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This two-phase mixed methods case study investigated the school based parental involvement of families with limited financial resources who have early grade children struggling with reading. Phase I details how the existing research on school-based parental involvement applies to one group of parents within a particular school. Two interventions were implemented in Phase II—Partners-in-Reading tutoring program utilizing parents and teachers as tutoring partners and Home-School Connection which allowed parents to capture via photography, the family's home literacy strategies and cultural experiences as a way for educators to bridge the gap of home and school. Results documented improved achievement for students and the implementation of initial pathways between the literacy practices of the school and home.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT OF FAMILIES WITH LIMITED FINANCIAL  
RESOURCES: BRIDGING HOME & SCHOOL TO POSITIVELY  
IMPACT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STRUGGLING  
ELEMENTARY READERS

by

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Approved by

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To My Parents:

*The Late William Charles Doggett, Sr. & Bernice Alston Doggett*

who have always been *involved* in my life.

I Love You Forever!

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been accepted by the following committee of the Faculty of  
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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Based on the assumed relationship between parental involvement and student achievement, schools are mandated by NCLB (2002) to encourage parents, from all backgrounds, to become actively involved at the school level in the education of their children. Many studies have associated the involvement of parents in a child's school life to increased academic performance (Crozier, 2001; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, Duchane, 2007; Epstein, 1995; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill & Craft, 2003; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Though these studies and many others report a connection with parental involvement and improved academic achievement; such involvement increases with higher socioeconomic status (SES) and higher levels of parents' education (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), thus volunteering at school is more common among parents with more education and financial resources (Epstein, 1986; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Therefore, schools, aligned with federal demands of NCLB, attempt to implement various pathways for more parents to become involved. Whether these pathways work for parents with limited economic resources is debatable.

#### **Background**

As our society changed from an agrarian-, to an industrial-, to a technological-based culture, thus schools changed their expectations for students. During agrarian and industrial societal times, schools expected fewer students to go to college, parental

involvement received minimal emphasis, and the nation lacked uniform curriculum standards and assessments. As society became more technologically savvy, the school's expectations for parents and students changed as schools implemented national curricular and achievement tests. With these changes, school policy makers expected students (a) to attend schools for longer periods of time and (b) to improve their academic achievement as measured by standardized tests. These two themes are discussed in the first section of this chapter.

In the second section of this chapter, I will look at research literature on parental involvement with a focus on (a) how schools attempt to involve parents through various pathways, (b) the environment and resources parental involvement creates for a child's developmental needs, and (c) the nature of the relationship between the cultural experiences at home and those acknowledged at school. These three areas of interest could not have occurred until schools increased their demands on students to remain in schools for longer time periods and to achieve at higher levels.

In the third section of this chapter, I will look at how inquiries into the schools' attempts to involve parents led to a closer examination of the theoretical paradigms (deficit- and differenced-based) behind our expectations of parental involvement and traditional schooling. I will claim that researchers need to focus a greater share of their attention on a difference-based model in hopes of increasing the parental involvement of families with limited financial resources and education as well as how to find a direct effect on student achievement through parental involvement. The themes in these three sections set the stage for my pilot study and this dissertation research.

### **Society's Changing Impact on School's Expectations for Parental Involvement**

In tracing the history of parental involvement from as early as the mid 1800s, one witnesses society's imprint on different phases of educational reform, from a period where school attendance was an option, to a time it was enforced by specific laws with punitive consequences for parents of students who dropped out. In this section, I will look at two major points, (a) when and why expectations for students to stay in school for longer periods of time were made compulsory and (b) why improving one's academic achievement measured by standardized tests was implemented. These two foci were viewed as methods intended to better one's way of life through employment opportunities. This next section will look at how these expectations were formed by changes in society.

#### **The Need to Stay in School Longer**

As far back as 1852, states started to mandate compulsory school attendance. The legal age requirement for school attendance varied from state-to-state, ranging from an entry age of 5-7 years to an exit age range of 14-16 years. By 1918, every state enacted such a policy. North Carolina's attendance laws became effective in 1907 with the 7-16 age range mandatory for school attendance. Quite often, states referenced 'nation building' as the rationale for these changes (Angrist & Krueger, 1991).

Because society based one's level of success on employment, schools often failed to enforce the initial attendance policies. Therefore, even though parents were expected to send their children to school and could be punished if they did not, many schools often looked the other way if the children were employed. Though there was definite need for

the partnership of schools and home, a more important need for families was additional household income. This need was the primary reason why society did not rigorously enforce the new school attendance laws. Individuals, even young children, were needed to work at home, in the fields, and assume positions of hard labor in mills and factories or farms to help their families (Horrell & Humphries, 1995; Nardinelli, 1990). Some adult accounts show that as early as the eighth or even the sixth grade, students dropped out of school to become blue-collar workers because their families needed money. Thus, the compulsory school attendance policy gave students options for leaving schools, based on their age and employment availability within the job market.

While the new attendance laws signaled the beginning of the new partnership between schools and home (Angrist & Krueger, 1991) this relationship would change over time. For example, as the industrial revolution progressed, individuals moved to towns or cities from their farms. Subsequently, immigrants increasingly entered the country to fill the job vacancies at cheaper salary rates. At this point, students still left schools before the required attendance age to work in the mills (Larned, Smith, & Seymour, 1922; Nardinelli, 1990). As automation increased, industry needed fewer workers and the pressure to remain in school also increased (Appelbaum, Bernhardt, & Murnane, 2002). Therefore, if individuals wanted a better job and to support their families, they needed to stay in school to acquire a higher-level of education. This new partnership made parents more dependent upon schools because their children needed an education to seek employment. This partnership was strengthened as schools increased their expectations for attendance and achievement.

A greater number of jobs were lost as society increasingly relied on technology to manufacture goods. Technology increased productivity, lowered costs, and created more highly skilled jobs while reducing the actual number of jobs (Appelbaum, et. al, 2002). Therefore, students were expected to stay in school until age 16 or even 18. They were also expected to attend college after high school to better market their skills as well as themselves for employment. To help promote these goals, the conditions for dropping out of school became somewhat punitive, in that, students who dropped out could be denied a driving license (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9004703>).

Additionally, many states connected their dropout age to its minimum age of employment (Greenberg, 1977); thus if students desired their driver's license and employment beyond a minimum wage position, they needed to stay in school.

North Carolina passed its *Dropout Prevention and Adequate Progress Law* in 1998. This law was designed to motivate and encourage students toward better grades and high school completion. Students are now required to pass 70% of their academic coursework in order to receive or maintain their driving permit and/or license; if students fail to meet these requirements the Division of Motor Vehicles will be notified and the students' driving privileges will be revoked until they provide a Driver Eligibility Certificate [granted by the school]. This certificate provides proof that adequate academic progress has been accomplished (North Carolina Driving School, Inc. retrieved on May 11, 2010- <http://www.ncdrivingschool.com/faq.html#4>). Therefore, even if you have employment, you still lose your driving privileges if you drop out of school or reduce your academic success below a 70% passing rate. Thus, as employment has been a sign

of success, until this point, education becomes the front-runner as students need to demonstrate adequate academic progress to maintain their driving privileges.

Another sign of the need to stay in school is the press for everyone to attend college. Ultimately, whereas once a grade school education was acceptable, now, due to societal demands, all students are expected to attend college. Such messages are even included at both the local and national levels. For example, my pastor included the following in her sermon, “a post college degree is almost a baseline educational mark for today’s twenty-first century way of life” (Personal Communication, May, 2009). At the national level, Noah Berger, writer for *The Chronicle Review* reported, “It is a practical reality . . . in today’s society as the job market seeks more qualified employees . . . for everyone who has the motivation and stamina to pursue education after high school to acquire some form of post-secondary education” (Interview with Daniel Yonkelovich, *Chronicle Review of Higher Education*). Such messages appear to be effective because 70% of high school graduates are now attending college, compared to only 40% in 2004 (Berger, 1991).

The Obama administration continued this emphasis on academics through the Reauthorization of the Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) stating, “Every child in America deserves a world-class education. Today, more than ever, a world-class education is a prerequisite for success” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). As our president compares our success in education to the completion of college, he notes as a nation that we once lead the world with college completion; however, now there are ten other countries ahead of our college completion rate. Reforming our schools to a level of

world-class education is the responsibility of all U.S. citizens: the task cannot be shouldered by our nation's teachers and principals alone. It is important for communities and families to support their children's education, because a parent is a child's first teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Once again, the nation building rationale is at the center of this emphasis on more schooling and higher achievement.

This new reform for education once again demonstrates how changes in society dictate the educational push for the country at any given time. President Obama states, “. . . My Administration's blueprint for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is not only a plan to renovate a flawed law (NCLB), but also an outline for a re-envisioned federal role in education. This is a framework to guide our deliberations and shared work – with parents, students, educators, business and community leaders, elected officials, and other partners – to strengthen America's public education system” (p. 2).

This need to stay in school will increase to include the present day push for more and more students to achieve a college degree. Thus, the home-school partnership has changed in two important ways: (a) society no longer allows students to drop out of school for employment and (b) staying in school to earn a degree is now more important because students need to achieve higher levels of education to be employed in today's workforce.

### **The Need to Achieve at Higher Levels**

The implementation of No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) demonstrates this need for students to achieve at higher levels. NCLB's main

purpose is to ensure that all children receive a high quality education. In particular, it was designed to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their higher achieving peers. Prior to this law, the federal government measured school success by the amount of money spent on computers, textbooks, programs, professional development, etc. After NCLB, testing became the method by which academic success was measured (McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1993). By looking at achievement levels, schools could see if students reached proficiency on state academic standards. As a result, we are still in the midst of the academic accountability era where success is measured mainly by test scores and we expect all students to achieve one hundred percent proficiency by 2014.

Prior to NCLB, schools had the freedom to spend state and national funds with limited restrictions. Additionally, schools decided on how they would implement the curriculum. As a novice teacher in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I recall my school adopting textbooks based on its needs. We had access to the state standard course of study; however, teachers were not required to follow it as a mandate, nor did anyone monitor its implementation. With the implementation of NCLB, school districts now require teachers to follow various curricula and assessment mandates ([http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/c.lvIXIiN0JwE/b.5056999/k.21BC/A\\_guide\\_to\\_standardsbased\\_reform.htm#short\\_history\\_of\\_standards](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/c.lvIXIiN0JwE/b.5056999/k.21BC/A_guide_to_standardsbased_reform.htm#short_history_of_standards)). Thus, with greater national control of educational policies and procedures, teachers were faced with demands to implement more uniformed accountability systems. Along with this

movement towards greater uniformity, schools received common expectations to increase parental involvement.

NCLB's four basic principles are: (a) stronger accountability, (b) increased flexibility and local control, (c) expanded options for parents, and (d) an emphasis on research based teaching methods that work. With this multifaceted focus, NCLB attempted to empower educators, policymakers, and parents with the knowledge and information needed to increase students' achievement. Yearly feedback from assessments would provide valuable information relative to the quality of individual teachers and schools. Additionally, assessment data let's educators know if they are meeting students' academic needs. Policymakers and school leaders use this information to determine which schools are making substantial academic growth towards meeting newly implemented curricula standards. Therefore, NCLB's aim is to increase the achievement of all students while also closing the achievement gap (Center on Education Policy, 2003).

