family backgrounds of early readers, but there is little significant research to date concerning the later consequences of early reading, particularly beyond the primary years. However, some educators may disagree with this statement because the existing research has been so highly publicized.

According to Dr. Wood Smethurst in Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, there is enough evidence to indicate that early readers may have an achievement advantage through the elementary grades, but the majority of the evidence that exists about the educational progress of early readers in high school and college is from personal interviews or case histories of good readers who state that they learned to read before they went to school. Smethurst states, "In my opinion, not enough evidence of advantage exists to justify teaching a preschool child to read - if gaining this advantage is the only reason for teaching. It seems reasonable that there would be an advantage, and there is some evidence for it, but the point is by no means proved."<sup>2</sup>



## LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH STUDIES ON EARLY READING

The existing research concerning the later consequences of early reading includes nine longitudinal studies, the most thorough and well-known being the two six-year studies by Delores Durkin in Oakland, California and New York City.<sup>3</sup>

Durkin's first study conducted in Oakland, California, began in September, 1958 and ended six years later in June, 1964. Out of 5,103 first graders tested with the individual Stanford Binet Intelligence Test, forty-nine were found to be early readers (already knew how to read). These early readers were tested each May for the following six years. To form the control group for the study, the 133 first graders who were not tested were divided between those who had been given preschool reading instruction (during the second semester of kindergarten) and those who were out of school for the duration of the seven day testing period.

In the beginning the test used to identify the subjects was comprised of a list of thirty-seven words, chosen because they correlated with preprimers of the three basal reader series currently used most often in California schools. The subjects were required to identify a minimum of eighteen words to qualify for selection (see Appendix A). Durkin's original plan was to match an early reader with a non-reader of equal intelligence as they progressed through several grades. However, twenty-five percent of the early readers were double promoted during the first two years so she was unable to accomplish her goal.

Warren G. Cutts feels that Durkin should not have used as her control group the twenty non-readers who had been Binet tested at school since certain selection factors probably influenced their choice by school personnel for individual testing. He advocates that even a smaller group randomly chosen out of the 5,103 children involved in the study would have made a much better means of comparison.<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting to note that many of the children in the group were classified as being in the normal range of intelligence rather than in the gifted category. In fact, fifteen early readers had Intelligence Quotients of 120 or less with one-third of the children's scores in the group ranging from ninety-one to 110. The intelligence of the selected children showed a wide range, from ninety-one to 161 with a median of 122.

Another aspect of the study that seems rather unusual is that more than half of the early readers had parents Durkin labeled as being "lower" class and another fourth she classified as "lower-middle" class (according to Warner's Index of Social Class Scale, 1949 which would now be out-of-date.) Seven of the families were professional or upper-middle class status; fifteen were of the lower-middle class; twenty-six were upper-lower class; and one was lower-lower class. In addition, it was found that most of the forty-nine families of the early readers had three children; however, the numbers ranged from one to eight. Also, forty of the subjects had at least one older brother or sister.

(It would be helpful to have the same information for the non-early readers.)

A possible explanation as to why most of the parents were blue collar workers was obtained through the parent interviews. It seems that most of the parents in the high socio-economic classes felt that it was the teacher's responsibility to teach their children how to read and they would only be interfering and confusing their children if they tried to help. The parents of the children in the lower economic brackets were only too happy to help their children when they asked questions about reading, hoping to give them a better start in school. They encouraged their children in preschool reading activities because they "didn't know any better".

The family backgrounds of the early readers were determined from information on the (1) father's occupation, (2) source of income, (3) house type, and (4) dwelling area. The parents of the forty-nine early readers used the following adjectives most frequently to describe their children (in the order of the frequency with which they were named): persistent, perfectionistic, eager to keep up with older siblings, high strung, and curious. Eleven of the parents formally taught their children to read, although they had different reasons for doing so.

After four years of accumulating findings, Durkin attempted to answer the following questions; however, the last one still remains unanswered: (for this reason the



study is primarily important for information concerning personality characteristics and family backgrounds of early readers.)

- (1) How many children first learn to read at home and enter the first grade with some achievement in reading?
- (2) How advanced in reading are they when they enter the first grade?
- (3) What kinds of children are these early readers?
- (4) What factors promoted their preschool reading?
- (5) What is the future value of their head start in reading?<sup>5</sup>

The last two questions are of primary interest in this study. In an attempt to provide more accurate information to answer number five, Durkin planned to use the same testing procedure for the non-early readers that was used for the early readers through sixth grade, because of the fallacy of school administered reading tests. Despite Durkin's intentions, apparently no follow-up studies have been done until this time.

Durkin drew the following conclusions from the studies conducted in 1958:

- (1) Preschool children are able to learn to read prior to entering first grade.
- (2) The Intelligence Quotient is not a significant factor in preschool children.
- (3) Children who learn to read early continue to read and achieve at a higher level than their counterparts who do not learn to read early.

- (4) Early reading is a pronounced advantage for children with low Intelligence Quotients. In short, children who learn to read early seem to maintain their headstart.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the Oakland, California study showed that there was no academic, physical, or social harm to the early reader.

Durkin's second study in New York City began in September, 1961, and was completed in June, 1964 (the same time the first study was terminated). In this study, 4465 first graders were tested, out of which 157 early readers were identified and given Stanford-Binet Intelligence tests (a much larger number of early readers than before). The Intelligence scores of the group ranged from eighty-two to 170, the average being 133 (as compared to 122 in Oakland).

Improvements made in the second study included a more complete parent interview form which provided more of a checklist format rather than short answer questions. Also, personality characteristics of both early and non-early readers were examined. In comparing the two studies, it is interesting to note that the early readers in New York were from mostly middle and upper class families; however, the environment has to be taken into consideration.

According to the results of the studies made in California and New York schools by Durkin, an earlier start in reading is an advantage for children through-out elementary school but particularly over the first three-year period. The findings report that the younger the child when he

started reading, the better advantage he had. For instance, twelve children learned to read at age three; by the end of sixth grade, their reading level averaged 9.2 (ninth grade, second month). The average reading level of the fourteen children who began to read at five years old was only 7.6 (seventh grade, sixth month) at the end of sixth grade - even though the Intelligence Quotients differed by only one point from that of the three year old group.

Dr. Durkin also pointed out that preschool reading instruction does not cause academic problems later in school, judging by the outcome of her research. A greater number of preschool readers did better in reading after only five years of school than non-early readers with identical intelligence scores did after six years of instruction.<sup>7</sup>

The other six-year study reviewed was one concerning the teaching of reading in kindergarten and was conducted in the Denver public schools by Paul McKee and Joseph Brzeinski between 1960 and 1966. The study included 4,000 children who were tested from kindergarten through fifth grade.

The experimental group was given twenty minute lessons in reading skills each day in kindergarten, continued in grades one through five with a special reading program in which they could progress through the basal series at their own pace. The kindergarten materials used by the experimental group were designed by the senior author of the Denver study and an associate (McKee and Harrison).



The control group was taught using the regular reading programs adopted by the Denver public schools in kindergarten through fifth grade. Basic reading skills were not formally taught in kindergarten and the children were to progress beyond their grade levels in the basal readers. (Incidentally, the basal readers are not identified in the study which refers the reader to the Denver Public School Curriculum Guide.)

In the beginning of the study, experimental groups consisted of 1,250 subjects, whereas the control group had 750 subjects. By the end of the study the numbers had decreased from 1,250 to 759 in the experimental group and from 750 to 225 in the control group. This represents a thirty-nine percent loss in the experimental group and a seventy percent loss in the control group which may affect the random sampling. Another aspect of the research design that should be considered is the fact that two variables were manipulated in the experimental group instead of only one: the method and the materials. This brings up the question of whether the results can be attributed to the method, the materials, or a combination of the two.<sup>8</sup>

The kindergarten readers in the experimental group who got an adjusted reading program later on had higher reading levels at the end of fifth grade than the children who were in the regular program without the special guided kindergarten instruction. Other advantages were that kindergarten readers made higher gains on vocabulary, reading

comprehension tests, word-study skills, arithmetic concepts, language, social studies, and to some degree, in science.

According to the authors, the Denver study showed that reading can be taught quite well to large numbers of average kindergarten students in a big-city public school system. Pupils in varying ability groups profit accordingly. The earlier start in reading has a lasting effect through the fifth grade if the school program is adjusted to coordinate with the early start. The advantages of the early start seem to disappear after first or second grade if the regular school program does not allow for the early readers to progress beyond their grade levels.<sup>9</sup>

In summary, the following conclusions were drawn from the results of the study:

- (1) Reading skills can be taught effectively to kindergarten children.
- (2) Gains in reading as the result of early reading instruction are maintained.
- (3) Early reading instruction does not have an adverse effect on vision, social, and emotional adjustment, or the desire to read.<sup>10</sup>

A three year study was made by Marjorie H. Sutton in 1969 of children who learn to read in kindergarten. One-hundred and thirty-four kindergarten children in Muncie, Indiana (105 of whom remained to the end of the study) were given a chance to learn to read during the school year 1962 to 1963. By the end of the kindergarten year sixty-six children were actively involved in the informal reading

activities, however sixty-eight had no interest in them. In April forty-six of the children scored at a level of 1.3 (first grade, third month) or above on the Gates Primary Reading Achievement Test, the average score being 1.76. These children formed Group A for the study of their reading achievement from first through third grade. Group B was composed of the fifty-nine children who did not score on the Gates test in kindergarten and remained to the end of the study. Group C was made up of the thirty-five children who moved into the district during the summer and enrolled in school at the beginning of first grade. Twenty-four of these children stayed until the completion of the study.

The S.R.A. Primary Mental Abilities Test was given in September, 1963 to all of the first grade children in accordance with the Muncie testing program. A comparison was made of the following variables for the three groups: I.Q. chronological age, mental age, and level of father's schooling (see Appendix B). Kahl and Davis (1957), Warner (1949), and Hollingshead (1958) have implied that one fairly dependable way to determine socio-economic status is by the number of years of education completed by the father or wage-earner, so this is the measure used in Sutton's study. Other factors applying to socio-economic status are disregarded.

A comparison was also made throughout the primary grades on the basis of results from the Gates Reading Achievement Tests (See Appendix B). From the evidence of the test results, Sutton concluded that the children who



achieved a measure of reading performance in kindergarten had a lasting and increasing advantage over their classmates through the third grade. The results of this study differ, however, from those previously mentioned in that the children had a choice in kindergarten of whether or not they wanted to participate in the reading activities (which lasted fifteen minutes per day during the second semester). "This seems a small portion of time out of a child's school life, yet the findings of this study have indicated that the resulting early reading advantage attained by some children continued and increased as they progressed through the primary grades."<sup>11</sup>

The next three year study, "A Comparison of the Early Reading Performance of Early and Non-Early Readers from Grade One through Grade Three" by Coleman Morrison, Albert J. Harris, and Irma T. Everbach (1969) is a part of the extensive CRAFT project (Comparative Reading Approach First Grade Teachers). Its purpose was not to study the "when" or "how" of early reading but to research the succeeding reading performances of children who knew some sight words when they entered first grade. Certain strengths and weaknesses of this group were identified and their reading ability was compared to the rest of the CRAFT population over a three year period. The study included the investigation of specific achievement variables, attitudes toward reading, as well as the quality and extent of their reading.

In September, 1964, fifty-eight early readers were identified out of 1,378 first graders (a total of four percent) on the basis of their ability to read any number of words in print on the "Detroit Word Recognition Test". All the children in the study were taught to read by either the Skills Centered (Basal Reader or Phonovisual) or the Language Experience Approach.

The following tests were administered to the students throughout the primary grades:

- A. Beginning of first grade
  - 1. Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Tests
  - 2. Word Meaning and Listening Subtests of Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test
  - 3. Thurstone Pattern Copying and Identical Forms
- B. End of first grade
  - 1. Stanford Primary I Achievement Test
- C. Second grade
  - 1. Metropolitan Primary II Achievement Tests (Form B at the beginning of the year and Form C at the end of the year)
- D. Third grade
  - 1. Metropolitan Primary II Achievement Tests (Form B at the beginning of the year and Form A at the end of the year)

In addition, the Inventory of Reading Attitude (San Diego) was given at the end of the first and second grades. At the end of the second grade, teachers appraised the children in regard to their desire to read and types of books

they were reading. By the end of the third grade, early readers showed a decisive advantage on reading subtests over the rest of the CRAFT population, and early readers in the Language Experience Approach attained higher scores than the ones in the Skills Centered Approach. (The Language Experience Approach children scored six months higher in word knowledge and five months higher in reading than the Skills Centered group. The teachers said that the early readers had more of a desire to read than the non-early readers; however, a much greater percentage of early readers were rated as selecting books "far above their grade level.")

The study implies that some disadvantaged children who enter first grade have a certain amount of word recognition skill which they received from the home or in a pre-school nursery or day care center excluding public kindergarten. This correlates with Durkin's study which showed that some early readers came from homes below the middle or upper socioeconomic income brackets. The project also confirms the fact that the early readers maintained and increased the advantages they had at the beginning of the study during the three year period. The authors of the study thus advise the importance of excellent reading readiness programs in kindergarten and subsequent early reading instruction.<sup>12</sup>

The emphasis in Beatrice E. Bradley's three year study, "An Experimental Study of the Readiness Approach in Reading", was the effects of early versus later first grade entrance on reading achievement. The effects of postponed



reading instruction by five, eight, and ten months for three experimental groups of first graders were tested. According to the findings of the study, the experimental group was found to be behind the control group at the end of first grade, on the same level at the end of second grade, and above them by the end of the third year.

Results of the Bradley study must be viewed with disgression, however. The children in the experimental group had only one teacher over a two year period, whereas the children in the control groups had many different teachers throughout the time period. If the children in the experimental group had been allowed to change teachers, they may have been able to make more progress. Also, the control classes were introduced into the reading program without any previous readiness training, a factor which may seriously question the validity of the research findings that delayed instruction is not disadvantageous.<sup>13</sup>

B.V. Keister made a study of "Reading Skills Acquired by Five-Year-Old Children" in 1941 to see if the early reading skills were retained at the end of second grade. Like many of the other studies, Keister asks the question: "Is it worth the effort to teach young children to read?" He found that children with a mental age of less than six years can attain basic reading skills in the first grade; however, "the skills lack permanence and tend to disappear during the summer months between grades one and two." Keister states that this loss is never recovered during later teaching.