Nevertheless, schools with a high population of families living in poverty to serve (Title I) continue to have a more difficult time of 'making the grade.' So, for that reason the NCLB Act claims to be a framework for educators to strengthen US schools, by "building the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). This fact of building every family is a source of empowerment. As parent involvement increases so does a students' familiarity with school tasks, which then leads to increased academic competence (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010).

## Summary

Societal changes caused a shift in the home-school partnership as students needed more education to compete in the workforce. At one time students could drop-out of school before the recommended legal age if they had a job. As automation increased and fewer jobs were available, pressures to stay in school increased to the point where states implemented punitive consequences for dropping out. Now, students are expected to stay in school, achieve academically, and move on to earn a college degree. As a result of the many changes in our society and the focus of our nation, schools increasingly relied on parental involvement and recommendations for parental involvement became more uniformed. Quite simply, students need to stay in school to increase their achievement to obtain the knowledge needed for today's employment and schools expect parents to help achieve this goal.

### **General Framework to Improve Parental Involvement**

Epstein's (1995) Six Types of Involvement framework provides general recommendations for parental involvement opportunities which schools can initiate to encourage families (especially those with both limited financial resources and limited education) toward increasing their involvement. Her recommendations are as follows:

1. **Communicating**—communication between home and school should be regular, two-way, and meaningful.
2. **Parenting**—schools should insure that parenting skills are promoted and supported.

3. ***Student learning at home***—parents play an integral role in assisting student learning, whether they provide it themselves or seek tutors to assist the child.
4. ***Volunteering***—schools should ensure that parents feel welcome, and their support and assistance is sought.
5. ***School decision making and advocacy***—parents should have opportunities to become full partners in the decisions that affect children and families of the school.
6. ***Collaborating with community***—community resources are solicited/available to strengthen school and family partnerships as well as student learning.

Epstein's (1995) framework represents an ideal home-school/parental involvement relationship. If schools offer these opportunities, it is assumed that the students' achievement will increase. This assumption is consistent with what Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) call the 'More is Better' approach--the more parents are involved through these opportunities, the more students will benefit. Various studies have used this approach as a basis for their studies (Chavkin, 1993; Colombo, (2006); Crozier, 2001; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; DePlaney, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2007; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 1995; Jeynes, 2003).

Colombo (2006) studied information related to the Parent Partnership for Achieving Literacy (PAL) program designed by a Massachusetts school district to improve relationships between teachers and families in an overall effort to raise the achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse students whose test scores seemed to always lag behind the majority student population. The PAL program implemented by

the district was an initial effort to bridge the relationship between home and school. Teachers participated in professional development to enhance cultural awareness and to improve their knowledge and understanding of both the strengths and needs of the targeted students and families. In addition, parents were involved in understanding the expectations of both individual teachers and the school system as a whole during parent literacy sessions. After a year of the family literacy sessions and high levels of attendance and participation, Colombo discovered the test scores showed a slight increase, culturally and linguistically diverse parents did want to be involved in the academic lives of their children, and they usually participated when an invitation, from the school, was extended.

Additionally, Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, (2006) investigated the affects of family involvement in school and the literacy performance of diverse families with limited financial resources who had children in grades kindergarten to fifth. This longitudinal study examined both within-family and between-family results. Data for the study came from the impact evaluation of the Comprehensive Child Development Program (CCDP), which is an early intervention program for low-income children and families. Information from the School Transition Study (STS), which was a follow-up investigation for children from the CCDP, was also utilized. There were 281 students who were followed from kindergarten through the fifth grade. The results indicated that both between-family differences in school involvement and within-family changes in school involvement were associated with child literacy performance across the study for children of less educated families. Also when families increased their involvement in

school, between kindergarten and fifth grade, the literacy performance, of their children, was improved.

Furthermore, DePlaney, Coulter-Kern & Duchane (2007) set out to identify types of parental involvement, which parents and teachers believed to affect academic achievement. The study was conducted with 22 educators within a rural junior high school in a mid-western state in the U.S. The participants attended advocacy groups and completed a survey focused on (a) attitudes related to parent involvement and (b) behaviors considered to increase parent involvement. Additionally, there were 234 junior high school student participants and 301 parents from a predominately Caucasian community who all completed the survey. They concluded that teachers, parents, and students all value the importance of parental involvement in education and open communication between all parties was a benefit to students' academic achievement. Amazingly, all participants indicated "ensuring that children attend school daily" was the most important component of parent involvement (p. 364). Teachers; however, identified more of a need for home-based parent involvement than school-based.

Such findings lead to NCLB's endorsement of the "More is Better" approach (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). That is, as society realized the need for increased achievement and the task became more of a national concern, schools relied on parents to help them demonstrate adequately yearly academic progress for its students. The Parental Component of NCLB Section 1118 offers specific requirements to increase the involvement of parents with limited economic resources through "more is better" traditional opportunities. For example, Titles I and V, under NCLB, bring attention to the

importance of the home-school connection for schools with high concentrations of parents with limited economic resources. Title I, entitled *Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged* has five of its six subheadings specifically designed to involve parents. They are listed as: (a) *Parent Involvement Policy for Schools and Districts*, (b) a *District Parent Involvement Policy*, (c) a *School-Parent Compact*, (d) *School and District Responsibilities for Building Capacity for Parent Involvement*, as well as (e) *Parental Information Resource Centers*. Additionally, Title V, entitled *Promoting Informed Parental Choice and Innovative Programs*, strongly encourages schools to systematically consult with parents on how the school's funds should be spent, as well as the planning, designing, and implementing assistance programs that inform and involve parents. The purpose of Title I sought to bring families of all backgrounds together for a more equal and equitable education for all (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Moreover, NCLB enforces punitive actions for schools if they fail to properly educate students. If students fail to make progress on standardized tests, their schools incur corrective actions. If they fail to make the recommended adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years, NCLB offers an exit option for them to attend other schools. Students attending low performing (a new term for deficient schooling) schools may use Title I funds to transfer to a higher-performing public or private school, or receive supplemental educational services (i.e. after-school care, tutoring services, etc.). This effort is intended to inform and “empower parents” by providing them with choices. As part of the parent “empowering” process of NCLB, schools are required to provide

parents with report cards on student achievement to help them make informed choices about schools for their children. These and other forms of involvement are viewed as traditional pathways, consistent with Epstein's recommendations and they support the "more is better" model of parental involvement.

Furthermore, President Obama even draws attention to parental involvement and its importance in rebuilding our education force. He recognizes in the U.S. Department of Education's Blueprint for Reform (The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act-ESEA) the importance of schools and families coming together in the task of education as he states, "We must support families, communities, and schools working in partnership to deliver services that address the full range of student needs" (p. 1). Thus the nation's plea continues to promote the "more is better" approach.

The assumed relationship between parental involvement and student achievement may not be as strong as some researchers and policy-makers claim (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010; Calabrese Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004). Such concerns raise important questions regarding the validity of the "more is better" involvement model. For example, most parental involvement studies are based on correlations and this method of analysis should not be interpreted as being causal in nature. We cannot be sure if one causes the other or vice versa or, more importantly, even if other variables mediate any possible effects (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). Next, except for the elementary grades, parental involvement research findings are not consistent across different grade levels (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). These inconsistencies may be related to the fact that different studies used

different measures to obtain their data and to evaluate student achievement. Some researchers use student grades, whereas others use standardized test scores or researcher-designed assessments (as was done with NELS, a commonly cited data source). Such inconsistencies bring question to NCLB's pressure to increase parental involvement.

To understand these inconsistencies, Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) looked closely at parental involvement at the school level. Such activities might include attending parent-teacher conferences, joining and attending parent-teacher-association (PTA) meetings, or volunteering at school (Balli, Wedman, & Demo 1997).

Unfortunately, parents who are likely to attend these activities are from higher socioeconomic status (SES) families and they have higher levels of education. More importantly, Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) strongly question whether these types of involvement opportunities increase student achievement for any family because such activities are not directly related to student achievement.

Jeynes (2003, 2005) points to the challenges faced by diverse families with limited economic resources as a reason why they are not involved at their children's schools. Due to demands of the workplace/lack of time (Eccles et. al, 1993; Jeynes, 2003), parents with limited economic resources may not be able to come to school to attend conferences and assemblies because they lack transportation, (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Reynolds, 1992) or they may lack the understanding and/or information about the specific structure of school, communication channels, and the perceived lack of welcome by teachers and administration (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001). Furthermore, many of these parents did not have positive experiences with school when they were students

and they may be reluctant and suspicious about becoming involved as adults (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Because of these negative experiences, they may even lack an understanding of how to become involved with schools in a positive manner (Chavkin & Williams, 1989). Any attempt to develop pathways which have a direct effect of student achievement will need to address these challenges (Calabrese Barton, et al., 2004; Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010).

The second level of participation is home-based parental involvement. This form of involvement includes parents encouraging homework completion and providing a quiet time/place to do so. This home-based parental involvement is related to the child's learning at school, although it occurs at home with the parents or other extended family members (i.e. reviewing homework, discussing school activities/events, communication with teachers, etc.). In Pomerantz and Moorman's (2010) study, the majority of parents (70%) reported involvement in the home-related activities. Their high levels of involvement lead Pomerantz and Moorman's (2010) to question whether this type of involvement directly affects students' achievement. That is, it may help to maintain current achievement levels but not lead to any significant progress.

The other type of home involvement relates to parents' attempts to expose their children to the wider world by taking them to museums and other cultural events. They include engaging children in cognitive-intellectual activities (reading books, museum and library visits, plays and musical productions, vacations and cultural experiences, academic camps, etc.). While research studies have shown these activities to be related to increased achievement, Pomerantz and Moorman's (2010) view the relationship as

indirect. While these opportunities were thought to suggest to the child the importance of schooling (De Gaetano, 2007), which would ultimately and indirectly motivate students toward increased academic achievement, their effects on increased achievement are not direct. Moreover, this indirect method of fostering a child's knowledge may not be a viable option for families with limited economic resources to establish because they require a variety of financial and other resources (e.g. available time, transportation, etc).

Some researchers have developed pathways for parental involvement through the use of various intervention studies. Their rationale for developing interventions is to find a direct effect on achievement. Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) claim that studies are beneficial when they create an environment that fosters the academic growth of a child. The main question is what resources are given directly to the student. They identify several positive versus negative traits based on the quality of parental involvement. The positive aspect emphasizes parents' connectivity to the academic life of their children, thus their interactions are supportive; however, despite the attempt of some parents to be involved and positively connected, some levels of parental involvement foster negative results.

The following positive versus negative traits by Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) are categorized as:

1. ***Controlling vs. Autonomy-Supportive Involvement*** where the autonomy-supportive parent allows the child to explore their environment in order to draw conclusions--also referenced as the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (1987) vs. the pressure to excel, which is placed on children by

more aggressive parents. The former produces enhanced academic performance while the latter increases student dependency as well as frustration.