A factor of this study that should not be overlooked is that by the end of the first year, the three groups of children taking part in the project had average achievement scores of 2.7 (second grade - seventh month), 2.9 (second grade - ninth month), and 3.2 (third grade - second month). Since the average mental ability scores of the children were only slightly above their chronological age (5.7 - five years - seven months versus 5.9 - (five years - nine months) when the study began, it is odd that their first grade post test scores would average more than a year over their expectancy reading level or the national norms. Under these conditions it is understandable that later performance was not proportionate to the achievement in first grade.<sup>14</sup>

Interested in the reading development of gifted children, Ruth Strang made a study in 1954 of the reading autobiographies of fifty-four seventh, eighth, and ninth graders with Intelligence Quotients of 120 or more. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- (1) When do gifted children learn to read?
- (2) How do gifted children learn to read?
- (3) Who do gifted children learn to read?
- (4) How much do they read?
- (5) How do they feel about reading?
- (6) Do they have difficulty in getting the books they want?
- (7) What are their reading habits?
- (8) What are their suggestions to teachers?

- (9) What is the general pattern of reading development of gifted children?

In response to the first question, gifted children learn to read early. Approximately half of the students learned to read when they were five years old or younger. Most of the children learned to read by various approaches with help from parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, or teachers. First they learned sight words, then phonics or words recognition skills and afterwards the amount of their reading was determined by their interest and free time.

In the primary grades the books the gifted children were reading were similar to those of other children. In later years, individual interests began to develop. Most of the gifted children said they read every chance they got, anywhere from three to twenty hours a week. This explains how they feel about reading. The majority wrote that they never had trouble getting the books they wanted. They tend to read quickly and critically, skimming over the book beforehand to see what it is all about and if it is worth reading.

Their advice to teachers includes:

- (1) Make interesting literature available.
- (2) Allow more time for reading in class; have free reading periods.
- (3) Teach good reading methods.



Concerning the general pattern of reading development of gifted children, their reading interests are broad; they learn to read by all of the current methods; reading helps the personal-social development of gifted children in many areas; and is a rewarding way to spend part of their free time.<sup>15</sup>

Also interested in the reading development of gifted children, Lewis L. Terman wrote "An Experiment in Infant Education" in 1918 in which he recorded an account of the reading development of Martha from age two until the eighth grade. Martha, a brilliant child, became one of Terman's subjects in Palo Alto, California, when she was twenty-six months old. Her father, a lawyer, taught Martha and John (one of her older brothers) to read when they were of pre-school age. First Martha's father taught her to recognize the letters of the alphabet, next whole words, and then to read sentences. At nineteen months, she knew all the capital letters, at two years old she could read over two-hundred words, and at twenty-six months she could read from first grade books and knew over seven hundred words.<sup>16</sup>

In writing of Martha in Genetic Studies of Genius and Mental and Physical Traits of a Thousand Gifted Children (1925), Terman said:

This girl probably holds the world's record for early reading. At the age of twenty-six and a half months her reading vocabulary was above seven hundred words, and as early as twenty-one months she read and apprehended [sic] simple sentences as connected thoughts rather than as isolated words. By that age she could distinguish

and name the primary colors.

By the time she was twenty-three months old she began to experience evident pleasure when she read. At twenty-four months she had a reading vocabulary of over two hundred words, which had increased to more than seven hundred words two and a half months later.

When she was twenty-five months old she read fluently and with expression to one of us from several primers and first readers that she had never seen before. At this age her reading ability was at least equal to that of the average seven year old who had attended school a year.<sup>17</sup>

In Genetic Studies of Genius, Terman writes the case history of Martha's academic development from the time her father taught her to read until the eighth grade. According to his reports, she became a superior reader who read quickly with excellent comprehension. Her IQ was determined to be around 140. She had an outstanding school record in all subjects except for music and was allowed to skip several grades. Her medical history was satisfactory and Martha was normal psychologically and socially. By the eighth grade, her goal in life was to be a writer and she was already the author of several little books.

The way in which Martha was taught to read and her reactions to the "lessons" illustrates the major points which Stevens tries to make in The Case for Early Reading (1968):

- (1) Young children can learn to read and moreover, enjoy learning to read.
- (2) The process of teaching them involves three things: Large-lettered words meaningfully associated with objects at frequent intervals.
- (3) Parents can, with some effort, teach their children to read.

- (4) Young children should be taught to read since preschool readers become both accurate and rapid readers.
- (5) The early stimulus of reading may be a factor in the development of a gifted child.<sup>18</sup>

In 1958 Lawrence M. Kasdon examined the reading background of fifty superior readers among college freshmen in an effort to find answers to the following questions:

- (1) Are superior readers able to read before they start school?
- (2) How do they account for their becoming superior readers?
- (3) What aroused their interest in reading?

The sample for this study was chosen from the nine colleges in the Los Angeles area which give reading tests to entering freshmen. Out of the fifty college freshmen who scored highest on the reading test ("Speed of Comprehension Scale of the Cooperative English Test, Test C2: Reading Comprehension, Form Y"), twenty-seven or fifty-four percent read before first grade. Eighteen of these early readers said that they were taught to read by someone in their family.

Twenty or forty percent of the subjects believed they became superior readers because they read a great deal. Twenty-five or fifty percent of the subjects reported that motivation for reading came from being interested in or curious about the contents of books.

The results of the study do not indicate if "giftedness" in reading can be detected early in the life of the



child. The findings do suggest that if a child cannot read before he enters first grade, he may still become a superior reader by the time he goes to college. Most important, the study implies that the family influences interest in reading during the early years more than the school since the family members helped the early readers learn to read in most circumstances. Kasdon concludes that the importance of a child's environment should be stressed more by educators.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, out of the longitudinal research studies on early reading described, Durkin (1966), Brzeinski (Denver, 1966), CRAFT (Morrison, 1969), and Sutton (1969) report positive results concerning the continuation of early reader advantages through the primary grades - however valid the results may be. Bradley (1956) and Keister (1941) question the value of early reading, although the studies were conducted many years ago. In addition, Strang (1954), Terman (1918), and Kasdon (1958) provide interesting information regarding the reading development and backgrounds of gifted readers.

#### SOME FACTORS INFLUENCING EARLY READING

The criteria for Millie C. Almy's study in 1949 was to compare a child's success with reading in first grade to the types of experiences the child had at home during his fifth year. Reading ability was determined by tests given to 106 first graders during the last month of school and also by teacher rating scales of their achievement. The kinds

of experiences the children had the previous year were determined from parent interviews held throughout the school year.

A disadvantage in Almy's study was the large number of children who were unable to make satisfactory scores on the reading tests. Regardless of this deficiency, Almy concluded that the best readers in the group of 106 were "children whose experiences in kindergarten, in play, and with adults had in them some elements of reading. In this study experience with an aspect of reading was defined very broadly; it included being read to as well as attempts at actual instruction in reading."<sup>20</sup>

In other words, there is a meaningful positive relationship between success in beginning reading and the child's opportunities for reading in the first grade. "This is true despite the limitations of the criterion, the unreliability contributed by retrospective errors, and the narrow range of ability in this group. The exposure to reading experiences before first grade and encouragement of reading activities outside of school during the first grade appear to be valuable."<sup>21</sup>

Helen P. Davidson's study in 1931 provided some additional valuable information about the home environments of early readers. Davidson's study consisted of thirteen children including bright three year olds, average four year olds, and dull five year olds; all having a mental age of four years. She wanted to find out if all the children

in the group could learn to read equally well under the same circumstances. The study took place in Palo Alto, California, where Terman's subject, Martha, grew up. The instructional period for each group lasted four-and-a-half months. Each child was given a ten minute daily reading lesson followed by a short group reading game. Training began after kindergarten had been in session for twelve days.

Though the study demonstrated that brighter, younger children will do better in reading than less intelligent, older children of the same mental age, it showed reading progress for all the groups after only four-and-a-half months. Other implications from Davidson's study were:

- (1) That a stimulating home environment had helped the bright three year olds.
- (2) Early training in reading had no harmful effect on the children, but actually increased their interest in books and stories.
- (3) That usual reading instruction in the first grade seems to take an unnecessary amount of time.
- (4) That excellent eye habits for reading can be established by age three-and-a-half.<sup>22</sup>

The following conditions represent typical home situations where four year olds have learned to read. Parents who read to their children create an interest in words and letters. Children gradually realize that the print on the page tells something about the pictures. Favorite stories read again and again help the children to understand that the print on the page must say the same thing each time the



story is read, since the pages are turned at the same time. Later on the four year olds start telling their parents when to turn the page and eventually are able to begin turning it themselves.<sup>23</sup>

Gus P. Plessas and Clifton R. Oakes did a study of the "Prereading Experiences of Selected Early Readers" in 1964. Following the procedure for the study, each first grade teacher in twenty-five elementary schools (grades kindergarten through six) in the San Juan Unified School District next to Sacramento, California, was asked to give the names of students who could read at the primer level when they started first grade. The forty students who were identified were given the California Reading Test during the first week in December. The twenty pupils, thirteen girls and seven boys, who scored above 2.0 provided the sample of early readers for this study.

The parent questionnaire used in the study was adapted from Almy (1949). According to Taussig's scale (1939) the occupations of the fathers were categorized as follows: three skilled workmen, six clerical workers, and eleven professional workers. Only four of the mothers worked outside the home. Fourteen of the early readers had older brothers or sisters, three were only children, and three had younger siblings.

Answers on the questionnaires revealed that all the children were read to frequently, at kindergarten and at home. Nineteen of the children were read to daily, by

their mothers and fathers, grandparents, siblings, or baby sitters. All twenty children had a personal interest in reading. Three children knew the alphabet at age five, ten at age four, six at age three, and one at age two.

Sixteen of the children were given some kind of preschool reading instruction. Various approaches were used including the use of pre-primers, association of letters and sounds, use of a picture dictionary, playing alphabet games, use of flash cards, and teaching sounds of the letters. In the area of writing, all twenty children could write their own names by the time they entered first grade. Perhaps the most important question asked on the questionnaire was "What was the greatest influence in this child's learning to read?" The child's own desire to read was the answer most frequently stated, next the assistance of parents, an older sibling, and finally the influence of television and the newspapers. The early readers also displayed early personal interests in reading signs as well as a curiosity about letters, words, and numbers.<sup>24</sup>

The editor of the article from which the previous information was taken, Dr. Theodore Clymer, noted that the intellectual and socio-economic characteristics of the research sample in this study are different from the results of Durkin's California study of early readers. According to the WISC (Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children), the mean IQ for the boys was 126 in comparison to 128 for the girls. Most of the fathers were employed in clerical and professional positions.

Through interviews with mothers, "The Gallup Studies of Early Childhood Learning" (1969) confirmed the following characteristics of the homes of early readers. Most of the top first graders had been read to on a regular basis before they started to school. The parents enjoyed reading and there was access to many books and magazines in the home. "Reading to a child as early as the age of one gives him a statistically significant headstart."<sup>25</sup>

In her California study, Durkin emphasized the importance of material for writing, even scribbling, in the home for the child learning to read. The early readers could also be called "early scribblers". The children seem to have progressed from the scribbling stages to the drawing of people and objects, followed by copying letters from alphabet books, school papers of older siblings, and blackboards. It is probably not coincidental that each of the forty-nine families interviewed had a blackboard in their homes that belonged to an older sibling or was probably bought at a dime store for less than a dollar. Eighty-three percent of the parents of early readers in Durkin's New York study listed "availability of paper and pencils" as one of the factors influencing their children to learn to read. Almost all of the children had received help with printing (ninety-three percent).<sup>26</sup>

Studies at the University of Rochester reveal that "parents of early readers took their children to the library more often (than others), read to their children at an early



age and created a language environment for them." The investigators report that while it had been assumed in the past that early reading was the result of a combination of the parent's influence and the personal interest of the child, "Our results suggest that this may not be the case; that the parents' rather than children's interest may be the main motivational determinant of early reading."<sup>27</sup>

A significant factor influencing early reading has been the series initiated by the Children's Television Workshop on November 10, 1969, known as "Sesame Street". This five day a week, twenty-six week television series is primarily aimed for three to five year old children from urban families. Each episode sponsors one number and one or two letters, which are presented in various ways with many repetitions throughout the hour-long program by the stars of the show - Jim Henson's "Muppets" (including "Big Bird", "Ernie", "Bert", "Oscar", "Grover", and "Cookie Monster").

"Sesame Street's" second season premiered Monday, November 9, 1970 with the following additions added to the curriculum:

- (1) Reading, with specific emphasis on letter sounds and a selected sight vocabulary.
- (2) More advanced numerical skills, including the teaching of simple addition and subtraction.
- (3) A more comprehensive approach to teaching reasoning and problem solving.
- (4) New material designed to better reach key ethnic

groups, including the teaching of English vocabulary to Spanish-speaking youngsters.<sup>28</sup>

The following conclusions about the effects of "Sesame Street" on preschool children were taken from a pamphlet by the Children's Television Workshop.

Children like and appreciate invention and variety and are capable of attention spans far beyond those usually accorded them. Youngsters can tolerate and even prefer repetition, with and without variation - if the material being repeated is interesting to them in the first place.

Judith Minton in 1972 studied the effect of "Sesame Street" on reading readiness on kindergarten children. She compared the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Tests administered to kindergarten during the two years prior to "Sesame Street" (1968 and 1969) with similar tests given to kindergarteners in 1970.

Upon conclusion of her study, she detected no significant difference in total test scores; however, she did discover that children in 1970 knew more letters and did substantially better on the alphabet subtest. From this Minton surmised that "Sesame Street" in 1970 was "an effective teacher of letter recognition to kindergarten children."<sup>29</sup>

The instructional goal in reading for the 1970-1971 season of "Sesame Street" was: "The child can read each of the twenty words on the Sesame Street word list"<sup>30</sup> (See Appendix C). The Educational Testing Service selected a sample of 934 children from Boston, Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Durham, North Carolina, for testing to determine if the

instructional goals for the program had been met. According to the findings, the "report cards record impact" because percentage gains for the children included:

- 9% gains for children who watched seldom if ever.
- 15% gains for those who watched 2-3 times a week.
- 19% gains for those who watched 4-5 times a week.
- 24% gains for those who watched more than 5 times a week.

In the second season, which was far more ambitious in scope and complexity due to the addition of new goals, ETS found significant gains in these categories: function of body parts, naming geometric forms, roles of community members, matching by form, naming letters, letter sounds, sight reading, recognizing numbers, naming numbers, counting, relational terms, classification (single criterion) and scoring.

An additional finding in the second study, which included a follow-up of 283 first-year viewers, was that the first 'graduates' of Sesame Street were better prepared for school than their classmates who saw the show infrequently or not at all, according to an evaluation by their teachers. ETS also found that the Sesame Street 'graduates' adapted well to the school experience. Another significant result reported by ETS was a gain in favorable attitudes toward school and toward people of other races among children who had viewed the program both years.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the television series, the producers of Sesame Street also publish a magazine which contains similar reading readiness activities for preschool children, written in English and Spanish. The magazine is issued ten times a year. A page written exclusively for the parents explains the contents of each issue and describes each part and how it may be used as a teaching device along with suggested supplementary activities.



A case study of an early reader will be used to summarize some of the factors influencing early reading. The child will be called "Bill"; however, his real name has been changed to insure privacy. When Bill was eighteen months old, he had an accident and was confined to bed for several weeks, recuperating from a broken leg. His parents, both educators, showed him how to play games with magnetic letters and read lots of books to him while he was in bed. The accident probably encouraged Bill to read early, for he was reading at age two-and-a-half.

Other factors influencing Bill to read early were his parents' reading to him almost every night and taking him to the public library frequently. Sometimes Bill and his mother checked out forty books at a time. According to his mother, the librarian did not mind at all. She said the more books that were checked out, the more books they would be able to get to circulate. In addition, when the family was riding in the car, they would play spelling games, such as "Where's the C A R?" (spelling out the word to see who could guess it). Apparently they took trips quite often, since Bill's dad taught at a university in a neighboring town during every third week-end. Finally, the parents themselves were studying almost all the time when Bill was young, so he was around a lot of books and papers.

Bill's mother stressed that she in no way pressured her child to read. She knew he would "get it" sooner or later. Her second child, who will be called Patrick, is

five years old and seems to be ready to read, but she is not pushing it. She attributed most of the credit of his knowledge of letters and numbers to "Sesame Street".

The mother (Mrs. "S") explained that her two sons had very different personalities. The youngest is well-rounded and independent, however his older brother is more dependent, quiet and predictable. She feels that Bill is more like his Dad, the intelligent and more serious type; whereas Patrick is more like herself - outgoing and athletic. (She likes to ski, but her husband would rather read.)

When Mrs. "S" was asked how Bill's early reading affected him in school, she replied that he was not bored in kindergarten because of the social aspects. He had never been to a nursery school before and enjoyed making friends. He also enjoyed playing with the other children in such activities as sand and water play, which he had not been able to do previously. Since he started kindergarten at four-and-a-half, Bill's mother felt that he needed the year to mature socially rather than mentally.

He sort of drifted along in the first grade, but by the second grade he was beginning to get bored; possibly because he was only allowed to progress one grade level above where he should have been reading in school. Currently Bill is in the third grade, reading on a seventh grade reading level. Patrick will start kindergarten next fall at five-and-a-half in the school where his mother teaches fifth grade. He is presently attending a half-day Montessori program five days a week.

Perhaps the boredom of some early readers later in school could be alleviated through the awareness of teachers and administrators, and the introduction of programs such as enrichment classes for gifted students (if they are not already available in the school). The statements that some authorities have made about boredom and other effects of early reading will be described on the following pages.

#### SOME EFFECTS OF EARLY READING

Most of the negative effects of early reading fall into the following categories: boredom, physical or psychological harm to the child, and social maladjustment. In regard to the development of boredom in early readers, almost every school system has designed a program for the child who is ahead of his classmates. Every year there are a few children who can read at the beginning of first grade, but many parents are reluctant to admit that their child is an early reader. The teacher should be able to make adjustments for these children so that they can work independently and will not become bored or disinterested in school. Many teachers prefer the challenge of working with gifted children rather than with children having reading disabilities.<sup>32</sup> Wood Smethurst (1975) feels that the argument against early reading concerning boredom is not longer valid since first grade teachers are coming more and more to expect a few early readers, and to accommodate for them in their classrooms.

The second argument against early reading involves the possibility of physical harm to the child. Smethurst



(1975) states that "there is not evidence of physical after-effects at all."<sup>33</sup> Brzeinski further explains that although "Early reading being harmful to a child's eyesight is one of the oldest and most well-known arguments against early reading, few facts are really known today."<sup>34</sup> Jack Holmes in "Visual Hazards in the Early Teaching of Reading" indicates that "There is little experimental evidence dealing with changes in children's eyes between the ages of two and five with or without the imposition of the task of learning to read." He states that there is little evidence to prove that teaching reading after the age of four tends to cause a greater chance of myopia or nearsightedness. According to Ollila, a survey of Brzeinski's, Sutton's, and Durkin's longitudinal studies of preschool and kindergarten readers lends support to the theory that none of the early readers showed a presence of sight defects. He also warns that so little is known about the effects of early reading on eyesight that even the most enthusiastic advocates should take cautious note.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, Brzeinski, Durkin, and Sutton reported that early reading had no relationship to the problems of reading disabilities, and harmful social and psychological aftereffects of early pressured instruction in reading such as in the case of "Velia" are complicated by other problems, too.

It is true that studies of bright children, who were highly stimulated at an early age, have uncovered a small

proportion who experienced some disturbance in personality functioning. Cases have been concentrated in the extremely high IQ subgroup. Significantly, problems have generally appeared to stem from the child's social role difficulties, arising from the manner in which society has tended to evaluate a child of this caliber - for example, "egghead".....occasionally there is evidence that role adjustment problems of this type may not have been the sole source of disturbance.<sup>36</sup>

The social adjustment of the children appears to be another area of great concern to the majority of critics toward early reading. According to Englemann and Englemann (1966), "studies indicate that gifted children stand at least as good a chance of adjusting in school as the child who is average or below average in intelligence." The largest study, done in California, followed more than 1,000 gifted children whose IQ's ranged from 135 to 200 through high school and into adulthood. The gifted children averaged from one to three years above grade placement on achievement scores in all academic areas. Many of the children had been double promoted, but this factor did not prohibit them from becoming well adjusted in school. They held leadership positions in extracurricular activities. Later in life, seventy percent of them achieved professional or semi-professional life styles. The gifted students rated above the average child in the areas of physical health, mental health, and range of interests. "A superior intelligence may contribute to adjustment problems, but a superior intelligence is also a handy tool in solving these problems."<sup>37</sup>

It seems probable that early readers who later experience anxiety and problems with social adjustment have



in common: (1) very high intelligence and (2) a history of parental pressure and intense tutelage in very early childhood (Dolbear, 1912, Hollingworth, 1942, Goertzel and Geortzel, 1962, Fowler, 1962b, Engelmann and Engelmann, 1966).<sup>38</sup>

Joan Beck does not agree with the statement: "Teaching a child to read will rob him of his childhood and prevent him from achieving the social and emotional growth which is the chief developmental task of the preschool years." She questions, "How many 'moppets' have a life so full of fascinating toys and happy play that they can't spare even ten minutes for reading?" Results of the Denver reading program showed that children made comparable gains in reading ability if parents spent as little as thirty minutes a week working with them.<sup>39</sup>

In summary:

Early reading seems neither to create nor prevent reading disability, problems of boredom, school adjustment, or psychological problems. These problems, however, can be attributed to poor teaching and inappropriate methods and materials used in instruction. Advocates of early reading should feel a pressing need to provide better guidelines grounded in research about different organizational plans, reading approaches, methods, materials, and their suitability for different kindergarten children. If better guidelines are not provided, it will continue, and critics will find evidence of harmful effects.<sup>40</sup>

On a more positive note, advocates of early reading feel that "early readers will have better attitudes toward reading." Sutton reported that the students were said to be



"book hungry" according to their teachers. Also, in "The Kindergarten Reading Controversy", Robert Newman stated that "Children should be taught to read as early as possible, because this is one of the few keys to building a lifelong desire to read."<sup>41</sup>

Lloyd Ollila in "Pros and Cons of Teaching Reading to Four and Five Year Olds" says that of the research available, it can be said that most studies agree with the fact that children who have an early start in reading will demonstrate higher reading ability than their later starting classmates, and will keep the head start as long as adjusted instruction is given. He further relates that "The whole issue of early reading remains unsolved, and for many it is clouded in emotional appeals, extreme claims, and misunderstandings of terminology."<sup>42</sup>

According to LeShan (1967):

There is no reliable evidence that children who can read words at two are better readers by the time they are in the sixth grade. There is no reliable evidence that children who learn to read in kindergarten do any better later on than children who are not good readers until third or fourth grade. Furthermore, there is no evidence that children who were considered poor readers until fifth or sixth grade are necessarily poor scholars, or that early reading skills have any correlation whatsoever with whether or not they may be brilliant intellectuals in adulthood.<sup>43</sup>

Smethurst in Teaching Young Children to Read at Home agrees that LeShan is correct when she states that we have no reliable evidence of early reader advantage beyond sixth grade.

But there is not any evidence, either that the possible early reader advantage in first through sixth grade goes away - there simply is not any conclusive evidence either way. There are a few suggestions in the work of Kasdon (1958) and others, but nothing you could hang your hat on. We simply do not know.<sup>44</sup>

In Teach Your Preschooler to Read, Donald Emery also raises the question:

Since every parent expects his child to learn to read sooner or later, it should be an advantage to learn to read earlier. Is it? It has long been observed that the children most likely to finish first grade as the happier, better readers are those who started the school year knowing many of their letters and sounds. The Denver study cited earlier showed that children who learn to read starting in kindergarten did better in later grades in reading and language as well as in other subjects which lean heavily in that skill. Some older studies report that children who started to read in first grade catch up in later grades with those who started early. This phenomenon, where it occurs, can be laid more to teachers imposing a routine uninspired reading program in the early trained readers and effectively denying them the chance to continue to improve their skills with appropriate instruction and materials than to any flash-in-the-pan performance from early training.<sup>45</sup>

In his book, Emery concludes that:

You should teach your preschooler to read because research to date shows he has much to gain and nothing to lose. Everything you teach him will help him, even if you begin teaching him and do not follow through to the point where he can read independently. Even if he learns only a few words or a few sounds it will profit him. No matter which methods you chose, he will not become confused later on in first grade if the teacher used a different technique...

The more you expose your child to printed words, the quicker and easier he will learn to read. Some parents have used the technique of hanging labels on a table, a toy box, a bed, a doll. Buy your child all the books you can afford. Make your local library a regular stop and let him choose his own reading materials. Do read to your child, happily, lovingly, frequently. The

children who did the best in the Denver preschool reading program were those whose parents read to them at least 60 minutes a week.<sup>46</sup>



## Chapter 3

### RESEARCH METHOD

A letter was written initially to the superintendent of the Davie County School System, Mr. James E. Everidge, requesting an appointment to discuss the research plan. An abstract of the study was written for the Superintendent to read during the appointment (See Appendix D). Also a copy of the proposed parent survey was given to the Superintendent for approval.

During the interview Mr. Everidge gave his permission for the researcher to conduct the study in Davie County, through a letter of introduction addressed to all the elementary schools in the county (See Appendix E). He stated that further cooperation with the project would be each principal's prerogative. The researcher informed the Superintendent that a copy of the paper would be placed in the office of the Board of Education for availability to the principals of the schools included in the study.

Three of the five elementary schools in the county were randomly selected for the study in order to obtain a research sample of fifty to one hundred students: Cooleemee Elementary, Mocksville Middle School, and Pinebrook Elementary. The only elementary schools in the county not included in the study were Shady Grove Elementary and William R. Davie.

Both of these are very small schools, having seventy-five eighth graders enrolled as opposed to the one-hundred and twenty-five students in some of the larger schools. Cooleemee and Pinebrook Elementary consist of grades kindergarten through eight; however, Mocksville Middle School has grades five through eight.

The next step in the research method was to solicit the principal's permission to conduct the study in the selected schools. A letter of introduction to the parents of the eighth grade students was presented to the principals. The permission of the parent and the child to examine the cumulative folders was requested (See Appendix F). All three principals, Mr. V.G. Prim - Cooleemee Elementary; Mr. Dwight Jackson - Mocksville Middle School; and Mr. William T. Eanes - Pinebrook Elementary School, consented to the research study.

About seventy-five permission forms were distributed to students in the eighth grade suite at Cooleemee School; twenty to each of the five eighth grade classes at Mocksville Middle School, and fifty to the eighth graders at Pinebrook Elementary. Only the eighth grade students who had been in the county for eight years needed to receive the permission forms.

The students were given several days to return the permission forms. Then the researcher collected the forms and recorded the necessary information from the cumulative folders of the children whose parents gave permission to do

so. Scores were recorded for the first grade readiness test, either the American Guidance Service First Grade Screening Test or the Metropolitan Readiness Test. The Cooleemee School cumulative folders contained more of the American Guidance Service scores, however, scores for the Metropolitan Readiness Test were recorded in the Mocksville Middle and Pinebrook Elementary cumulative folders.

Tests given in the third, fifth, and seventh grades appeared to be the same in all three schools. The Primary Mental Abilities Test was given in the third grade in addition to the Metropolitan Achievement Test. The Metropolitan Achievement Test was used exclusively in the fifth grade but the Metropolitan and the California Achievement Tests were given in the seventh grade at Cooleemee and Pinebrook Elementary. The teachers at Mocksville Middle School administered the Metropolitan Achievement Test in the sixth grade and the California Achievement Test in the seventh grade.