2. ***Structuring vs. Chaotic Involvement*** is the second trait, where the structure parents evoke provides clear and consistent rules and guidelines with applicable consequences vs. a confused and disorganized attempt at involvement, causing stress and disappointment.
3. ***Process vs. Person-Focused Involvement*** takes into consideration, ‘how’ one learns instead of ‘what’ the child actually learns. This positive aspect allows parents to emphasize the child’s efforts and not always their ability. Children then receive motivational encouragement that can eventually enhance their self-esteem and academic performance.
4. ***Involvement Characterized by Positive vs. Negative Affects*** is the fourth trait which recognizes parents’ involvement as a way to connect with their children and encourage the interactions to be fun and enjoyable for both vs. the hostility and annoyance which transpires with negative feelings toward parent-child interactions related to academics.

These four traits allow Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) to contend it is not the amount of time spent involved with children and their schooling, but more so, the variables which increase the quality of resources children receive from the involvement, whether at home or school. These resources are the intermediary variables between

parents' involvement and student achievement. These four traits are based on Deci's and Ryan's (1987) self-determination theory of human development.

The self-determination theory (SDT) is a comprehensive theory of human motivation and personality, associated with an individual's natural growth tendencies and their innate psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Additionally, SDT focuses on the motivation behind the choices people make without any influence or interference. SDT determines if an individual's behavior is self-motivated and self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

According to Deci and Ryan (1987), there are three psychological needs which motivate an individual and which must be satisfied to foster well-being and health. They are the need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2002). These three dimensions act alone or in combination to motivate learners to succeed. The need of *competence* refers to being effective in dealing with the environment in which a person finds him or herself. *Relatedness* is the universal desire to cooperate, work together, or be connected to and experience in caring for others. Lastly, *autonomy* refers to the ability of an individual to make a rational, informed, yet un-coerced decision.

### **Summary**

Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) make a distinction between school- and home-based parental involvement. Except for some intervention studies, they do not find a direct effect in the literature between both types of parental involvement and subsequent student achievement. Successful interventions were categorized by climate measures: without these characteristics, quite often the interventions were unsuccessful.

## **Paradigms to Parental Involvement**

Researchers have looked at parental involvement models through one of two paradigm perspectives; deficit-based or differenced-based. My major focus for this section is to take a closer look at parental involvement (specifically for parents with limited economic resources) through the views of both paradigms.

### **Deficit-Based Paradigms and Parental Involvement**

Herrnstein and Murray (1994) define deficit thinking as an endogenous theory, one without any apparent external cause, speculating that the student performing poorly in school does so because of internal deficiencies. Ryan Williams (1997) took the deficit idea and coined the phrase, “blame the victim” as a way to enlighten the general and apparent ambiguous public about the underlying beliefs taking place with this mindset. His harsh words alluded to the true culprit of deficit thinking in education as concealing rather than correcting, by stating, “In education we have programs of ‘compensatory education’ to build up the skills and attitudes of the ghetto child, rather than developing structural changes in the school” (p. xiv). After Williams’ exposure, deficit thinking was seen, by some, in its true light, as a form of oppression, a way of “keeping a group of people in their place” (Valencia, 1997).

Additionally, the deficit view holds parents responsible for any lack of involvement (from home or at the school) caused by their inability to meet a particular standard because they lack the mental make-up (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1984; Menchaca, 1997; Rushton, 2000; Valencia, 1997) or ‘appropriate’ socialization experiences (Banks, 2004). Either way, society tends to point fingers and place blame, by

utilizing the deficit paradigm. Schools primarily view parents at fault if they fail to become involved in their children's education and children are at fault if they fail to make the necessary academic gains. It's a no-win situation.

Not surprisingly, the role of deficit thinking was very influential in the promotion of forced school segregation, as some felt the low SES students of color (mainly African- & Mexican-Americans) were "intellectually inferior, linguistically limited in English, unmotivated and immoral—all characteristics that would hold back the progress of white students if racial/ethnic mixing in school was permitted" (Herrnstein et al., 1994, p. 4). This frame of thinking, unfortunately set the stage for educators to continue to propose traditional models/pathways of involving parents (e.g., joining and attending PTA meetings, volunteering in classrooms and on committees, etc.) and motivating students (e. g., offering incentives for daily reading, providing homework passes for completing assignments, etc.), especially for the low SES, believing they needed specific and very direct guidance and structure in order to meet the educational expectations being set, while leaving little room for their cultural experiences and creative freedom (Balli, Wedman, & Demo 1997).

Theorists have categorized these traditional models as deficit-based, because they tend to place the home at a disadvantage. Schools are inclined to view parents as non-caring or lacking the appropriate values (Pemberton & Miller, 2009) related to their child's academic achievement when they don't participate in these traditional pathways. Reality and past experiences reveal parents don't become involved and their children

don't achieve, not because they are unable to do so, but because their socialization leads them to have different concerns in life.

Traditionally deficit-based models imply the school's role is to dictate (as harsh as this may seem) to parents, especially parents with limited financial resources, what needs to be accomplished and furthermore criticizes them if they do not follow the prescribed agenda. Comer (1993) contends that schools are instruments of the 'mainstream culture.' He justifies this assertion by claiming that schools attempt to instill middle class values and culture onto all students; however, parents/families with limited financial resources are really not a part of the mainstream culture. Thus, they experience difficulties fitting into this mold (Edwards, 2008). Based on my experience, as both a teacher and a parent, this traditional deficit-based perspective leaves little room for the warm and welcoming interactions, acknowledgement, and implementation of personal experiences, or even the creative freedom parents want from schools. Moreover, I question the extent to which this 'unwanted' feeling for family diversity transfers to the academic achievement (or lack thereof) for the struggling student.

Deficit-based proponents would undoubtedly agree their approach is the best for this specified population. However, on the other hand, advocates for difference-based/alternative models to parental involvement and student achievement tell us that if we corral all of our students and place them in the same mold (deficit-based), we are doing them an injustice. Difference-based proponents also contend that the acceptance of the individual and the experiences they bring will open pathways for social connections and academic growth in the classroom, especially when educators support this paradigm

by conveying and incorporating equitable and just educational experiences for all students (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

### **Difference-Based Paradigms and Parental Involvement**

Contemporary/difference-based models view parental involvement and home-school relationships as a new, multi-dimensional construct. Additionally, these models refer to the parents, who are visible in the school, as well as those parents who care about their child's education, but are hesitant to become involved because they do not feel welcomed (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Difference-based advocates believe that the acceptance of the individual and the experiences they bring will open avenues for social connections and academic growth.

The contemporary approach reflects difference-based thinking, which focuses on the families' social and cultural capital as avenues for acceptance and demonstrates for them how to negotiate and meet the demands of both school and society (Fairbanks & Ariail, 2006) and tends to be more accepting of the 'whole person' as it emphasizes what each brings to the academic table within their rich home and cultural experiences. It is important to understand that parents with limited financial resources do have the opportunities to become involved in the school through any of the traditional/deficit-based pathways, yet their level of comfort needs to first be addressed by the school. These parents especially, need to sense a feeling of welcome and acceptance toward them, by the school. De Gaetano (2007) explains that many parents, especially parents of low SES, really yearn to have the school invite/involve them in ways that are affirming

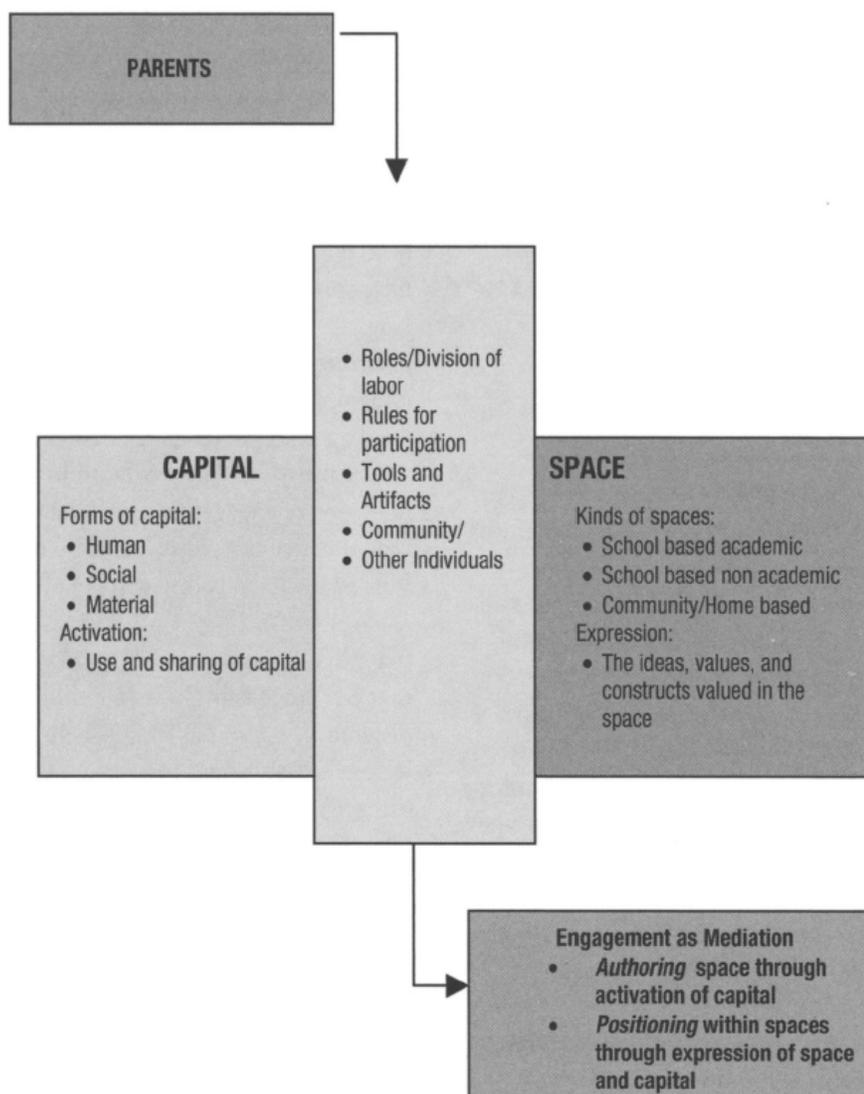
and empowering to them, their culture, and their personal experiences. This level of comfort is similar to Pomerantz and Moorman's (2010) four climate characteristics.

Two frameworks, Calabrese Barton et al.'s (2004) model, Ecologies of Parental Engagement (EPE), and Moll and Greenberg's (1990) 'funds of knowledge' offer parents non-traditional pathways for involvement—the former focuses on school-based involvement, the latter on home-based involvement and both capture the essence of difference-based alternative pathways by giving parents a feeling of acceptance and agency.

The Ecologies of Parental Engagement study (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004) identifies both obstacles and opportunities offered by traditional and alternative pathways. As noted in Figure 1, the schools' pathways and/or interactions with parents should set the stage for building camaraderie and confidence. Through interactions, parents develop their perceptions of the roles and/or divisions of labor among parents within the school. Through participation, parents determine how they do or don't fit in the positions and roles of involvement. Additionally, they witness how these roles are divided among all parents. Through active involvement, parents better understand the procedures and structure of the school, taking their role of active participant rather than a spectator.