Other information obtained from the cumulative folders included the educational levels and occupations of both the mothers and fathers of the eighth grade students. The names of the first grade teachers or room (suite) numbers of the students were also recorded to determine the students who had been enrolled in the Davie County School System for eight consecutive years. In addition, the names of the current homeroom teachers had to be identified for the Mocksville Middle School students. Instead of suites,



Mocksville Middle School had five self-contained classrooms for the eighth grade students.

A blue sheet in each of the cumulative folders was signed by the researcher, who also recorded the date and reason for needing the information. The cumulative folders were kept in the eighth grade suites at Cooleemee and Pinebrook Elementary. At Mocksville Middle School they were stored in filing cabinets in the vault behind the secretary's desk in the principal's office.

The next step in the research method was to design, duplicate, and distribute the parent surveys of the students who had been in the county for eight years according to the information in the cumulative folders. Since the parent survey was thought to be the most important part of the research, the significance of each question was very carefully studied and simply worded for the parents to easily understand. The survey conducted by Delores Durkin in 1958 was used as a guide; however, hers was designed as an interview form and was longer than advisable in a written survey. (The survey can be found in its entirety in the appendix of Durkin's book, Children Who Read Early).

The following introductory paragraph was used on the cover sheet of the survey:

Dear Parent:

The following questionnaire is designed to gather some general information about the background of your eighth grade child. No names or identification will be used in the study. It is very important

that you fill out and return the questionnaire as soon as possible (preferably tomorrow). Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

The child's name and school had to be indicated on the cover page of the survey so that test scores of the "early readers" (designed by the data from the surveys) could be identified.

Nineteen questions that best corresponded with the goals and objectives of the study were selected to be used, limiting the survey to two pages. It was felt that better results would be obtained from a shorter survey rather than a longer one. The survey was designed in a checklist form except for question number seventeen in which the number and age of older or younger brothers and sisters was requested. If there were older brothers and sisters in the family it was asked if they learned to read before going to school.

Some of the questions included blanks for parents to specify other answers if they were not included in the number of responses. The most important question in the survey was felt to be number eight, which should identify the early from the non-early readers. The question was:

Did your child learn to read before he went to school?  
 (By learn to read, was your child able to recognize  
 and understand any words before he went to school?)  
 YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

In the first question the parent was asked to check whether or not his child attended nursery school or day care. More specific information was deleted in favor of other questions

concerning the child's reading background. Secondly, the parent was asked if and how often his child watched "Sesame Street". When these children were of kindergarten age the program was a very new production. The fact that during Durkin's study it was non-existent was one reason for including the question in the present survey.

Another question dealt with reading to the child and how often the parent did so. Possible responses ranged from less often than thirty minutes a week to more often than sixty minutes a week. The parents were also asked if they took their child to the library and how often.

If the child was an early reader, the parents were asked if reading was the child's idea or someone else's. One theory was that children who were pressured to learn to read did not progress as quickly as those who learned on their own initiative. Parents of early readers were also asked who or what gave their child most of the help with reading and what materials and/or approach were used to teach him.

All parents were requested to check whether or not their child could recognize the letters of the alphabet before first grade. (A blank was included for them to check if they did not remember.) At first the question read: "Did your child know the letters of the alphabet before first grade?" It was felt that the parent might think his child knew the letters if he could sing the "alphabet song", so the word recognize was inserted in the question. The decision



was made not to include the sounds of the letters because of the long time span.

Three questions in the survey were concerned with the area of boredom later in school. (The researcher wanted to cover the positive as well as the negative aspects of "early reading".) The parents of both early and non-early readers were asked to answer if, when, and why their child lost interest in school.

Finally, question nineteen dealt with the child's personality. In the original survey, the parent was asked to write one sentence describing his child's personality. The survey used in the study had a list of ten characteristics of which the parent could check the ones that suited his child's personality.

After the surveys had been received by the parents and returned to the researcher, two more questions were devised to identify the early readers, since a large percentage of surveys returned were those from parents of early readers (almost fifty percent). In order to narrow down the group of early readers the following two questions were added to the survey:

- (1) Before he (or she) went to school, could your child:

Read a few words (under 10) \_\_\_\_\_

Read many words (about 20) \_\_\_\_\_

Read simple sentences \_\_\_\_\_

Read simple stories \_\_\_\_\_

Read easy reading books \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) How old was your child when he started reading?

5 years old \_\_\_\_\_

4 years old \_\_\_\_\_

3 years old \_\_\_\_\_

2 years old \_\_\_\_\_

(See Appendix G for a copy of the survey.) Also included on the page was a line for the child's name and parent's signature (similar to those on the permission forms) so the researcher could be sure that the parent rather than the child filled out the information.

Two months after the first survey was conducted questionnaires were sent out a second time to the parents who had not responded previously. Below is the handwritten letter that was included on the cover of the surveys to encourage a greater response:

Dear Parent:

Several months ago your child received a copy of the following survey. Due to the Christmas holidays there was very little time to return the forms, so I wanted to try a second time. If you could fill out the form and get it back to your child's teacher by Friday, I would be very grateful.

You only need to complete the last page of the survey if your child is an early reader (learned to read before he started to school). I remind you again that no names will be used in the results of the study - only numbers. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Janet H. Towell

Due to the low response of permission forms and parent surveys, the research sample was narrowed considerably.

A total of fifty-nine surveys were returned that could be used in the study. The group of "Early Readers" (Group A) from the three schools consisted of thirty-two eighth grade students, fourteen boys and eighteen girls. (Group B), the "non-early" readers, was composed of twenty-seven students, twelve boys and fifteen girls.

According to a pamphlet published by the Mocksville-Davie Chamber of Commerce, Davie County, the county in which the study takes place, "is located in the heart of the Piedmont North Carolina. It offers the security of a balanced economy where the average income is high and the average life expectancy is longer." One of the state's smallest counties, Davie has a population of 23,700 and encompasses an area of approximately two hundred and sixty-four square miles.

Industry plays a major role, providing jobs for some 3,000 people and manufacturing such products as portable air compressors, mobile homes, furniture, textiles, feed and flour. Though decreasing at a steady rate, agriculture is still an important part of the county's economy, with farm income amounting to nearly \$16.5 million in 1976. The number of fulltime farmers is only about 175 but there are estimated to be 2,000 part-time farm operations, including one-third to one-half of the people living in the county.

The per capita income in Davie County in 1974 was \$4,414; in 1975 it amounted to \$4,687 and in 1976 increased



to \$5,194 according to figures developed by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C.

The most recent information about Davie County schools was found in a book published by the Mocksville - Davie Chamber of Commerce in April, 1979, in which was written:

Davie County has an established reputation for maintaining an excellent school system. It is one of fifty-four school systems in the state that has been accredited by the State Board of Education at Level III, the highest level of State accreditation. The elementary schools are affiliates with the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges and the high school has been a member of the Southern Association for twenty years. Emphasis on the basic skills is reflected in student competency; only fifteen percent of the school units in the state performed better in reading competency, and only ten percent of the school units in the state were more competent in math on the statewide test for eleventh grade students.

The basic philosophy of education in Davie County is to treat each child as an individual, particularly in the areas of Reading, Language Arts, and Mathematics. For the other subjects the students are divided according to the interests and maturity of the individual. Marlene Benson, in the local paper's article, "Individualization is Stressed" (1971), wrote:

Take a child where he is and let him learn in his own way, and at his own rate. This is the way teachers at the Cooleemee School feel is the best way to teach each individual child.<sup>47</sup>

At Cooleemee a child is known as a first or second year student rather than a first or second grader. There

are three classes of kindergarten and first year students, three classes of first and second year students, and three classes of second and third year students. This may be thought of as a "family-type" style of grouping since two or three adults are involved in learning with children of various ages.

The principal and teachers are attempting to offer classroom environments which stimulate the total growth and development of each child. They understand that each child has his own special way of learning and growing. By abolishing grade lines, it is believed that a student can be taught more as an individual, and that allowances can be made to meet the needs of every child. In other words, "instead of teaching books the teachers are teaching individual children."<sup>48</sup>

About thirteen years ago (1966) the Cooleemee School started using the Sullivan Programmed Reading materials in order to become more individualized in the teaching of reading. This material is mainly for first, second, and third year students, however, some students may take four or five years to finish the twenty books in the series.

Beginning in 1971 the MacMillan Spectrum of Reading Skills, also an individualized reading program, was used with fourth, fifth, and sixth year students who were not already in a more individualized program. This program is comprised of three skills books, each of six levels.

Placement tests will indicate where each child will be assigned according to his needs. He continues from that point and will progress as much as his own growth pattern will let him.

Pinebrook Elementary, considered to be the "model school" of the country, features large instructional areas (3200 square feet), cooperative teaching, and a continuum of skills for students in grades one through eight. Each student is able to move at his own rate and level of progress; students will move according to their mastery of skills in various subject areas; the lecture approach to classroom teaching will be deemphasized in favor of small group and individual research assignments.

Rose Post in an article in the March 21, 1971 edition of the Salisbury Sunday Post wrote:

Pinebrook Elementary has no teacher's desks. Nor classroom doors. As a matter of fact, it has no classrooms at all. Nor a lunchroom.

The children learn reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic, but there aren't any grades - of any variety. No one's in the 'fourth grade' or the 'fifth grade' at Pinebrook, nor are there any F's on report cards, although the reporting system should tell the parents as much as the teachers know about what Johnny can do and whether or not he's doing it.

Primary children six, seven, and eight years old are placed in one of the two primary suites. Elementary children aged nine, ten, and eleven are assigned to one of the two elementary suites. Seventh and eighth grade students in the junior high suites have departmentalized work but their teachers are considering the "multi-aged" approach used for the other children.



Before school opened teachers designed a "continuum of skills" for students from kindergarten through the eighth grade, based on the theory that children should make continuous progress in learning.

'Education,' they say, is the whole set of changes produced in a person by learning through the many activities and experiences that he or she encounters. We sincerely believe that we must accept each child as he comes to us and that we must be keenly aware of his need to grow and develop at his own rate and according to his own unique growth pattern.<sup>49</sup>

A child stays for three years in the primary suite and three years in the elementary suite; however, the teachers work with him on his level. In other words, he could progress to normal fourth or fifth grade work even though he is in the primary suite, or he may be on the average second grade level when he goes to the elementary suite.

But a teacher is responsible for picking him up where he left off, Mrs. Strider (Davie County's 'helping teacher') says; Each child has a check sheet that is passed on with him. He will be with his age level but he will be working where he is in his learning. His check sheet gets checked when the material is introduced and when he is applying what he has learned - and that's when he moves on to the next level.

Our whole theory, Mrs. Strider says, is based on success. There are no non-promotions, no failures. We never say, 'You failed.' We say, 'I believe you need to work on this some more.'<sup>50</sup>

This goal can be accomplished through team-teaching. Each suite has three teachers, and primary suites also have aides. Programmed materials - in which one question and answer leads to another - are used whenever possible.

"Contracts" are also used frequently by teachers in Davie County (particularly in the upper grades). The teacher makes a contract or agreement with a student for him to do a specific amount of work in a subject independently. When the work is completed, the teacher checks it so the student will understand what he is doing and whether or not he can move on.

Each suite contains two science and art areas with tile floors and sinks, in addition to rest rooms for boys and girls. There is a mixture of furniture in the suites, including standard desks, chairs, and tables and six movable units that provide cubbyholes and coatrack space for the children. Teachers are provided with chalk boards, bulletin boards, and projectors. The units can be moved around in the suites to make any desired "classroom" area.

Discipline has not been a problem, according to the teachers and the principal:

The children come in the morning and just get started where they left off yesterday. We try to teach independence instead of having the children led so much.

When discipline is necessary, the students are punished by taking away their 'extra' time in the center - and the result is that it is necessary very seldom.<sup>51</sup>

The children are grouped by performance instead of intelligence or achievement tests. But the teachers inform parents what IQ's and achievement scores are during the first report period, which is always a conference:

We show the parents everything, tell them where the weak areas are and where the strong ones are, Mrs. Strider says, and try to find out anything the parents can tell us about the children.<sup>52</sup>

The subsequent progress reports only check whether or not the child is working up to capacity.



## Chapter 4

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Analysis of the Data: Hypothesis One

As stated earlier Hypothesis One was "to determine if the children who were ahead of their classmates in reading ability in first grade remained ahead throughout the eighth grade in school." The primary objective was to record the results of the standardized tests used by the Davie County School System in grades one, three, five, and seven to determine if the children who were early readers remained ahead of their classmates in subsequent years throughout elementary school.

Initially, the Metropolitan Readiness Test or the American Guidance Service First Grade Screening Test scores were compared for the two groups of early and non-early readers. Skills areas tested were similar in both of these examinations; however, the AGS (1966) included a separate test booklet for boys and girls. Only two pages in the test booklets were different; there were pictures of boys in the boys' booklets, whereas the girls' booklets contained illustrations of girls.

In Table 1 (page 60) the following test scores of the early readers (Group A) are recorded for the three schools:

TABLE 1

## TEST SCORE ANALYSIS OF EARLY READERS - GROUP A

GROUP A - EARLY READERS							
SCHOOLS	READINESS		3rd		5th	7th	7th
	MAT TOTAL	AGS % AVE.	MAT AVE.	PMA IQ	MAT AVE.	MAT AVE.	CAT AVE.
Cooleemee	4.23	33	3.1	86	5.1	6.8	7.5
Mocksville	7.73	64	3.4	101	6.0	7.3	8.5
Pinebrook	1.37	46	3.6	103	5.8	7.5	8.4
Total Scores (3 schools)	13.81	143	100.11	2842	161.2	213.3	241.8
Average Score (3 schools)	1.34	46	3.3	95	5.6	7.1	8.6

1. Metropolitan Readiness Test
2. American Guidance Service First Grade Screening Test
3. Primary Mental Abilities Test - Third Grade
4. Metropolitan Achievement Test - Third Grade, Fifth Grade, Seventh Grade
5. California Achievement Test - Seventh Grade

At the bottom of the table the total scores of the early readers are shown as well as the average score for each test. The percentages are included for the readiness test scores; the scores for the achievement tests are shown in grade levels. The first number represents the academic grade level with the second being the school month. (For example, 5.3 would be fifth grade, third month). Table 2, (page 62), represents the test scores of the non-early readers (Group B).

The test scores in Table 1 (Group A) were above those in Table 2 (Group B) in all cases, although differences ranged from one percent to one academic year (nine school months):

1. Readiness Tests - Group A scored one percent over Group B
2. PMA (Third Grade) - Group A scored two points ahead of Group B
3. MAT (Third Grade) - Group A scored five months over Group B
4. MAT (Fifth Grade) - Same as MAT (Third Grade)
5. MAT (Seventh Grade) - Group A scored three months more than Group B
6. CAT (Seventh Grade) - Group A scored one year (nine months) ahead of Group B



TABLE 2

## TEST SCORE ANALYSIS OF NON-EARLY READERS - GROUP B

GROUP B - NON-EARLY READERS							
SCHOOLS	READINESS		3rd		5th	7th	7th
	MAT TOTAL	AGS % AVE.	MAT AVE.	PMA IQ	MAT AVE.	MAT AVE.	CAT AVE.
Cooleemee	5.33	38	2.7	93	5.3	7.1	8.0
Mocksville	6.07	55	2.9	93	5.1	6.4	7.6
Pinebrook	.87	44	2.3	96	4.0	6.2	5.0
Total Scores (3 schools)	12.27	137	74.8	2518	138.2	173.5	202.5
Average Scores (3 schools)	1.37	45	2.8	93	5.1	6.8	7.6

According to the results, the Group A (early readers) test scores were slightly higher than those of Group B; however the most significant difference in the two groups was in the results of the California Achievement Test given at the end of the seventh grade or year in school. There was shown to be one academic year's difference in the two groups. The Metropolitan Achievement Test, given at the beginning of the seventh grade, only showed a three month academic difference. The computer-graded CAT is thought to be a more accurate analysis than the MAT which has been used for many years in the system. Last year (1978) was the first year the CAT was given to seventh graders in the Davie County School System.

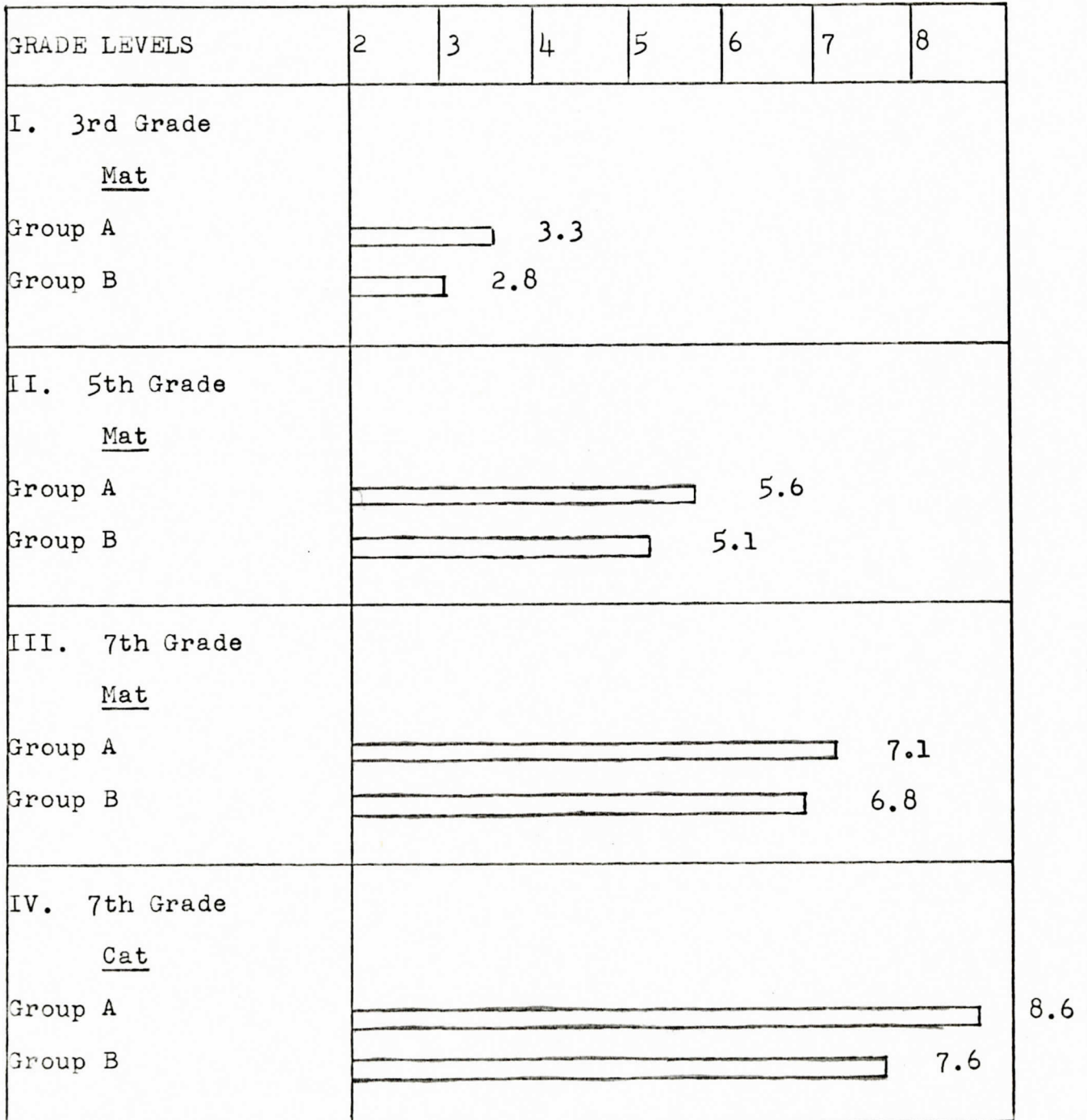
Figure 1 (page 64) represents the difference in the average achievement scores of the two groups according to grade levels.

#### Analysis of the Data: Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis number two was to make a comparison of the family backgrounds of early and non-early eighth grade readers. In Objective A it was stated that "the educational backgrounds of the parents showed that a large percentage of early readers had parents who completed the twelfth grade in school."

Completing the twelfth grade or higher were six fathers of early readers from Cooleemee, five from Mocksville, and five from Pinebrook. Of the non-early readers, there

FIGURE 1  
DIFFERENCES IN THIRD, FIFTH, AND SEVENTH  
GRADE TEST SCORES BETWEEN GROUP A AND  
GROUP B





were six fathers from Cooleemee, seven from Mocksville, and one from Pinebrook who finished the twelfth grade. As shown in Figure 2 (page 66) there was a larger percentage of fathers of non-early readers who graduated from high school than fathers of early readers. However, a much larger group of mothers of early readers than those of non-early readers completed twelfth grade or more. Of Group A, six mothers from Cooleemee, nine mothers from Mocksville, and five mothers from Pinebrook finished twelfth grade; but only six mothers from Cooleemee, six from Mocksville, and one from Pinebrook did so.

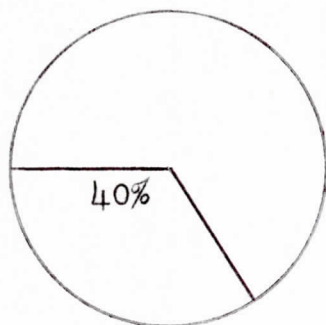
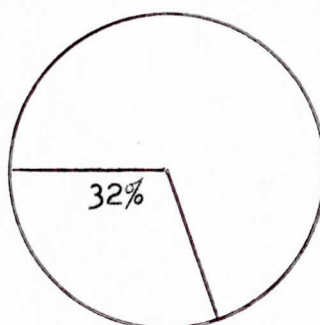
Objective B reads, "A larger percentage of the early readers had older brothers or sisters." From Cooleemee Elementary, ten out of thirteen early readers had older brothers and/or sisters, eight out of eleven from Mocksville, and three out of five from Pinebrook (a total of twenty-one out of twenty-nine early readers having older brothers and/or sisters).

Non-early readers having older brothers and sisters consisted of six out of fourteen from Cooleemee, six out of eleven from Mocksville, and one out of two from Pinebrook (a total of thirteen out of twenty-seven non-early readers having older brothers and/or sisters). A total of seventy-two percent of Group A (early readers) had older brothers and/or sisters as compared to forty-eight percent of the non-early readers (see Figure 3, page 67).

FIGURE 2

## PARENTS' LEVELS OF EDUCATION

## A. Fathers Completing 12th Grade or Higher

Group A  
60%Total: 16 out of 27  
fathersGroup B  
68%Total: 14 out of 22  
fathers

## B. Mothers Completing 12th Grade or Higher

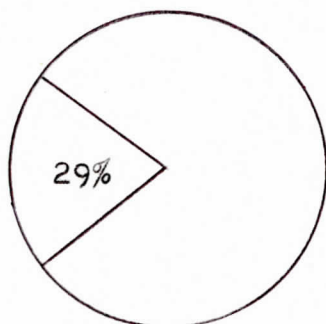
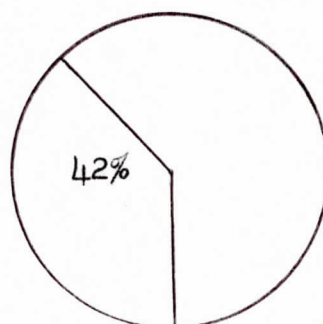

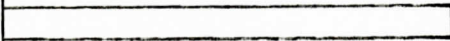

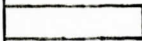
Group A  
71%Total: 20 out of 28  
mothersGroup B  
58%Total: 14 out of 24  
mothers

FIGURE 3

PERCENTAGE OF EARLY AND NON-EARLY READERS WHO  
HAD OLDER BROTHERS OR SISTERS WHO COULD  
READ BEFORE SCHOOL

PERCENT	GROUP	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	
I. % having older brothers and sisters	A										72%
	B										48%
II. % of older brothers and sisters who could read before school	A										75%
	B										11%



Question eighteen in the parent survey asked whether or not the brothers and sisters could read before they went to school. Of the twenty early readers' parents answering the question, fourteen reported yes and five answered no. Out of eighteen non-early readers, the parents said two could read before they went to school and sixteen of the older brothers and sisters could not. A total of seventy-five percent of the early readers versus eleven percent of non-early readers had older brothers and/or sisters who could read before they went to school (see Figure 3).

#### Analysis of the Data: Hypothesis Three

As previously stated, Hypothesis Three was "to determine if the occupations (approximate socio-economic levels) of the parents were related to their educational levels." Objective A was worded: "A greater percentage of early readers had parents who could be classified as 'White Collar' rather than 'Blue Collar' workers."

For the purpose of this study, Blue Collar worker will be defined as:

A manual worker, whose work is primarily physical and dealing with things - rather than mental or social. The category includes skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers; includes farm workers as well as factory workers, miners, construction workers, etc.<sup>53</sup>

The definition of White Collar worker will be:

A large heterogeneous category of clerical and technical workers, such as stenographers, bookkeepers, typists, draftsmen, sales-persons, and others whose work is primarily non-managerial and non-manual.<sup>54</sup>

Figure 4 (page 70) shows the distribution in percentages of white collar jobs among the fathers and mothers of early and non-early readers.

The percentages of parents from both groups employed in blue collar jobs are shown in Figure 5 (page 71).

Figure 4 shows the reverse of Objective A to be true: less fathers as well as mothers in Group A were white collar workers. Objective B was stated: "The parents who were classified as being in the 'White Collar' category had a higher level of education than those who were in the 'Blue Collar' category." In Group A, fifty-nine percent of the fathers had completed twelfth grade or higher. Twenty-seven percent of the fathers were employed in white collar jobs, with seventy-three percent being employed in blue collar jobs. Group B reported sixty-eight percent of the fathers finishing twelfth grade or more. Thirty percent of those fathers were working in the white collar category, whereas seventy percent were hired in blue collar jobs.