Calabrese Barton et al. (2004) traced the involvement of two parents through this figure. The parents, Miranda and Celia, neither viewed traditional pathways as effective, became involved at their schools through informal pathways. Miranda, an African American single mother, wanted to attend traditional school functions but was hesitant

because of her negative school experiences as a child. She “never found schools to be a welcoming place” (p. 6). In spite of her fears and frustrations, she utilized the alternative pathways made available by her son’s teacher, Ms. B., to ‘break ground’ and become involved in the school’s efforts.



**Figure 1. *Ecologies of Parental Engagement Model***

Miranda explains how the dedication of her son's teacher welcomed her as a parent with different cultural/home experiences, and then created a situation for her to become actively involved in the school, a task Miranda initially "believed she lacked the knowledge, skills, and network of resources to know how to enter into the kinds of conversations and activities that made a difference in school" (p. 6). Ms. B. was more committed to getting her son where he needed to be academically and not so concerned about medicating his hyperactivity. In Miranda's eyes, Ms. B. availed herself more than any other teacher had ever done. This was how Ms. B treated everyone in the classroom, which helped establish the comfort levels parents needed (Allen, 2009). Ms. B's class had family night each Thursday evening. This was a very informal session where, Ms. B. learned about the students and their families, while they in turn learned about each other. She also took the time to call Miranda's home when her son was absent, to see if his asthma was bothering him, and she seemed to be genuinely interested in his well-being. This interaction with both the teacher and other families, later gave Miranda the confidence (*confianza*) to confront another teacher who she felt had 'wronged' her child. In this circumstance, Miranda's rules for participation changed from merely a participant in the class family night activity, to a leader, stepping forward and advocating for the rights of her child.

The second parent, Celia, a non-English speaking Hispanic mother, from the same study, also realized the importance of visible parent involvement, although many other aspects of the school setting may not have been as clear to her. Celia's initial purpose was to make sense of the 'ins and outs' of the school, starting in her own child's classroom.

Taking a position, on the inside, is not very common among families with limited financial resources due to their lack of comfort, confidence, and trust (Allen, 2009; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Regardless, Celia frequently made her way into her child's classroom each year to develop a relationship with the teacher and to learn more about what was expected of students. Her entry allowed her to feel successfully involved because she knew her voice as a parent was heard and her visible presence made a difference. She was satisfied with the fact the teacher knew her and recognized her concern. This fundamental step, as effortless as it may seem, afforded Celia the opportunity to investigate the roles of individuals (teachers & students, and possibly administrators or other parents) in the school, as well as to establish her own specific rule for participation as an initial spectator.

These two cases show how diverse families with limited economic resources and limited education need alternative pathways to feel comfortable and opportunities to gain the confidence to become involved in their child's education. The alternative pathways gave agency to these parents. This maneuvering also showed the parents the extent to which the school accepted and utilized the varied experiences and cultures of its families. Through a greater understanding and access, the parents became comfortable partners in the learning process of their academically struggling children. The more comfortable they became, the more human and social capital they acquired, resulting in greater agency. They changed from being mere spectators with limited access to active participants with newly developed relationships with other parents and teachers.

The Ecologies of Parental Engagement model (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004) offers an alternative to what is viewed as the traditional deficit-based approach because it alters parents' and teachers' roles and expectations for participation. Instead of treating parents as if they were not doing the right things, teachers helped them to develop the necessary confidence and knowledge to advocate for their children. Their efforts created new spaces for parents to acquire the agency needed to take a more active role. To the contrary, with deficit-based approaches, schools view parents as lacking appropriate levels of initiative; thus, they need to "show" parents how to become involved (deficit-thinking).

Moll and Greenberg's (1990) research on 'funds of knowledge' also may help schools to move beyond deficit-based thinking because it provides alternative pathways for supporting parents. Their research shows how schools fail to build upon home literacy practices, limiting possibilities for children and teachers to see a positive relationship between the cultural practices of the home and school. Moll and Greenberg (1990) explain how schools need to utilize these forms of literacy, called 'funds of knowledge,' because every household is an educational setting (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Other studies, in particular Heath (1983), showed that when home and school do not speak the same language, not only in a literal sense, the experiences of the child at home bear little-to-no relevance to the school; consequently, there is a disconnect--a gap that does not create the needed bridge between home and school. This approach allows schools to realize the academic benefits of integrating the home literacy experiences into their curriculum.

This emphasis on “funds of knowledge” as a bridge between the culture of the home and that of the school focuses on the same points as do proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1996). That is, teachers using students’ cultural experiences from home as a foundation upon which to develop knowledge and skills, allows students to develop new skills and knowledge with meaningful connections between school and real-life situations and thus, students learn (Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). By being allowed to learn in different ways or to share viewpoints and perspectives in a given situation, based on their own cultural and social experiences, students become active, motivated participants in their own learning and parents appreciate the efforts to make learning meaningful and significant (Nieto, 1996). For this reason, Hollins, (1996) among others, (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1996) believes that culturally relevant instruction provides the best learning conditions for all students, especially those struggling academically due to a home-school disconnect. It is teaching that is designed not merely to fit the school culture to the students’ culture but also to use student culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge (Ladson-Billings). In addition to placing students in an academically ‘win-win’ situation, teachers benefit from this situation as well when they view parents as viable resources and make efforts to bridge the home-school gap by attaining and employing families’ cultural and home experiences. After all, this places the teacher on the receiving end of a learning situation, so important in today’s schools of predominately white middle-class teachers, instructing

a diverse classroom population, inclusive of predominately minority low socioeconomic status students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

In summary, Calabrese Barton et al.'s (2004) model of parental involvement and Moll and Greenberg's (1990) funds of knowledge provide pathways for parents to have a direct effect on the academic achievement of their children. These pathways are based on a difference paradigm and they could offer parents different avenues of participation, while providing students with the resources they need to improve their academic performances.

### **Conclusion**

As society has dictated a change in the home-school partnership over the course of several decades, the role parents play has also changed. Now, NCLB (2002) requires schools to increase parents' involvement in their children's education at the school level. The problem with this mandate relates to the nature of the relationship between parental involvement and students' achievement. Research does not support a direct effect between parent involvement and student achievement for traditional activities such as attending school events. If schools are to implement programs to increase involvement, researchers offer several recommendations regarding the climate for these interventions.

In the first part of this dissertation, I used the parental involvement research to situate my study in one school. I then used researchers' recommendations for establishing a climate in implement two interventions. The definitions for the terms used in this study are included in Appendix A.

The following research questions guide this study:

*Phase I:*

1. How do parents respond to their school's efforts to increase their involvement?
  - 1a. What do teachers and administrators view as opportunities and obstacles for parental involvement at their school?
  - 1b. What do parents with limited financial resources view as opportunities and obstacles at school regarding their levels of involvement?
  - 1c. What is the relationship among parents', teachers' and the administrators' views regarding the school's opportunities and obstacles for involvement of parents with limited financial resources?

*Phase II:*

1. How do parents respond to the school's efforts to increase their participation by altering the pathways for their involvement?
  - 1a. How will parents respond to opportunities to become involved at school through informal/non-traditional pathways?
  - 1b. How will student reading progress be impacted using the Partners-in-Reading (PIR) tutoring program with parents and teachers acting as tutors?
  - 1c. How will parents and teachers respond to opportunities to become partners in tutoring struggling readers?
  - 1d. How will teachers respond to opportunities to utilize families' funds of knowledge in their daily classroom instruction?

## **CHAPTER II**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this mixed methods case study was to investigate the school based parental involvement of families with limited financial resources who have early grade children struggling with reading. A two-phase case study was employed.

Phase I primarily describes how the existing research applies to one group of parents within a particular school. Given the inconsistent results across parental involvement studies, my main purpose was to situate the general research findings to a particular school by looking at its administrator' and teachers' efforts to involve parents in their children's education. Based on Phase I's findings, Phase II explains the extent to which the development of alternative pathways would affect parental involvement and students' reading achievement. Whereas Phase I was mostly descriptive in nature, Phase II was more explanatory because I knew the school's context and wished to alter some of its practices with two interventions based on the research literature (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010).

With Phase I, a qualitative research method was employed, which defined the roles, rules, and perceptions of school-based parental involvement of diverse families with limited economic resources through their perceptions and experiences. This study was based on the experiences and knowledge of administrators, teachers, and parents in

one particular school setting. I selected a qualitative method, based on my vision for the study and Creswell's (2003) definition, stating

A qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., multiple meanings of individual experiences, meaning socially and historically constructed, with the intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change-oriented) or both. . . . The researcher collects open-ended emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data. (p. 18)

In Phase II, I used a mixed method approach to incorporate both the narratives of individual experiences through qualitative methods along with the numerical data from student pre and post literacy assessments through quantitative methods. Consistent with Phase I's qualitative methods, Schram (2006) identifies one point of reference in support of using a qualitative paradigm as an interpretivist researcher where the goal is to understand the complex and constructed reality from the point of view of those who live it. In other words, interpretivists operate from the belief that all constructs are equally important and valid (Schram, 2006); therefore, I operated in this manner as I learned the lives and experiences of my participants. The qualitative research method was designed to investigate the assumed relationship of parental involvement of diverse families with limited financial resources and the reading achievement of their struggling elementary readers in this Title I school. Additionally, I employed quantitative methods in Phase II as well.

According to Creswell, (2005) "some quantitative research problems require you [the researcher] to explain how one variable affects another" (p. 44). Thus, my study of

increasing parental involvement to ultimately affect increased literacy achievement of struggling elementary readers falls into Creswell's quantitative criteria as well. I used pre- and post-test data from several indicators of reading improvement (Allington, 1999).

In this chapter, I describe the five components of a case study design: research questions, study propositions, units of analysis, logic linking data to study propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings (Yin, 1994, p. 20). Additionally, I will describe issues of validity and reliability, and finally introduce the research context, the participants, data sources, and data analysis procedures.

### **Case Study Design**

Yin (1994) states that case studies are particularly useful, "to confirm, challenge, or extend the theory . . . The single case can then be used to determine whether a theory's propositions are correct or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant" (p. 38). A case study methodology was used because case studies are, "an essential form of social science inquiry...in which investigators desire to define a broad research topic [*parental involvement*], cover complex conditions [*diverse families with limited financial resources, struggling readers, and different cultural experiences*], and rely on multiple sources [*administrators, teachers, parents, and students*], and not singular sources of evidence" (Yin, 2003, p. xi). It is both descriptive and explanatory in keeping with the belief that the division between these two purposes is not always clear (Yin, 1994). This case was confined to one school and its administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

## Research Questions

This study asked two sets of research questions. The questions for Phase I were:

1. How do parents respond to their school's efforts to increase their involvement?
  - 1a. What do teachers and administrators view as opportunities and obstacles for parental involvement at their school?
  - 1b. What do parents with limited financial resources view as opportunities and obstacles at school regarding their levels of involvement?
  - 1c. What is the relationship among parents', teachers' and the administrators' views regarding the school's opportunities and obstacles for involvement of parents with limited financial resources?

The findings from Phase I initiated the research questions for the Phase II portion of this dissertation study. In particular, the findings provided a rationale for developing an intervention as well as developing alternative pathways for parental involvement and increasing the number of various types of instructional opportunities for students (e.g., tutoring and funds of knowledge). The Phase II research questions were:

1. How do parents respond to the school's efforts to increase their participation by altering the pathways for their involvement?
  - 1a. How will parents respond to opportunities to become involved at school through informal/non-traditional pathways?
  - 1b. How will student reading progress be impacted using the Partners-in-Reading (PIR) tutoring program with parents and teachers acting as tutors?