Concerning the mothers, seventy-one percent in Group A went through at least the twelfth grade in school as compared to fifty-eight percent of the mothers in Group B. Of those mothers, fifteen percent in Group A and twenty-five percent in Group B were employed in white collar jobs. Forty percent of the mothers in both groups were unemployed housewives. Forty-one percent of the mothers in Group B were in the blue collar category. The percentage of working mothers in Groups A and B was not significant. Fifty-six percent of

FIGURE 4

## DISTRIBUTION OF WHITE COLLAR JOBS

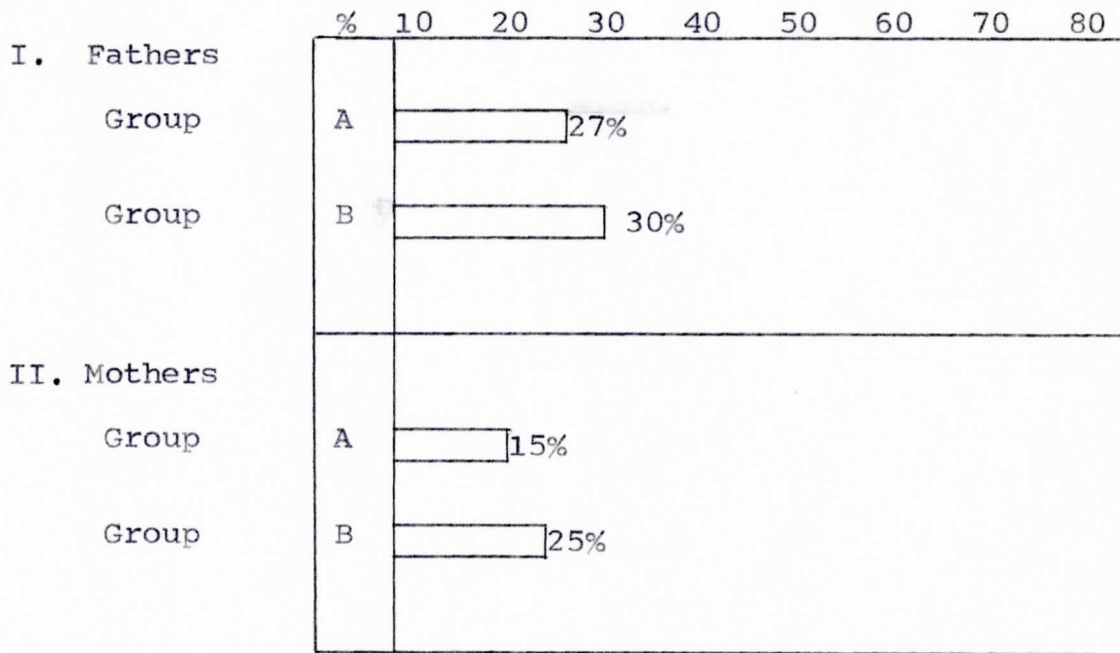
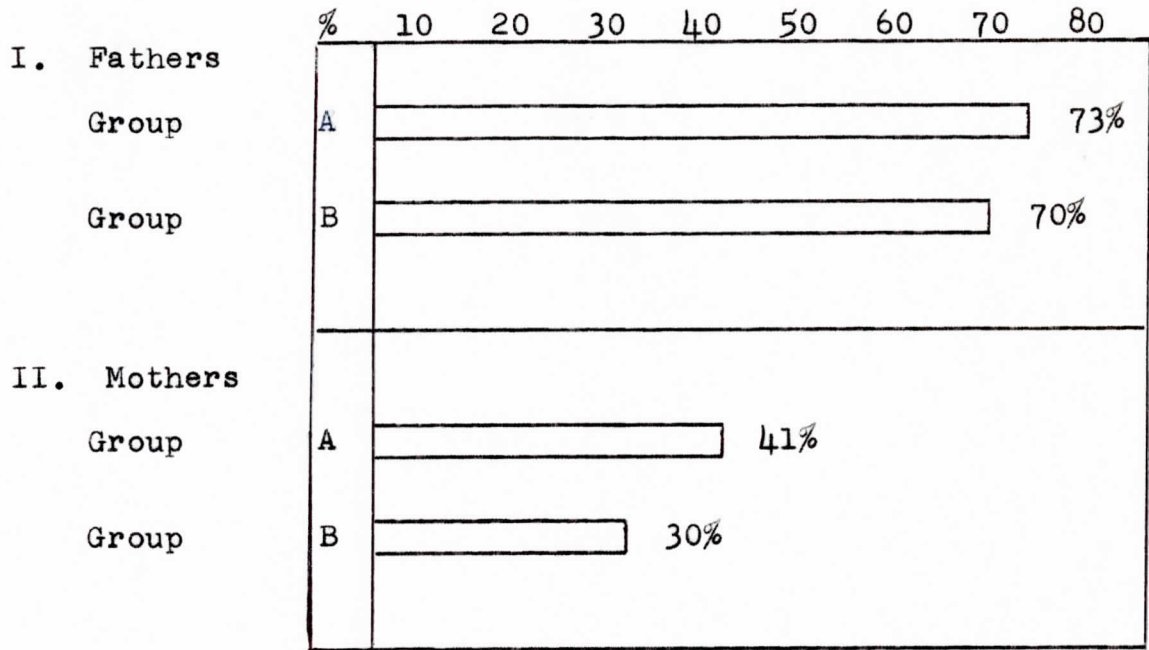




FIGURE 5

## DISTRIBUTION OF BLUE COLLAR JOBS



the mothers of early and non-early readers were employed in white or blue collar occupations. The data shows that the majority of jobs in Davie County are blue collar rather than white collar jobs. Therefore, the results of the hypothesis are not significant according to the study.

#### Analysis of the Data: Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis Four reads: "To make a comparison of the preschool experiences of the early and non-early readers." Objective A was that "A larger percentage of preschool children who were early readers stayed at home with their mothers rather than attending nursery school or day care." Nineteen percent of the early readers attended day care as opposed to seven percent of the non-early readers which proves the opposite to be true (see Table 3, page 73).

Eighty-one percent of the early readers stayed at home with their mothers while ninety-three percent of the non-early readers did so. The majority of both the early and non-early readers stayed at home with their mothers rather than attending nursery school or day care. However, a larger percentage in Group A attended nursery school or day care than in Group B.

Objective B was as follows: "A larger percentage of preschoolers who were early readers watched 'Sesame Street' before entering first grade." Fifty percent of the early readers watched "Sesame Street" in comparison to twenty-one percent of the non-early readers (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

PARENT SURVEY QUESTIONS CONCERNING SESAME STREET,  
READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN, AND TRIPS TO THE LIBRARY

	GROUP A	GROUP B
I. Watched Sesame Street	50%	21%
II. Seldom Occasionally Regularly	11% 61% 28%	43% 57% 0%
III. Parents who read to their children	97%	96%
IV. 30 min./week 60 min./week Less often than 30 More often than 60 When he asked for it	7% 19% 7% 34% 34%	7% 7% 14% 24% 48%
V. Taken to Library	77%	67%
VI. Once a week More than once a week Once a month Less than once a month	23% 10% 64% 5%	25% 0% 25% 50%
VII. Attended day care	19%	7%



Of those children who watched "Sesame Street", twenty-eight percent of the early readers were said to have watched the program regularly, whereas none of the non-early readers were regular viewers. Forty-three percent of Group B seldom saw "Sesame Street", however, fifty-seven percent were reported to have occasionally watched it (see Table 3).

Objective C was written: "A larger percentage of parents of the early readers read to their children before they went to school (see Table 3). In Group A, thirty-four percent of the parents stated that they read to their children more often than sixty minutes a week or whenever they asked for it. The third response chosen most frequently was that they read to their children whenever they asked for it, with twenty-four percent saying it was more often than sixty minutes a week. The next answer chosen most often for the non-early readers was that fourteen percent of the parents read to their children less often than thirty minutes a week.

Many of the parents took their children to the library before they went to school - either for Story Hour or to check out and look at books, but more of the Group A parents than Group B parents did so (see Table 3). Sixty-four percent of the parents of the early readers took their children to the library once a month. Fifty percent of the non-early readers parents took their children less often than once a month.

#### Analysis of the Data: Hypothesis Five

According to Hypothesis Five, the study could "determine if, when, and why the early readers lost interest

in school." Objective A predicted that "a lower percentage of early readers became bored or lost interest eventually in elementary school." More of the non-early readers than early readers lost interest later in school (forty-three percent of Group B in contrast to twenty-six percent of Group A). Twenty-five percent of the early readers were said to have lost interest in grades one, three, and six because the material was not interesting (see Table 4, page 76).

None lost interest in grades five or seven, however the teachers probably had a large influence in the outcome of this question. There was a fairly even distribution of the grades one through seven in which the non-early readers lost interest in school. Twenty-two percent lost interest in first grade, according to their parents, with seventeen percent losing interest in grades three and seven. As to why their children lost interest in school, thirty-one percent thought the material was not interesting; nineteen percent thought their reading book was too easy; six percent felt that either their child was ahead of the others in reading or the teacher was more concerned with the poor readers. There may have been other reasons but they were not specified by the parents. Perhaps they did not know why their children lost interest in school. This question may best have been answered by the students themselves.

In regard to the other questions included in the survey, question twelve asked which children could recognize

TABLE 4

PARENT SURVEY QUESTIONS CONCERNING IF, WHEN,  
AND WHY THESE STUDENTS LOST INTEREST IN SCHOOL

	GROUP A	GROUP B
I. Lost interest in school	26%	43%
II. Grade 1	25%	22%
Grade 2	13%	11%
Grade 3	25%	17%
Grade 4	13%	11%
Grade 5	0%	11%
Grade 6	25%	17%
Grade 7	0%	17%
1. His reading book was too easy	0%	19%
2. The material was not interesting	13%	31%
3. He was ahead of the others in reading	0%	6%
4. The teacher was more concerned with poor readers	0%	6%



the letters of the alphabet and how many letters they knew. Forty-four percent of the early readers knew all of their ABC's before they went to school, but only seven percent of the non-early readers' parents replied in the affirmative. Many of the children in both groups knew some of the letters of the alphabet as indicated by the question - forty-one percent of Group A, and fifty-seven percent of Group B (see Figure 6, page 78).

Fifteen percent of the parents in Group A and thirty-six percent of the parents in Group B responded that their children either knew none of the letters of the alphabet before first grade (since there were no public kindergartens) or they did not remember.

The remainder of the survey questions concerned only the early readers. Question thirteen dealt with the methods, materials, and/or approaches used by the parents of the early readers to help their children learn to read. Thirty-five percent used easy reading books; sixteen percent were assisted by chalkboards and picture dictionaries; fourteen percent taught their children through letter sounds and playing alphabet games. The remainder of the parents used other ways to teach reading ( see Figure 7, page 79).

The researcher hoped to find out through the last two questions of the survey how early the children learned to read and how much they could read at an early age. Seventy-three percent of the early readers in Group A learned to read at five years of age. Twenty-five percent learned to

FIGURE 6

## RECOGNITION OF THE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET

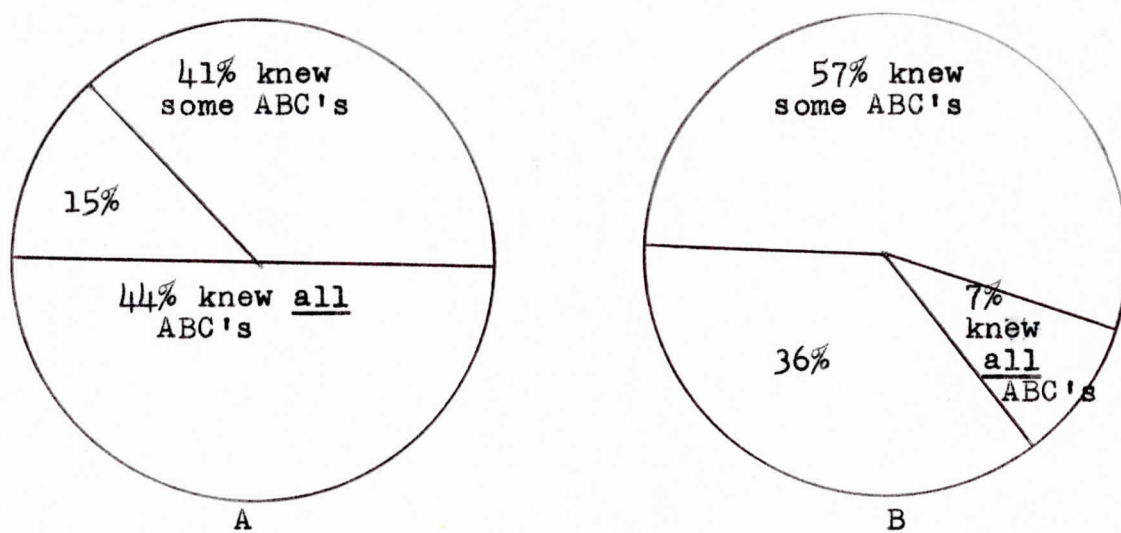
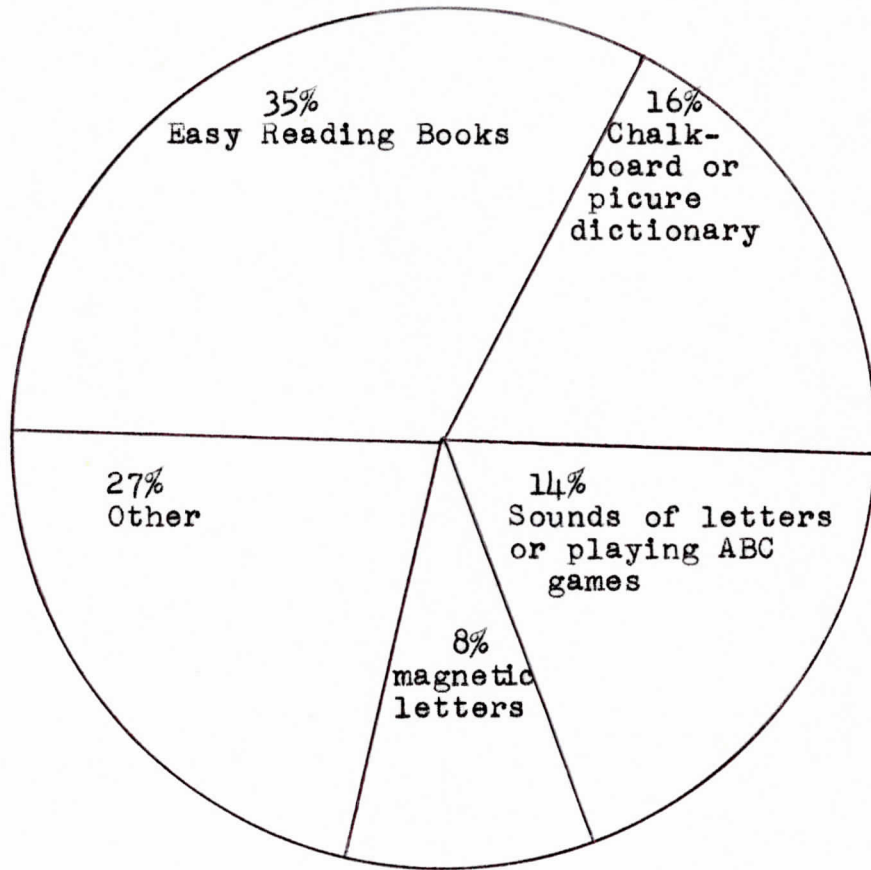


FIGURE 7

APPROACHES TO READING USED BY PARENTS  
GROUP A



read at age four but only three percent at age three (see Figure 8, page 81).

As to what they could read, twenty-nine percent could read a few words (under ten); twenty-one percent could read simple sentences and/or easy reading books; thirteen percent were able to read many words (about twenty), and/or simple stories (see Figure 9, page 82).

Other information obtained from the parents of the early readers is shown in Table 5, (page 83). Fifty percent reported that it was their child's idea to learn to read instead of theirs or someone else's. Practically all of the early readers had help with their reading, most of which was provided by their mothers (forty-eight percent). Sixteen percent of the fathers furnished some help with the reading in addition to thirteen percent of the help from either sisters or programs on television. Nine percent learned to read from road signs and/or food labels. The least help came from nursery schools, brothers, or relatives (see Table 5).

FIGURE 8

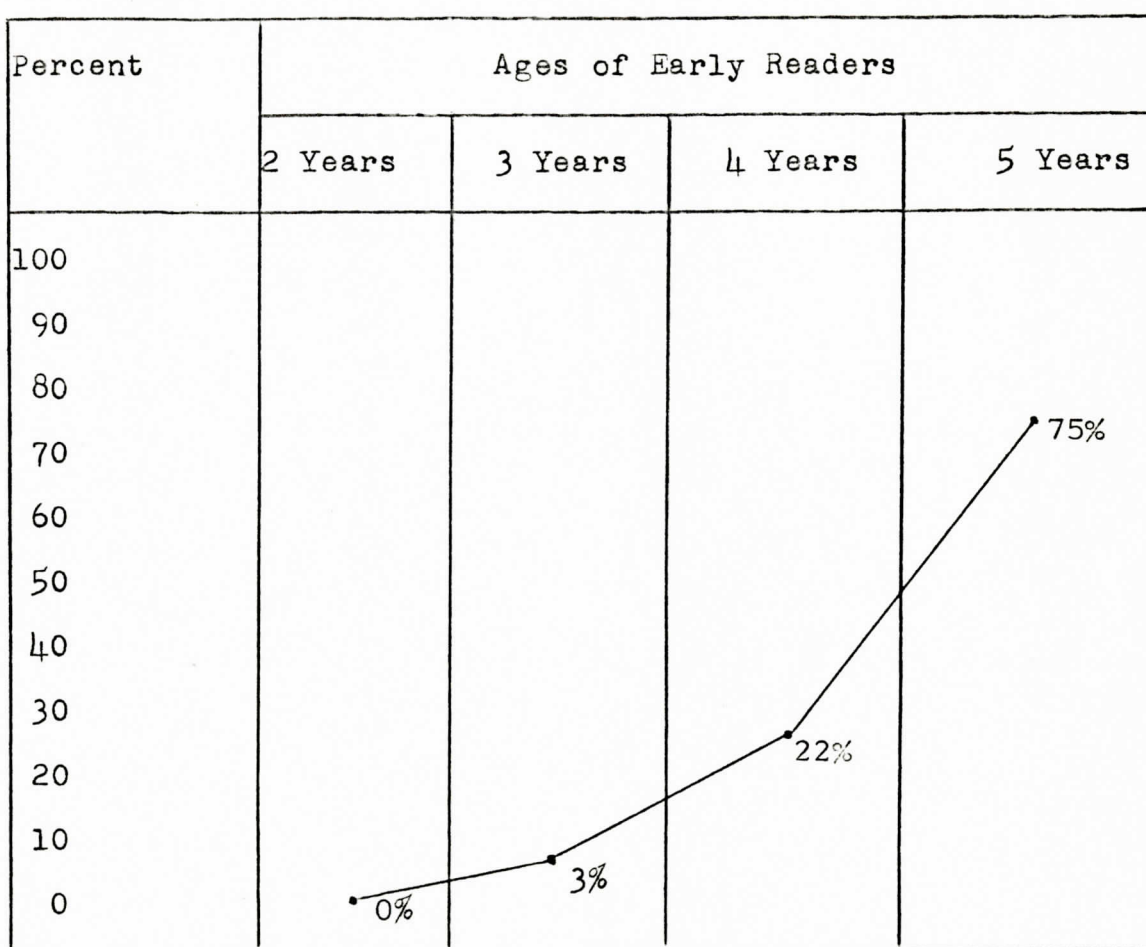
AGES AT WHICH EARLY READERS  
LEARNED TO READ

FIGURE 9

AMOUNT OF READING BY EARLY READERS  
BEFORE SCHOOL



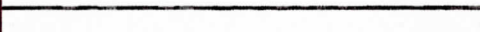
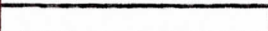

Percent	0	10	20	30
I. Read a few words (about 10)				29%
II. Read many words (about 20)				13%
III. Read simple sentences				21%
IV. Read simple stories				13%
V. Read easy reading books				21%



TABLE 5

PARENT SURVEY QUESTIONS CONCERNING  
WHOSE IDEA IT WAS TO LEARN TO READ AND WHO  
GAVE MOST OF THE HELP WITH READING

SURVEY QUESTIONS	PERCENT
1. His own idea to learn to read	50%
2. Had help with their reading	97%
3. Who gave the most help?	
Mothers	48%
Fathers	16%
Sister	13%
Television	13%
Road signs; food labels	9%
Nursery school	4%
Brother; relative	2%

## Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS,  
AND RECOMMENDATIONSSummary

There were only eight actual early readers in the sample group who could read simple sentences and easy reading books before they were five years old. Seven of the early readers learned to read when they were four years old, but only one when he was three. The eight early readers represented twenty-seven percent of the research sample of thirty-two early readers which was not a large enough number from which to draw any separate conclusions. There may have been a significant difference in the groups of early and non-early readers if there had been more true early readers. (Several school systems would have to be used to obtain such a sample of early readers.) The majority of early readers in this research sample could read a few words (under ten) by the time they were five years old (see Figures 8 and 9).

According to the test results shown by the two groups, the readiness scores were almost identical - an average of forty-six percent for Group A (Early Readers) and an average of forty-five percent for Group B (Non-early readers). The IQ's of the two groups were very similar also, with Group A averaging only two points above Group B in Intelligence Quotients. This would lead the researcher to conclude that

I.Q. is not an influencing factor in terms of determining early readers from the children who did not learn to read early (see Tables 1 and 2).

The difference in test scores of the standardized achievement tests (Metropolitan and California) showed the early readers' achievement to be slightly higher than non-early readers in each grade level (third, fifth, and seventh); ranging from three academic months to one school year (consisting of nine academic months).

Several characteristics of the early readers were identified in the study. A larger percentage of the mothers rather than the fathers of the early readers had completed twelfth grade or higher (seventy-one percent as compared to fifty-eight percent). Consequently, it was shown that forty-eight percent of the parents reported that the mothers gave most of the preschool help with reading. Fathers ranked second with only sixteen percent (see Figures 2B and Table 5).

The majority of early readers had older brothers and sisters (seventy-two percent versus forty-eight percent), most of whom learned to read before they went to school (seventy-five percent versus eleven percent). More of the early readers than non-early attended nursery school or day care; watched "Sesame Street" regularly; had parents who read to them when they asked for it as well as more often than sixty minutes a week; and who took them to the library at least once a month (see Figure 3 and Table 3).



Fewer of the early readers than non-early lost interest later in school; the majority of parents reported the main cause to be that the material was not interesting enough to their children (twenty-six percent in contrast to forty-three percent - see Table 4).

Half of the group of early readers wanted to learn to read on their own. It was someone else's idea to teach the other 50% to learn to read (see Table 5). The most common approach used to teach the children to read was through the use of easy reading books. Other parents used chalkboards, picture dictionaries, sounds of letters, playing ABC games, and a few mentioned magnetic letters (see Figure 7).

In addition, a larger percentage of early readers could recognize all of the letters of the alphabet before they went to school (forty-four percent as compared to seven percent - see Figure 6).

#### Conclusions and Implications

There were many limitations in a study of this kind. It was necessary to obtain parental permission to look at the cumulative folders. Many students refused to take them home saying they did not want their folders examined by an outsider. Parental permission was obtained for eighty-five eighth graders, but only fifty-seven students returned their parent surveys and could be used in the study (a total of sixty-seven percent). Possibly some parents refused to fill

out the surveys if their children were not early readers. In order to collect the data, names were put on the cover sheets of the surveys. This could have decreased the number of completed surveys submitted to the researcher.

The time period was another factor influencing the outcome of the study. The researcher was not able to go to the other two elementary schools in the county - William R. Davie and Shady Grove. However these are the two smallest schools in the county. The validity of the questionnaires as well as the dependence upon the parents' honesty and memory in answering the surveys were other important variables.

Test scores are not always valid either. It would have been helpful to have skills checklists or records of books read by the students in their cumulative folders. Reading cards have not been kept for eight years. Last year (1978) was the first year continuous placement cards were used in the Davie County School System. Also, North Carolina has not had public kindergartens for eight years.

There was a low number of actual early readers, (four years of age or younger). Most of the children read a few words (under ten) and were five years old. Seven learned to read at four and only one at three. Only eight could read simple sentences and easy reading books before they started to school. Eight early readers are not enough to prove anything.

The researcher believes that the present study did show some important characteristics of children who tend to become early readers. It is the parent's responsibility as

well as the teacher's to provide environments conducive to learning to read (see Smethurst's suggestions for parents in Appendix H, as well as Blanton's checklist for parents in Appendix I). Possibly this study could be a guide for a much more comprehensive study of early readers including several different school systems in the state (for example, one school system in the mountains of North Carolina, one in the Piedmont such as this study, and one county school system on the coast).

As a parent, kindergarten teacher and reading teacher, the researcher felt it was vital to find out whether early reading makes a difference in a child's later performance in school. More research is needed to support the theory that early readers have distinct advantages academically over non-early readers. The data collected in the present research indicates that there is a difference in the test results of the two groups of early and non-early readers. However, the degree of difference is impossible to determine from the current information. Past studies do indicate that early readers have a head start in school, but the length of time it lasts is questionable.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Revisions should be made in the parent survey forms. A question could be included concerning how much the parents read for their own enjoyment to encourage a love of reading in the home. The question acknowledging the ages of brothers and sisters should be omitted since the information was not



used in the study. The surveys could be initially given to all the schools in the county instead of only two or three. To save time, the surveys could be given out first and then parental permission could be obtained to look at the cumulative folders.

In the beginning, a section on approaches to beginning reading was included in the Review of Related Literature. This information was omitted due to lack of relevance to the topic. Only one survey question deals with approaches to early reading. A separate thesis could be written covering approaches to beginning reading.

As previously mentioned, the researcher feels that it is beneficial for a parent or teacher to create a good reading background for his preschool child or student. More research is needed to provide answers as to the importance and genuine significance of a good reading environment that is begun early in a child's life. Hopefully, future research will help to obtain information concerning the following questions:

- What is the correlation between a child's desire to learn to read and his parents' enjoyment of reading?
- Does the amount of time a child is read to really make a difference in his reading proficiency?
- Are preschool children who write or scribble profusely necessarily early readers?
- Does the type of approach used to teach a child to read influence his reading performance?

- Do children who were taught to read early enjoy reading more than those who learned at a later age?
- Do early readers have an advantage in academic achievement over non-early readers when they reach junior high, high school or college age?

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lawrence M. Kasdon, "Early Reading Backgrounds of some Superior Readers among College Freshmen," Journal of Educational Research, (1958).

<sup>2</sup>Wood Smethurst, Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1975).

<sup>3</sup>Delores Durkin, Children Who Read Early, (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1966).

<sup>4</sup>Warren G. Cutts, Teaching Young Children to Read, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

<sup>5</sup>Durkin, Children Who Read Early, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup>William E. Blanton, Preschool Reading Instruction, (Bloomington, Indiana: ERIC Document Reproduction Services, ED. 069 345, 1972).

<sup>7</sup>Joan Beck, How to Raise a Brighter Child: The Case for Early Learning, (New York: Trident Press), 174-175.

<sup>8</sup>Darlene Weisblatt Mood, "Reading in Kindergarten? A Critique of the DENVER STUDY," Educational Leadership, 22 (February, 1967), 399-403.

<sup>9</sup>Beck, How to Raise a Brighter Child, p. 176.

<sup>10</sup>Blanton, Preschool Reading Instruction, ED 069 345.

<sup>11</sup>Marjorie H. Sutton, "Children who Learned to Read in Kindergarten: A Longitudinal Study," The Reading Teacher, 22, (April, 1969), 602.

<sup>12</sup>Coleman Morrison, Albert J. Harris, and Irma T. Everbach, A Comparison of the Early Reading Performance of Early and Non-Early Readers from Grade One through Grade Three, (New York: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 028 041, 1969).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



- <sup>14</sup>Idem, A Comparison of the Early Reading Performance of Early and Non-Early Readers from Grade One Through Grade Three, ED 028 041.
- <sup>15</sup>Ruth Strang, "Reading Development of Gifted Children," Elementary English, 31 (1954), p. 35-38.
- <sup>16</sup>"An Experiment in Infant Education," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 12, p. 226; quoted in Smethurst, Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, p. 53.
- <sup>17</sup>Glenn Doman, How to Teach Your Baby to Read, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1964), p. 59.
- <sup>18</sup>George L. Stevens and R.C. Orem, The Case for Early Reading, (St. Louis, Missouri: Warren H. Green, Inc.), 125.
- <sup>19</sup>Lawrence M. Kasdon, "Early Reading Background of some Superior Readers Among College Freshmen," Journal of Educational Research, 52, (December, 1958), 153.
- <sup>20</sup>Durkin, Children Who Read Early, p. 11.
- <sup>21</sup>Millie Corinne Almy, "The Importance of Children's Experiences in Beginning Reading"; quoted in C.W. Hunnicutt and William J. Iverson, eds., Research in the Three R's, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 48-52.
- <sup>22</sup>Helen P. Davidson, "An Experimental Study of Bright, Average, and Dull Children at the 4-year Mental Level," Genetic Psychology Monographs, 9, (March, 1931), quoted in Donald G. Emery, Teach Your Preschooler to Read, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975), 73.
- <sup>23</sup>Emery, Teach Your Preschooler to Read, p. 81.
- <sup>24</sup>Gus P. Plessas, and Clifton R. Oakes, "Prereading Experiences of Selected Early Readers," The Reading Teacher, 17, (January, 1964), 244.
- <sup>25</sup>Joseph E. Brzeinski and Gerald E. Elledge, "Present Some Answers Obtained from Experience with the Two Denver Studies"; quoted in Robert C. Aukerman, Some Persistent Questions on Beginning Reading, (Newark, Delaware: I.R.A., 1972), 72.
- <sup>26</sup>Smethurst, Teaching Young Children To Read At Home, p. 96.
- <sup>27</sup>John E. Gibson, "The Way Children Really Are," Family Weekly, (August 27, 1978), 11.