1c. How will parents and teachers respond to opportunities to become partners in tutoring struggling readers?

1d. How will teachers respond to opportunities to utilize families' funds of knowledge in their daily classroom instruction?

### **Study's Propositions**

The propositions of a case study focus the researcher and narrow the study toward specific, rather than general information or outcomes (Yin, 1994). The propositions for this particular study were (a) when given the opportunity to participate via appropriate pathways; parents' involvement will increase, and (b) to the extent that parents are involved directly in their children's education, students' reading progress and parents' involvement will increase. As stated in Chapter I, these propositions offer interpretative latitude, in that, the nature of the pathways (traditional versus alternative) and their guiding rationales (deficit- versus difference-based) influence the nature of the parents' involvement (or lack thereof) and students' eventual achievement.

### **Unit of Analysis**

Defining the boundaries of what is to be studied in a case study defines the researcher's areas of foci. In this study, Thompson Primary School (pseudonym) represented the bounded system or the single case (Yin, 1994). A single case methodology is appropriate when the theory is well defined (Yin, 1994) and when the bounded system is made up of distinct groups of individuals (Stake, 1994) such as parents and their families, teachers, and administrators. There may be one or several units of analysis within a case (Mertens, 1998). For Phases I and II there were two units of

analyses, the school personnel (administrators and teachers) and the families (parents, extended family members, and students).

### **Logic Linking Data to Study's Propositions**

The collected data shows a link to the propositions through comparison of common themes, patterns, or explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1994) and triangulation of the many and varied data sources, which Yin perceives to be “a major strength of case study data collection” (p. 97). Upon completion of data collection, I made connections between the literature that established my theoretical framework and the findings. A crosswalk of research questions can show a link between the questions and the data that was collected. See Tables 1 and 2 for listings of research questions and data sources for Phases I & II of this study. More specific information will be provided in the data analysis section in Chapter III.

**Table 1**

#### ***Phase I (Research Questions x Measure)***

<b>MATRIX (Crosswalk)</b>			
	<b>How do parents respond to their school's efforts to increase their involvement?</b>		
<b>Measure</b>	What do teachers and administrators view as opportunities and obstacles for parental involvement at their school?	What do parents with limited financial resources view as opportunities and obstacles at school regarding their levels of involvement?	What is the relationship among parents', teachers' and the administrators' views regarding the school's opportunities and obstacles for involvement of parents with limited financial resources?
<i>Admin Interviews</i>	X		X
<i>Teacher Interviews</i>	X		X
<i>Parent Interviews</i>		X	X

Table 2

*Phase II (Research Questions x Measure)*

<b>MATRIX (Crosswalk)</b>				
	<b>How do parents respond to their school's efforts to increase their involvement?</b>			
<b>Measures</b>	How will parents respond to opportunities to become involved at school, through informal/non-traditional pathways?	How will student reading progress be impacted using the Partners-in-Reading (PIR) tutoring program with parents and teachers acting as tutors?	How will parents and teachers respond to opportunities to become partners in tutoring struggling readers?	How will teachers respond to opportunities to utilize families' funds of knowledge in their daily classroom instruction?
<i>Developmental Reading Assessment</i>		X	X	
<i>Independently Read Leveled Texts</i>		X	X	
<i>Parent – Teacher Communication Log</i>		X	X	
<i>Focus Groups</i>	X		X	X
<i>Informal Teacher &amp; Parent Interviews</i>	X		X	X
<i>Personal Field Notes</i>	X		X	X
<i>Transcripts of CAMP with Kim sessions</i>	X	X		X

**Criteria for Interpreting Findings**

The initial coding of themes was actually derived from the literature in order to “tie research questions or conceptual interests directly to the data” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 64). In most studies, criteria are set to identify themes across and among participants (Miles & Huberman, 1984). However, in this study, in addition to

establishing patterns and themes, I wanted to be open to the possibility that any one of my families, because of their cultural expectations, home literacy practices, or achievement needs, might have unique needs that required different levels of support; thus, while I looked for themes among families, teachers, and administrators, I was open to the possibility of finding themes related to single families as well (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). This latitude is particularly important in Phase II when interventions were developed and implemented. More specifics will be included in the data analysis section of this chapter.

### **Issues of Validity and Reliability**

Yin (1994) indicates the importance of maximizing the quality of the study's design through four aspects of validity—construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. According to Yin, critiques of case studies contend that “case study researchers fail to develop a sufficiently operational set of measures, and subjective judgments are used to collect the data” (p. 34). The following criteria were used in judging the quality of this research design.

**Construct validity** refers to the extent to which operationalizations of a construct (e.g. practical tests developed from a theory) do actually measure what the theory says they do and its evidence involves the empirical and theoretical support for the interpretation of the data. To develop terms, I used the research literature to set parameters for key constructs such as alternative pathways and home- versus school-based parental involvement. Then, to make sure that my data was related to these constructs, I triangulated sources and used external auditors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For

example, I used multiple sources of evidence during my data collection (interviews, reading scores, focus group sessions, etc.). These multiple sources created triangulation across data sources. Secondly, I included my advisor as an external auditor. During analysis, we met a minimum of thirty times over a three month period. I also shared my interpretations with a colleague, who previously taught elementary school and now is an adjunct instructor of pre-service elementary educators.

**Internal validity** (credibility) deals with the researcher making inferences based on information collected, and whether those inferences are stated correctly. Such information is only necessary in causal or explanatory case studies (Yin, 2003). As a result, internal consistency was enhanced by organizing all forms of data for each case to create a chain of evidence that could be followed from each finding to the source(s) related to that finding as well as through pattern matching to known theories of parental involvement and literacy achievement to ensure this case study data could not be explained by opposing theories. I used my external auditors for this dimension as well.

**External validity** addresses whether a study's findings are generalizable beyond the immediate case. It is the extent to which the results of a study can be held to be true for other cases, for example, to different people, places or times (Yin, 1994). While empirical research relies on statistical generalization where the findings from a sample can be generalized to a larger population, case study research relies on logical or analytical generalization where the researcher strives to generalize a particular set of findings to a broader theory (Yin, 1994). External validity in this study was established by the use of replication logic which resulted in thoroughly identified and explained

research procedures explicitly detailed for future researchers considering replication of this study.

**Reliability** according to Yin (1994) “. . . is to minimize the errors and biases in a study” (p. 36) in the event another researcher wants to conduct the same study (not a replication with a similar case). Yin further explains that to conduct a high-quality case study, “. . . a case study protocol should be developed . . . and a pilot study conducted” (p. 54). Reliability for this case was ensured by the following. Protocols were created and followed for each interview of Phases I and II. Additionally, *CAMP with Kim* focus group sessions established consistency in the collection of data via session format and procedures (See Appendix H1-H6 for session agendas). Moreover, Phase I of this research also served as a pilot study. Procedures in this research study were clearly documented to increase the possibility of future researchers arriving at the same conclusions.

### **Researcher Bias**

Peshkin (1988) points out the importance of the researcher making their subjectivity conscious, so as not to insinuate, but clarify plainly their stance or personal stake in the research. For this reason, I am revealing my own positions in this research.

As an educator, my career took me on a few various paths. I was a classroom teacher in a Title I school for more than a decade, for a brief period I was a university liaison from the school of education to primarily Title 1 public school classrooms (kindergarten-grade 12) where our interns and student teachers collaborated with teachers in the field (revealing to me more than the single viewpoint I entered with regarding my

only school experience). Next, I was as an adjunct professor in the areas of education and child development, I taught courses related to family involvement. I later returned to the public school classroom for three additional years as an educator in a high achieving school (designated by the state's standardized assessment scores), witnessing a totally different perspective of parent participation than in my first school. All of this was completed prior to me entering school, as a student once again, to work toward my Ph.D.

Through these experiences, I witnessed a fundamental transformation in my own knowledge and understanding of parental involvement, how one's home or cultural experiences validate their knowledge, understanding, and their academic achievement, and the disparity between individuals with appropriate economic resources and those families with limited financial resources. These underlying components directed me toward this study.

Many children in my initial career assignment (Title I school) entered school as kindergarten students with insufficient curriculum-based knowledge and few educational experiences; yet they were full of home-based experiences that did not match-up somehow to the required curriculum. Their insufficient knowledge in many cases was never regained to the level of their majority counterparts. This caused continuous academic struggling throughout their schooling. Additionally, a large percentage of their parents, felt unsure about and uncomfortable with many aspects of the school's environment. Due to many negative school experiences (Comer, 1997; DeGaetano, 2007; Desimone, 1999), they had few networking systems to utilize as a way to understand the disparity in knowledge between their children and other students or even to feel

comfortable with asking the professionals how they could assist their children (Comer, 1997). Their perspective and experiences differed from my personal history, which made the concept initially difficult for me to comprehend.

As a child, my brothers and I grew up in a household with two college-educated parents and a mother who was an elementary educator in our public school system. Though they both worked full-time, they still found time to attend school functions, contact teachers, provide educational opportunities, and let us know how important an education truly was. The idea of little-to-no parent involvement and the lack of educational experiences within the home seemed foreign to me, probably as the reverse seemed foreign to my Title I families in the late 1980s. Solving this problem of parents not being involved was not only important to me as an educator, trying to help the children, but probably more important to me as an African-American mother of two school-aged children in public schools. As a student and a teacher, I knew the benefits of parental involvement and I wanted the same benefits for my students and their families.

Additionally, as an educator, the importance of a sound literacy background always proved to be a stable foundation on which to build additional knowledge and I too wanted that for my children as well my students. However, when students entered school with such delayed literacy beginnings as those I taught in the Title I school, it was sometimes difficult for them to progress to expected grade level standards, leaving them “playing catch-up” for most of their school career. These two elements sparked my interest in researching parental involvement of families with limited financial resources who have children struggling with elementary literacy. I truly believe, through the

initiatives of this study, parental involvement of these families can be redefined and established as a guideline to ensure an equitable education for all.

Furthermore, I serve the research site as a supervisor for interns and student teachers, which might have had some effect on the study in a positive manner. Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) explain how environments for parent participation should be enriched with skill- and motivation related resources. As a frequent face in the building, administrators, teachers, and possibly even some parents and students felt a stronger sense of trust, thus a better rapport was established with me which possibly enhanced the climate in which we worked during this study. It was my desire, through this study, to act as the liaison for diverse families with limited financial resources and the school (teachers and administration), which allowed all parties a clear view into the others' thoughts on parental involvement and how a symbiotic relationship was beneficial to everyone involved. As a researcher and participant, I wanted my participants to feel I could be trusted with the personal information they divulged and also that I "heard" them and understood the opportunities and obstacles they faced in reference to parental involvement at this school site. They needed to view our work as meaningful, purposeful, and beneficial to the academic success of their children as well as their level of involvement. Kanno (1997) and Hadjistavropoulos and Smythe (2001) suggest that the personal involvement of the researcher as participant is most important in research. Some researchers may oppose the participant-researcher relationship, described by Oakley (1981) as 'dangerous-bias.' This is when one allows others into the personal realms of their life and the fear is that the data yielded may be put at risk or lack trustworthiness.