<sup>28</sup>Gerald A. Lesser, "Designing A Program for Broadcast Television," Psychology and the Challenge of Early Learning, p. 208-213.

<sup>29</sup>Smethurst, Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, n. 5, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>32</sup>Siegfried and Therese Englemann, Give Your Child A Superior Mind, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), p. 17.

<sup>33</sup>Smethurst, Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, p. 100.

<sup>34</sup>Lloyd O. Ollila, "Pros and Cons of Teaching Reading to Four and Five Year Olds," found in Aukerman, Some Persistent Questions of Beginning Reading, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>William Fowler, "Teaching a Two-Year-Old to Read: An Experiment in Early Childhood," Genetic Psychology Monographs, (1962).

<sup>37</sup>William Fowler, "Cognitive Learning in Infancy and Early Childhood", Psychological Bulletin, (Vol. 59, no. 2, 1962), quoted in Smethurst, Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, p. 100.

<sup>38</sup>Engelmann, and Engelmann, Give Your Child A Superior Mind, p. 19.

<sup>39</sup>Smethurst, Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, p. 100.

<sup>40</sup>Beck, How to Raise a Brighter Child, p. 177.

<sup>41</sup>"Pros and Cons of Teaching Reading to 4 and 5 Year Olds", from Aukerman, Some Persistent Questions on Beginning Reading, p. 61.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-57.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>44</sup>Smethurst, Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, p. 41.

<sup>45</sup>F.L. Ilg and L.B. Ames, "School Readiness: Behavior Tests Used at the Gessell Institute," (New York: Harper & Row), quoted in Smethurst, Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, p. 42.

<sup>46</sup>Emery, Teach Your Preschooler to Read, p. 88.

<sup>47</sup>Davie County Enterprise Record, 23 September, 1971.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Saturday Sunday Post, 21 March, 1971.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Christine Ammer and Dean S. Ammer, Dictionary of Business and Economics, New York: The Free Press (A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), pp. 44 and 451.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.



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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## THE TEST USED TO IDENTIFY EARLY READERS

(Durkin, 1966)

NAME	SCHOOL		
said	to	down	jump
mother	for	big	house
red	it	in	blue
want	father	here	we
can	is	work	away
help	stop	little	ball
get	and	funny	you
the	come	play	see
look	make	me	go
			not

The ball is red.

Come and look.

Come and see the ball.

It is not big.

It is little and red.

Mother said it is for me.

## APPENDIX B

Table 1: "Comparison of IQ, chronological age, mental age, and level of father's education for the 3 groups"

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Group A</u>	<u>Group B</u>	<u>Group C</u>
I.Q.	115.5	101.6	104.4
Chronological Age	67.9	66.6	68.4
Mental Age	78.4	67.5	71.5
Level of Father's Schooling (in years)	14.8	13.0	13.2

Table 2: "Comparison of reading achievement of three groups throughout primary grades as measured by performance in Gates tests"

<u>Grade and Date</u>	<u>Group A</u>	<u>Group B</u>	<u>Group C</u>
Kindergarten (April, 1963)	1.8	—	—
First Grade (May, 1964)	3.7	2.6	2.9
Second Grade (May, 1965)	4.6	3.5	3.9
Third Grade (May, 1966)	6.0	4.3	4.6



## APPENDIX C

SESAME STREET WORD LIST

- |        |           |            |               |
|--------|-----------|------------|---------------|
| 1. ran | 6. bird   | 11. is     | 16. street    |
| 2. set | 7. bus    | 12. love   | 17. telephone |
| 3. big | 8. danger | 13. me     | 18. the       |
| 4. mop | 9. exit   | 14. school | 19. walk      |
| 5. fun | 10. I     | 15. stop   | 20. you       |

## APPENDIX D

Janet H. Towell  
Reading Department  
Appalachian State University  
Boone, North Carolina 28608

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF EARLY READING AND  
SOME INFLUENCING FACTORS

The purpose of my study is to determine if the children who were ahead of their classmates in reading ability at the beginning of first grade remained ahead through the junior high years in school. I also want to study the backgrounds of the children who were early readers to see how they compare to the backgrounds of non-early readers.

A Junior High School in Davie County will be randomly selected to complete the study. I will need to check the school records to make certain the eighth graders have been in this district since they started school. Hopefully I will have from 50 to 100 students to be in my research sample. If not, I will need to draw the name of another school in the county which has junior high grades.

With the permission of the Superintendent and school principal, I will examine the readiness tests given in first grade in the cumulative folders of these students in addition to conferring with their first grade teachers to determine which of the eighth graders were early readers. I would

like to look at the scores on subsequent achievement tests given in third grade to find out if early readers had above average IQ's as compared to their classmates (above 109 according to Slosson).

Finally, surveys will be given to the parents of the children in the research sample to provide information about their family backgrounds. Upon completion of the conclusions and implications, a copy of the paper and results will be presented to the Superintendent. No names or identities will be used in the study.



## DAVIE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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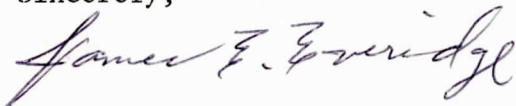
(704) 634-5921

November 22, 1978

TO: All Elementary Principals That Have Eighth  
Grade Students

This letter gives you my permission to work with Janet H. Towell  
in gathering research data for her thesis at Appalachian State  
University.

Sincerely,

James E. Everidge, Superintendent  
Davie County Schools

JEE:abf

## APPENDIX F

Letter to Parents of Eighth Grade Students:

Principal:

Dear Parent:

My name is Janet Towell. I am a graduate student from Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, working on a research study in the area of reading. I chose Davie County because I grew up in Cooleemee and graduated from Davie County High School in 1969. I would like your permission and your child's to look at his or her cumulative folder to obtain the necessary information regarding test scores. No names will be used in the study.

Sincerely,

Janet H. Towell

Please check one:

\_\_\_\_\_ YES, my child's folder may be examined to determine the necessary information regarding test scores.

\_\_\_\_\_ NO, my child's folder may not be used in the research study.

Signed:

Parent's name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please have your child return this form to his teacher tomorrow!

## APPENDIX G

Dear Parent:

The following questionnaire is designed to gather some general information about the background of your eighth grade child. No names or identification will be used in the study. It is very important that you fill out and return the questionnaire as soon as possible (preferably tomorrow). Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

-----

Dear Parent:

Several months ago your child received a copy of the following survey. Due to the Christmas holidays there was very little time to return the forms, so I wanted to try a second time. If you could fill out the form and get it back to your child's teacher by Friday, I would be very grateful.

You need only to complete the last page of the survey if your child was an early reader (learned to read before he went to school). I remind you again that no names will be used in the results of the study - only numbers. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Janet H. Towell



## PARENT SURVEY - CHILD'S READING BACKGROUND

(Please check the correct answers.)

1. Did your child attend nursery school or day care?  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did your child watch "Sesame Street" before starting first grade? If no, skip the next question.  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
3. How often did your child watch "Sesame Street"?  
Seldom \_\_\_\_\_ Occasionally \_\_\_\_\_ Regularly \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did you read to your child before he went to public school?  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
5. How often did you read to him?  
30 minutes a week \_\_\_\_\_ More often than 60 minutes a week \_\_\_\_\_  
60 minutes a week \_\_\_\_\_ When he asked for it \_\_\_\_\_  
Less often than 30 minutes \_\_\_\_\_
6. Did you take your child to the library? If no, skip the next question.  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
7. How often did you take your child to the library?  
Once a week \_\_\_\_\_ Once a month \_\_\_\_\_  
More than once a week \_\_\_\_\_ Less than once a month \_\_\_\_\_
8. Did your child learn to read before he went to school? (By learn to read, was your child able to recognize and understand any words before he went to school?) If no, skip the next question.  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
9. If your child learned to read before he went to school, was it his idea or someone else's?  
His idea \_\_\_\_\_ Someone else's idea \_\_\_\_\_
10. Did you or anyone else give him help with his reading? If no, skip the next question.  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

11. If yes, who or what gave your child most of the preschool help with reading?  
 Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Sister \_\_\_\_\_ Nursery school or day care \_\_\_\_\_  
 Father \_\_\_\_\_ Relative \_\_\_\_\_ Television \_\_\_\_\_  
 Brother \_\_\_\_\_ Friend \_\_\_\_\_ Road signs or food labels \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
12. Could your child recognize the letters of the alphabet before first grade?  
 No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't remember \_\_\_\_\_ Knew some of them \_\_\_\_\_  
 Knew all of them \_\_\_\_\_
13. What approach was used if your child was taught to read before he went to school? (Skip question if your child was not able to read before he went to school.)  
 Use of easy reading books \_\_\_\_\_ Picture dictionary \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sounds of letters \_\_\_\_\_ Playing ABC games \_\_\_\_\_  
 Magnetic letters \_\_\_\_\_ Chalkboard \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
14. Did your child lose interest in school?  
 YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
15. If yes, check the appropriate grade or grades in which he lose interest.  
 Kindergarten \_\_\_\_\_ 5th grade \_\_\_\_\_  
 1st grade \_\_\_\_\_ 6th grade \_\_\_\_\_  
 2nd grade \_\_\_\_\_ 7th grade \_\_\_\_\_  
 3rd grade \_\_\_\_\_ 8th grade \_\_\_\_\_  
 4th grade \_\_\_\_\_ Did not lose interest \_\_\_\_\_
16. If your child lost interest in school, what do you think was the primary reason?  
 Does not apply \_\_\_\_\_  
 His reading book was too easy for him \_\_\_\_\_  
 The material was not interesting \_\_\_\_\_  
 He was ahead of the rest of the class in reading \_\_\_\_\_  
 The teacher spent too much time on each story \_\_\_\_\_

The teacher was more concerned with the poor readers \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

17. Family Members      Number      Age  
 Older brother(s)      \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_  
 Younger brother(s)      \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_  
 Older sister(s)      \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_  
 Younger sister(s)      \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_
18. Did any of the older children in your family learn to read before school?  
 YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_
19. Check the words that describe your child:  
 Patient \_\_\_\_\_ Outgoing \_\_\_\_\_ Quiet \_\_\_\_\_ Hard-working \_\_\_\_\_  
 Impatient \_\_\_\_\_ She \_\_\_\_\_ Active \_\_\_\_\_ Lazy \_\_\_\_\_  
 Able to make decisions \_\_\_\_\_ Not able to make decisions \_\_\_\_\_



## Letter to Parents of Eighth Grade Students:

Mocksville Middle School  
Cooleemee Elementary  
Pinebrook Elementary

Dear Parent:

If you stated in the previous survey that your child could recognize and understand words before he went to school, please answer the following questions:

1. Before he/she went to school, could your child:

Read a few words (under 10) \_\_\_\_\_

Read many words (about 20) \_\_\_\_\_

Read simple sentences \_\_\_\_\_

Read simple stories \_\_\_\_\_

Read easy reading books \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

2. How old was your child when he started reading?

5 years old \_\_\_\_\_

4 years old \_\_\_\_\_

3 years old \_\_\_\_\_

2 years old \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX H

(Smethurst, Teaching Young Children to Read at Home, 1975)

## SOME SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

1. Try to read to your child at least twenty minutes every day, in pleasant circumstances, and make sure that he sits so he can see the words and pictures. The reading material should ordinarily be something your child wants. Ideally, the two of you will go to the library together and make a big occasion of selecting and comparing books.
2. Try to arrange for your child to watch "Sesame Street" and/or "Electric Company" if possible.
3. Encourage your child to draw, scribble, and write - have chalk and chalkboard, paper, markers, and pencils readily available in your child's room or someplace that they can be reached easily.
4. Play games involving basic reading skills - letter names, letter sounds, words, and so forth.
5. Get a set of magnetic plastic letters for the refrigerator door, and start to use them.
6. Try the Scholastic Press Record/Book Sets which have inexpensive paperback children's books matched with records of actors reading the same book. Your child can hear the book, read it, and look at it at the same time.
7. Surround your child with books, newspapers, posters, and magazines.
8. Make written language important around your place - call attention to the times that you need to read and to what a great thing it is to be able to read.
9. Point out words and letters on signs, billboards, T.V., labels, headlines, posters, etc.
10. Show your child how to write his name, your name, and the names of friends, pets, relatives, and others.

11. Go to the library or magazine rack or bookstore together often - get some books and magazines for both of you.
12. Relax - don't push. Never work on reading unless your child wants to, and always quit when your child wants to quit (preferably before the child wants to).
13. Keep the anxiety for your child to be "right" out of your voice. If you show him "X" and he says "Y", don't become tense or impatient. Children learn, but usually it takes time. Learn from mistakes - try to figure out why he confuses X and Y, and then try to clear up the confusion.
14. Follow my program outline or get one of the commercially available programs for teaching young children and use it. I recommend: Children Discover Reading, by Stern and Gould; Let's Read, by Bloomfield and Barnhart; Listen and Learn with Phonics, by Watson.
15. Do not use emotional pressure of any sort to get your child to learn to read!



## APPENDIX I

(Blanton, Preschool Reading Instruction, 1972)

1. Do I read aloud to my child?
2. Does my child have a story time almost every day?
3. Do I buy books for my child?
4. Do I have books for my child in the car?
5. Do I take my child to the public library?
6. Do I give books as presents to my child?
7. Does my child have a book shelf which belongs to him?
8. Do I take my child to the public library story hour regularly?
9. Does my child have a library card?
10. Does my child see both parents reading often?
11. Does my child subscribe to children's magazines or belong to children's book clubs?
12. Do I listen to my child read picture stories?
13. Do I listen when my child pretends to read?
14. Do I have a good reading list to help me choose books for my child?
15. Is there a special place for reading in my home?