However, this is the essential way to allow parent participants to discuss the barriers to their involvement at the school. Therefore, the main purpose of this researcher-participant relationship is to first understand, then bridge the differences of home and school in order to build common ground for the education of struggling readers and the involvement of their parents.

### **Setting**

Thompson Primary School (*all identifying geographical references are pseudonyms*) in the Alston County School District was the research site for this study. It is a Title I primary school with a prekindergarten-third grade enrollment of approximately 800 students, 89% of which receive free or reduced meals. The ethnic make-up is approximately one-third European-American, one-third African-American, and one-third Hispanic. Compared with a state average of 83%, only 43% of the third graders scored grade level proficiency on the state's end-of-grade reading and math assessments over the past three years. There are 60 certified teachers (12 with advanced degrees and five are National Board Certified), and veteran teachers (10 or more years in the profession) make up 46% of the staff, with an average 15% annual teacher turnover rate. There are two special needs teachers (ESL-English as a Second Language & Speech/Language), and a Community in Schools coordinator (a program designed to reduce dropout rates by helping students stay in school and prepare for life).

### **Participants**

The participants for Phase I of this study were two administrators, principal & parent liaison, who served as the gatekeepers (Yin, 1994) and granted me access into the

school. Additional participants included two first grade teachers (selected by the principal), and four parents (two from each participating first grade homeroom), specifically selected by the classroom teacher, who (a) taught and identified their children as struggling readers, (b) considered the family to have limited financial resources, and (c) regarded the parents as not involved in the school-based academic lives of their children.

The participants for Phase II were the same four parents plus two additional extended family members, who represented absent parent participants, during the focus group sessions. Also participating were the three second grade teachers for parent participants' children (*All students were promoted since Phase I*).

The principal was a female of European/ Hispanic descent with 30 years of experience, seven years in administration, five of which were at Thompson Primary School. The parent liaison was an African-American female with 18 years experience, ten of which were at this school. The first grade teachers from Phase I were Ms. Lawson and Ms. Little. Ms. Lawson is a European-American with six years of teaching experience, all of which have been at Thompson Primary. She grew up in a military family and believes this is why she “holds all children to the same standards and expects them to excel” (Email communication—October 6, 2009). Ms. Lawson initially received an Associate of Arts degree before pursuing her degree in Elementary Education. She considers herself to be a kind and caring person, yet she’s willing to share the difficult information of academic struggles with parents, if needed. She states, “The bottom line is, I care for my students and want the absolute best for them, now and in the future.” Ms. Little is a

European-American with 18 years of teaching experience, seven of which have been in first grade at this school. She recently received her Master's degree in Reading from an area university and went back to school because she enjoys, "watching children grow in their literacy development . . . They are proud of their accomplishments and I love to see that." (Interview—May 20, 2009). She explains her teaching philosophy to be one in which "Children are allowed to make mistakes and grow from those mistakes both socially and academically."

The second grade teachers included Ms. Baynes, Ms. James, and Mr. Rich. Ms. Baynes is an African-American with 4 years of second grade teaching experience, all of which have been at this school, where she also completed her undergraduate student teaching assignment. Even in her short term in the profession, she has already exerted her leadership ability as the grade level's Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) representative. She believes it is important to let the students know she expects only their best. In addition, Ms. Baynes acknowledges, her greatest accomplishment is when parents acknowledge that she has helped their children succeed. The second teacher, Ms. James, is a European-American with 7 years of teaching experience 4 of which were at this school. She has committed her career to teaching in high poverty, Title I schools, because she feels these students need committed and capable teachers, though it makes her job more difficult. She has also held leadership positions on her grade level and school-wide, and has recently completed her National Board portfolio. The third teacher, Mr. Rich, is an African-American with only 2 years teaching experience, both at Thompson Primary. He participated in a variety of required clinical experiences (pre-kindergarten, reading,

science and special education clinical observations) as an undergraduate to enhance his teaching experiences. Mr. Rich claims his greatest accomplishment, as a teacher, has been seeing a child grow more than one grade level during the course of a school year. Please note, the first grade teachers from Phase I, were invited to participate in the Phase II portion of the study with a new student and family which met the previous criteria for participation; however both declined participation due to “excessive school demands” (Personal communication, February 2010) related to new curriculum implementations.

There were four families across both phases of the study. Ms. Silver, a single, Hispanic mother of four children (one still at home, two in elementary, and a daughter in college). Ms. Camboli, a single, Hispanic mother with three young children; two of elementary school age, (one a hearing impaired male in kindergarten), the youngest is a male, still at home. Mr. Goode, a single, unemployed, European-American father, is a high school dropout, yet has sole custody of his three children who are 8, 11, and 13 years old. The last family is a married couple. Mr. and Mrs. Parks, are middle-aged, European-Americans with four school-aged children, ranging in ages from 6-18 years, one of whom (the only male and the youngest) has been identified as autistic. Phase II incorporated two additional participants (extended family members) who attended in the absence of an original parent participant. Ms. Betty, a European-American retired and widowed great-grandmother served as the representative for Ms. Camboli for several weeks and Ms. Myra, a European American, full-time employed, single mother of two served as family representative for her brother, Mr. Goode.

Due to the specific nature of my research and the criteria requirements for participants, parents of limited financial resources who had children struggling with reading in grade one, and who were considered by teachers as not involved at the school level, my parent selection process was a homogeneous sampling procedure. I selected this homogeneous sampling because it is designed to increase the likelihood of parents sharing their experiences with those individuals who have similar experiences or situations as them (Patton, 1990). Table 3 displays all participants (Phase I & II) and their identifying data.

## **Phase I**

### **Data Sources and Procedures**

The data sources for Phase I of this study were individual interviews for each group of participants (administrators, teachers, and parents). Creswell (2005) identifies interviews as useful sources of information that allow the participant to describe and share personal information that cannot actually be observed. Each interview included questions based on Calabrese Barton et al.'s (2004) Ecologies of Parental Engagement model and Moll and Greenberg's (1990) Funds of Knowledge research. For the convenience of each participant, most interviews were conducted at the school; however two parents chose to have their interviews in their home. Each interview was designed to last 20-30 minutes; however, some lasted longer than 60 minutes based on the depth of information and experiences the interviewee was willing to provide. Protocols for each interview are included in the Appendix.

**Table 3**

*Participant Demographics*

<b>Administrators</b>					
	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Years in Education</b>	<b>Years in current position</b>	<b>Advanced Degrees held</b>
Admin #1	Female	Hispanic American	30	7	Masters
Admin #2	Female	African American	18	10	N/A
<b>Teachers</b>					
	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Years in Education</b>	<b>Years in current position</b>	<b>Advanced Degrees held</b>
Ms. Lawson	Female	European American	6	6	N/A
Ms. Little	Female	European American	18	7	Masters degree in reading
<sup>+</sup> Ms. Baynes	Female	African American	4	4	N/A
<sup>+</sup> Ms. James	Female	European American	7	4	Awaiting National Board results
<sup>+</sup> Mr. Rich	Male	African American	2	2	N/A
<sup>+</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade teacher participant for Phase II					

**Table 3. (cont'd)**

<b>Parents</b>				
	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>No. of Children</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
Ms. Silver	Single	4 (1 female/3 male)	Hispanic	Unemployed (full-time college student)
Ms. Camboli	Single	3 (1 female/2 male)	Hispanic	Unemployed (suffering with severe back pain)
*Ms. Betty	Widow	1 female	European American	Retired Homemaker-(great grandmother of 2 <sup>nd</sup> grader)
Mr. & Mrs. Parks	Married	4 (3 female/ 1 male w/ autism)	European American	Mr.-full-time blue collar employment Mrs.-stay-at-home-Mom
Mr. Goode	Single	3 (2 female/1 male)	European American	High School dropout-full custody of all 3 children
*Ms. Myra	Single	2 (2 female)	European American	Full-time Employment
*Extended family member participant for Phase II				

**Administrator interviews.** The administrator (principal & parent liaison) interviews were audio taped and consisted of three sections and approximately 20 topic and sub-topic questions. These interview questions were designed to yield information related to administrator's views on the opportunities and obstacles for parental involvement at this school, understand how the principal set out to involve parents/families throughout the school, identify what types of involvement the school encouraged from parents, and recognize any specific efforts the school used to address the academic needs of struggling readers. I also wanted to gather information on the administrator's knowledge of the home literacy practices, and their position on the use and/or incorporation of the home literacy practices in classroom lessons (see Appendix A). The principal then recommended two teacher participants.

**Teacher interviews.** The two first-grade teachers were also individually interviewed and audio taped. The interview consisted of three sections with approximately ten total questions (see Appendix B for teacher interview protocol). The questions were designed to gather information related to an educator's views on the opportunities and obstacles for parental involvement at this school, how these educators involved parents/families, what type of involvement they encouraged from parents, and how these views related to the efforts the school used to address the academic needs of struggling readers in their classroom. I also wanted to understand teachers' knowledge of the home literacy practices, and their use or incorporation of the home literacy information in the lessons they developed and implemented with their students. After this

interview, each teacher identified several parents who fit the criteria for parent participation in this study.

**Parent interviews.** The criteria for parent participation for this study was parents with limited financial resources (based only on teacher knowledge of the family), parents not involved at the school level, and parents who had a child struggling with reading in this particular class. All parents who were identified were invited to participate in the study, through a letter that was sent home in the child's weekly home-school communication folder (see Appendix K). This letter was approved by the principal and child's teacher and fully explained the specifics of the study and parent participation requirements. It also invited families to become participants by completing a participant consent form and returning it to school. Only one parent, Ms. Silver, phoned me to request more information before completing the participant consent form (see Appendix K), and all other parent participants had to be called and personally invited before consenting to participation when no responses to the initial interest letter were received. Once all parent participants were confirmed, I individually spoke with them via telephone to once again explain the study and their participation. During that phone call I also set up interview dates, times and locations with each of the four parent participants.

There were five sections to the parent interview focusing on (a) how they defined parental involvement, (b) their understanding of how parents might become involved at their school, (c) the history of their involvement along with perceptions of any obstacles that prevented their current involvement, (d) their personal school experiences as a child and how it shaped their current involvement, and (e) ratings of the degree to which they

would feel comfortable volunteering for various activities or programs at the school. There were 23 questions across the five areas, 12 of which had follow-up questions or requests to provide further elaboration. The interview was designed to petition parents for how the school could develop stronger relationships with them as well as how parents could build stronger relationship with the school. These interview questions provided a better understanding of the different levels of parental involvement, parents' ideas of the importance of parental involvement at the school level, their specific reasons and/or challenges for not becoming involved, and any particular roles they observed or had been made aware of associated with parental involvement at this particular school site.

## **Phase II**

### **Interventions**

The findings disclosed in Phase I initiated the interventions implemented in Phase II of this research. Based on the findings from the interviews administered in Phase I, I discovered four factors related to parents' opportunities for involvement: (a) the school deliberately provided multiple pathways for parent involvement; yet the opportunities were mainly traditional pathways and were based on a deficit model; (b) teachers were not familiar with the home literacy practices or their students' cultural experiences, thus, their instructional strategies did not emulate experiences from students' home lives; (c) students continued to struggle with reading, which caused teachers to question their parents' educational values; and (d) the struggling students did not receive adequate additional support to improve their literacy achievement (Allington, 2001). Phase I

interviews also indicated how parents were willing to be involved. They helped their children nightly to complete their homework and recommended suggestions of involvement related to their own interests, such as initiating and assisting with bilingual classes, supporting gardening and science clubs, etc. Furthermore, the parents' suggestions supported their funds of knowledge and cultural experiences. I established several Phase II goals in utilizing that information. I wanted to (a) develop a way for teachers and parents to link home literacies to the school curriculum, (b) develop an informal pathway for parents to become actively involved at the school level, utilizing a difference-based model, and (c) I wanted to develop a plan that provided struggling readers quality time to read and be read to as a way to increase their reading achievement, thus creating the interventions for Phase II.

Within Phase II, there were actually two interventions simultaneously implemented. One was the Partners-in-Reading (Miller, 2003 & 2009) tutoring program that was implemented at school by teachers and interns and at home by parents or family members. The second intervention was the home-school connection, designed to bridge teachers' literacy practices and families "funds of knowledge" (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Both interventions were woven within a series of focus group sessions and activities, entitled *CAMP (Comforting And Motivating Parents) with Kim*. As stated in the Pomerantz and Moorman (2010), study *CAMP with Kim* set the climate for the two interventions and will be described next.

*CAMP with Kim*. As noted on Table 4, *Camp with Kim* included seven one-and-one-half to two-hour sessions across eight-weeks. Four of the seven sessions focused on

both the tutoring and the home-school connection with an estimated 70% of the time devoted to the former. For example, during the fourth session (May 6, 2010), I introduced parents to strategies to increase vocabulary and they also discussed their photo inventories from their home pictures. Attendance varied across these sessions with a minimum of 5 participants at the first session and fourteen at the last session. Participants included parents, students, extended family members, administrators, and teachers.

Pomerantz & Moorman (2010) describe the importance of parental involvement and the positive environment it has the possibility of creating. They claim “the key to understanding the effects on children of parents’ involvement . . . is the resources it provides to children” (p. 398). They also present research paralleling both the positive and negative (counter-productive) affects of parental involvement, such as (a) *controlling versus autonomy* supportive-involvement, (allowing exploration by children opposed to demands by parents to reach positive outcomes) , (b) *structuring versus chaotic* involvement, ( parents provision of structure and boundaries opposed to chaotic environment where boundaries are unclear), (c) process versus person-focused involvement (parents focusing on the process of gaining knowledge opposed to the child’s performance ) and (d) involvement characterized by positive versus negative affects (recognizes parents’ involvement as a way to connect with their children and encourages fun and enjoyable interactions).

Table 4

*CAMP with Kim Timeline and Session Details*

Session Date	#1 4-13-10	#2 4-27-10	#3 5-6-10
Time	6:00-7:30PM	6:00-7:30PM	6:00-7:30PM
Goals	-Intro. of participants, -Intro. research on PI & student achievement, -Intro PIR program, & goals of <i>CAMP</i> -Present photo inventory info -Set-up dates for literacy interview	-Intro. of participants -Re-Intro of PIR program, & goals of <i>CAMP</i> - Provide parents with information on <i>Choosing a Just Right Book</i>	-Provide parents with literacy strategies they can incorporate at home. -Share 2 photo inventories
Activities	-Just Like Me (Get Acquainted Activity) -Explain & Demonstrate PIR (parents practice while I monitor) -Explain photo inventory & practice with cameras	- Which Item Describes You Best? (Get Acquainted Activity) - Explain & demo <i>Choosing a Just Right Book</i> -Parents make <i>Just Right</i> booklets & practice with children	-Complete make & take items at each station to be used at home for literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STATION #1-<i>Unknown Words</i></li> <li>• STATION #2-<i>Comprehension Questions</i></li> <li>• STATION #3-<i>Leveling Texts</i></li> <li>• STATION #4-<i>Building Fluency</i></li> </ul>
Participants	<b>Parents:</b> Ms. Betty, Ms. Myra <b>Students:</b> Ariel, Caity, Helen	<b>Parents:</b> Ms. Betty, Ms. Myra, Ms. Silver <b>Students:</b> Ariel, Caity, Helen	<b>Parents:</b> Ms. Camboli, Ms. Myra, Ms. Silver <b>Students:</b> Ariel, Caity, Helen

**Table 4. (cont'd)**

<b>Session Date</b>	<b>#4 5-18-10</b>	<b>#5 5-27-10</b>	<b>#6 6-1-10</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>6:00-7:30PM</b>	<b>5:00-7:00PM</b>	<b>6:00-7:30PM</b>
<b>Goals</b>	-Strategies to build vocabulary - Share Report from Teachers' Focus Group	-Intro. Of participants -Overview of literature & goals of study -Share literacy strategies from all <i>CAMP</i> sessions -Group forum (Questions in Appendix L)	-Prepare for Photo Inventory sharing -Discuss sharing info for final celebration
<b>Activities</b>	- Parents Share Results from Stations - Chucking Words to Build Vocabulary - View Photos for Literacy Links - Concentration Game ( <i>with chunking strategies</i> ) - PIR Session with children	-Brief overview of each literacy activity -Group forum (Questions related to Parental Involvement) *Continued at individual homes	Construct Photo Inventory Displays <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select photographs to use</li> <li>• Write script for photographs</li> <li>• Set-up display</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	<b>Parents:</b> Ms. Camboli, Ms. Myra, Ms. Silver <b>Students:</b> Ariel, Caity, Helen, Donnie, Frankie, Stanford	<b>Parents:</b> Ms. Camboli, Ms. Silver <b>Students:</b> Ariel, Caity, Donnie, Frankie, Stanford <b>Administrators:</b> Principal	<b>Parents:</b> Ms. Camboli, Ms. Silver, <b>Students:</b> Ariel, Ian, Sean, Donnie, Frankie, Stanford

**Table 4. (cont'd)**

<b>Session Date</b>	<b>#7 6-3-10</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>5:00-7:00PM</b>
<b>Goals</b>	-Celebrate the success of the program with all participants
<b>Activities</b>	-Introductions -Dinner -Explain goals for Phase I & Phase II -Sharing from teachers/parents/admin -Group Forum related to PIR & <i>CAMP with Kim</i> -(Questions in Appendix) -Awards & Certificates for all participants -Group photo of all participants
<b>Participants</b>	<b>Parents:</b> Ms. Camboli, Ms. Silver, Ms. Betty <b>Students:</b> Ariel, Ian, Sean, Donnie, Frankie, Stanford <b>Teachers:</b> Baynes, James, Rich <b>Administrators:</b> Principal & Assistant Principal

Additionally, as parents are encouraged and allowed to take an active role in their children's academic lives, they build a positive environment with the resources they provide. Most importantly, however, Pomerantz and Moorman (2010) stress the need for establishing a certain climate during an intervention because research documents how certain projects have had a negative effect. Essentially, the Phase II *CAMP with Kim* sessions were designed to bring forth the positive environment where parents learned about the two interventions in a safe and supportive environment. For example prior to the photo inventory project of taking photographs within the home, parents were given the opportunity to practice with the cameras, posing children as well as themselves and having fun with the camera opposed to the assumption they were unfamiliar with the cameras and blatantly providing them with degrading instructions for its basic use. Additionally, in building the proper climate, I initially allowed parents time to get acquainted during the first two *CAMP* sessions: I began with a Get Acquainted activity, and followed it by having parents introduce themselves and provide some unique background information (e.g. "I enjoy dancing," "I'm originally from the Dominican Republic," "Gardening is my favorite hobby" etc.). The culminating *CAMP* session was a Celebration Dinner, establishing the climate to the very end, reporting the overall accomplishment of the project, sharing highlights from each participant's perspective, and honoring all participants.

*CAMP with Kim* sessions were held bi-weekly on Tuesday or Thursday evenings based on an initial needs assessment distributed to parents (See Appendix M). When teachers and administrators joined the *CAMP* for focus group sessions, meeting times

were conveniently scheduled closer to student dismissal. All sessions were held in the Media Center at Thompson Primary School. A light dinner was served at the beginning of each session and two door prizes were awarded at the end of each session. Initially door prizes were intended for parents; however, as students became regular attendees to the focus group sessions, door prizes became literacy gifts for students (i.e., reading books, flashcards, workbooks, books on CD, etc). At the closing dinner and awards ceremony each student received a participation certificate, an “I had fun reading at *CAMP with Kim*” t-shirt, and at least two new books. The following sections describe in greater detail the two interventions within *CAMP with Kim*.

**Intervention One: *Partners-in-Reading* tutoring.** Partners-in-Reading (PIR) (Miller, 2003, 2009) was the first intervention. The main goal of PIR, extending the amount of quality reading from tutors was based on the Richard Allington title, “If They Don’t Read Much, How They Ever Gonna Get Good?” (1977). Miller’s (2003) Partners-in-Reading (PIR) program is a reading tutorial which offers struggling students assistance through the “reading and rereading of familiar texts, an introduction to texts slightly above a student’s instructional level, and various word recognition activities” (p. 333). This program has proven its success among struggling readers in Title I Schools (Miller, 2009).

Using the PIR framework in Phase II, tutors and tutees created a pocket folder for record keeping purposes. The three pockets of each folder provided scaffolding by indicating books read (a) by the tutor, (b) with the tutor, and (c) independently, with the attempt of increasing the books read independently as well as the reading level of those

books read alone. Tutees set weekly/bi-weekly goals for themselves, indicating the number of books and in some cases the level they would achieve within a two-week timeframe. The tutors kept a record of the books read, using strips of paper with book titles, levels and dates the reading was completed, in one of the corresponding three pockets (written by the tutor or tutee). This study modified the original Partners-in-Reading program by adding interns, teachers, and parents as tutors, which increased the amount of opportunities for students to be tutored. It also allowed greater interaction between the school and home. The original program used classroom assistants as tutors. The tutoring was implemented at least 4-8 times weekly with each student.

The tutee made and/or decorated two PIR folders, one for school and one for home. In addition to the pockets for recording book titles and accompanying data, each folder had a parent-teacher communication log for bi-weekly updates on reading levels and progress between parent and teacher tutors. (See Appendix I for a sample communication log). The form was used as a quick checkpoint reference of student progress with PIR, with progress defined as the number of books read independently (third pocket) and their instructional level.

Parents or other family members tutored the children at home 3-5 times weekly and teachers provided 1-3 additional tutorial sessions at school using the PIR literacy program. University students, who interned in the classrooms at TPS, assisted the teachers with their weekly tutoring sessions, and in some cases caused an increase in the tutoring the child received weekly. The goal was for parents and teachers/interns to provide at least 4 to 8, twenty-thirty minute tutoring sessions per week.

Teachers received PIR preparation from me during one after-school session. With teachers, I presented the background information, shared the logistics of how a session should be implemented, provided materials for and a visual sample of a PIR folder. Additionally, I explained the parents' role in this study and clarified the importance of the home-school bi-weekly parent-teacher communication log.

Parent participants received background PIR information during the initial *CAMP with Kim* session. Parent preparation and practice took place during the first *CAMP* session, with a follow-up assignment to construct and decorate the PIR folder with the student. After the initial *CAMP* session, parents gave oral accounts of their PIR experiences to me during *CAMP with Kim* sessions and received additional strategies to implement and report on. Parents received PIR strategies during each *CAMP* session (see Appendix H1-H6 for *CAMP* agendas and specific strategies taught).

**Intervention Two: Home-school connection.** The second intervention in Phase II built on the premise that every household is an educational setting (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988) where the social sharing or 'funds of knowledge' provided the basis for schools to build a bridge connecting the home's literacy activities and the school's curriculum. Moll and Greenberg's (1990) research on the social histories of the household emphasizes the various forms of literacy utilized within a household and the importance of connecting them to literacy activities in the classroom. The basic goal of this intervention was to get to know parents/families by understanding their lives and experiences without viewing them as if their differences implied a deficiency (socially or academically) and, then to use that personal knowledge as a springboard to tap into the

curriculum and connect with the students. There were three activities implemented with this intervention—a parent home literacy interview, the construction of the photo inventory of home literacy practices, and its presentation in the classroom. All will be explained in the following section.

### **Parent Home Literacy Interview**

I administered and audio taped the Parent Home Literacy Interview individually to each parent participant. Most decided to have the interview conducted at the school; however, Ms. Silver elected to have me visit her home. This interview consisted of four sections with approximately thirty questions and five subsequent follow-up questions. It included parents' perception of their child's literacy performance at school; literacy practices at home; personal reading experiences (currently and as a child in school); and their use of any outside resources for academic assistance (e.g., after-school program, tutor, etc.). These questions provided me with a greater understanding of the family's home literacy experiences, parents' ideas about the importance of literacy, and parents' level of comfort with their own literacy skills (See Appendix F for Interview Protocol). It also reinforced the belief that their existing practices were valuable and should be shared with the school.

### **Photo Inventory**

The first activity to bridge the home-school connection was the photo inventory, which was introduced to parents during the first *CAMP* session (April 13, 2010) when cameras were distributed. This idea comes from Gemma Moss' (2001) research on the 'gendering of reading' as well as the Lancaster Literacy Research Group's account of

‘Photographing Literacy Practices’ (Barton et al., 1993). Their use of a photo inventory of literacy practices in the homes of students was another way of documenting both the range of literacy resources in the home, and who was involved in each literacy activity. Moss (2001) states, “We were very aware that school was not the whole story and that home itself. . . might well have a part to play [in the literacy develop of the students.]” I saw this photo inventory as an opportunity to allow my parents to bring their funds of knowledge and cultural experiences into the school and ultimately bridge the gap that allows diverse students of limited economic resources to maintain that struggling status in the classroom setting. Therefore, parent participants took part in a photo inventory of their home literacy practices and cultural experiences. I provided each parent with a disposable camera and instructions to take 10 to 15 pictures of their home literacy practices. Camera usage was demonstrated at a *CAMP with Kim* session and parents then took the cameras home, took pictures and returned the cameras to the school (office or classroom teacher) for me to develop. In two instances, I went to the parent’s home to help them with this project. The photo inventory was a ticket into the homes and lives of my families’ literacy practices and cultural experiences. It provided connections to the parent literacy interview, it demonstrated the at-home academic practices of the families, and confirmed their cultural experiences as important in the eyes of the school.

### **Photo Inventory Presentations**

The follow-up to the second activity was the photo inventory presentation, an informal pathway that allowed parents access into the classroom on a level that was comfortable and welcoming (sharing their stories). During the May 27, 2010 focus group

session with parents and teachers, a schedule of available times for parents to share their Photo Inventories as well as convenient times for parents to share was established. Parents selected their presentations to coincide on the day the school was hosting a special parade for Reading Excellence. This allowed parents to present as well as be an integral part of a school initiated event for community involvement. I accompanied each parent on her classroom presentations and introduced the project to the class.

Each presentation took place in the child's classroom, with the students seated in front of the presenters on the carpeted floor. The classroom teachers gave an introduction of the parent and me; afterwards I gave a "child-friendly" overview of the program as many were interested because the students were wearing their *CAMP with Kim* t-shirts they received at the celebration dinner. The explanation, with the chance to take home a camera offered enough incentive for the students to get excited about their opportunity with this project. Each presentation was audio-taped, and lasted approximately 15-20 minutes depending on how detailed the presenters were with their explanations, as well as the number of questions posed by the interested students. The photo inventory presentation provided an alternative pathway for parents, as well as a reason and something tangible to bring to class related to their lives outside of school. This validated their experiences as valuable in the eyes of the school.

### **Data Sources and Procedures**

**Developmental Reading Assessment.** The first data source was pre- and post-scores on the school mandated Developmental Reading Assessment. Pearson Education, Inc. (2010) defines DRA as a research-based assessment used to determine an

independent reading level. It enables teachers to systematically observe, record, and evaluate change in student reading performance and to plan for and teach what each student needs to learn next. The DRA helps teachers pinpoint students' strengths and reading abilities in a one-on-one conference.

Additionally, the results of the DRA tell educators the best way to advance the child's reading ability. A teacher administering a DRA will select a text for a student, from the kit, read several pages and then allows the student to read the next several sections and answer 6-8 related questions (both implicit and explicit). During the DRA, teachers note observable reading behaviors such as pausing, rereading, searching the pictures, appealing for help, sounding out clusters of letters, and self-correcting (Jacobsen et al., 2002). Teachers are asked to analyze the student's miscues on the running record, or record of oral reading. The DRA measures both decoding (oral reading accuracy) and reading comprehension. It is usually administered at the beginning, middle and end of the year and the multiple assessments are compared over time to monitor literacy growth. (<http://skilestest.ltschools.org/academics/curriculum/testing-program>). At Thompson Primary School (TPS), teachers or teacher assistants administered the DRA.

**The number of independently read leveled texts.** The second PIR data source was the number of independently read texts and their reading levels. The number of independently read books was obtained by counting the number of texts in the third pocket of the PIR reading folder. The school used Fontas and Pinnell's (1996) alphabetic guided reading system when leveling books. The kindergarten to eighth grade levels range from A-Z with H through M signifying second grade reading abilities.

**Parent-teacher communication logs.** Communication between school and families occurred in one of three ways. Space was provided in the reading folders for teachers and family members to note the number of books in each pocket, the levels of the most currently read books, and any additional information. Families and schools also communicated via phone calls or face-to-face discussions and documented the shared information on the contact log. Notes on the bi-weekly parent-teacher communication log helped me to cross check what transpired during the communication time.

The parent-teacher communication log provided a non-demanding way to check-up on students' progress (i.e., the numbers of books read & the level of current independently read books) and record the discussed information (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). This document required teachers and parents to record the date of the PIR tutorial session, the child's reading level at that time, the number of books in the independently read pocket, and any additional comments they deemed important, or which changed from the previous session. I also used this documentation to update and assess students' progress periodically, as I made note of the information shared as well. This was especially useful when the informal interviews were difficult to achieve due to teacher schedules and protected times for class instruction.

**Focus groups.** Focus groups were designed to collectively share ideas, experiences, and suggestions about the PIR tutoring, how that collaboration would positively impact the literacy achievement of students, while also fostering opportunities for parents to become involved at the school level. Some focus groups were with individual groups and some were with combinations of the different groups. The parent

focus groups occurred during *CAMP (Comforting And Motivating Parents) with Kim* providing opportunities for parents to discuss and share. The sessions systematically focused on providing opportunities for parent-identified obstacles for involvement. This was achieved by teaching the parent participants literacy strategies and skills to assure them they were a welcomed part of the literacy learning process of their children, to encourage their participation in the child's literacy learning both at school and at home, and to equip them with techniques and methods they could easily incorporate at home to enhance the child's literacy development, as a way of strengthening the resources parents are able to provide (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010).

Teachers came together for a teacher focus group session on May 13, 2010 to discuss the PIR program they were implementing with students. This discussion provided helpful information that was communicated later with parents. Teachers discussed parent involvement opportunities and ways to overcome some of the obstacles (i.e., younger children not in day care would need to come with them, how to help without interrupting, what to do when parents are spontaneously available to come and assist without prior planning or notice to the teacher, etc.)

Additionally, parents and teachers came together in one combined focus group session (May 27, 2010) for parents to share their *CAMP with Kim* activities, and how these new strategies were being implemented in their homes, with their children as well as teachers providing involvement times and opportunities. Teachers, in-turn shared possible ways for parents to become involved in their classrooms such as listening to students read, sitting with students as a monitor during teacher directed, etc.

Lastly, all participants took part in a focus group question and answer session during the celebration dinner (June 3, 2010). This dialogue allowed teachers additional background information on the families, which they could include in their instructional lessons and parents were enlightened on collaborative ways they could be supportive and beneficial (to students and teachers) in the classroom. This focus group session lasted approximately 1.5 hours. (See Appendix L for focus group protocol questions).

**Personal field notes.** Upon completion of interviews or focus group session with any/all participants, I briefly documented my memories of the experience. The field notes highlighted behaviors, facial expressions, gestures and even stories shared by participants during dialogue and during any unrecorded time, as a way to accurately document all that was taking place.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research can be defined by using three concurrent flows of action: data reduction, data display, and conclusions and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study produced a great deal of data (specifically within Phase II) in the form of qualitative information; therefore to make meaning of the data, I followed the aforementioned concurrent flows of action recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). Data reduction involves selecting, simplifying and transforming the collected data. This reduction is needed in order to make the data more readily accessible and understandable (Berg, 2004; Kvale, 1996). Data display is implemented to organize the collected data so it allows the researcher to draw conclusions (Berg, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994) which leads to the final component: conclusion drawing and

verification. Though there may be some preliminary conclusions made by the researcher during the data collection process, there should not be any definitive conclusions made. The preliminary conclusions should be verified in this final component (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Additionally, I used Boeije's (2002) recommendations toward constant comparison, consisting of comparisons within a single interview, between interviews within the same group (administrators, teachers, school personnel, and parents), and across interviews from different groups. Tesch (1990) defines constant comparison in reference to grounded theory:

The main intellectual tool is comparison. The method of comparing and contrasting is used for practically all intellectual tasks during analysis: forming categories, establishing the boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments to categories, summarizing the content of each category, finding negative evidence, etc. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and to discover patterns. (p. 96)

The goal of using both was to determine conceptual similarities and discover patterns while forming categories, and then to summarize the content of each category. Phase II also consisted of quantitative data as student DRA baseline, pre- and post-reading scores data, along with their accumulated number of independently read texts data was compared prior to and during the tutoring. Because of the small number of participants, comparative analysis could not be used: instead, I compared the rate of improvement for a month and looked for at least a two-fold increase.

Each phase and the accompanying data analysis procedures follow in the next section of this chapter. In analyzing the interview data during Phase I:

- I initially read through each transcript
- I took notes on each question, identifying information that related most directly to the question's intent and how that question fit into the Calabrese Barton et al. (2004) Ecologies of Parental Engagement (EPE) model or comments that were mentioned in the literature on obstacles and opportunities with parental involvement, families funds of knowledge, family literacy, or literacy development of struggling elementary readers.
- I took that information and created a matrix for each group of interviews (administrators, teachers, parents). That included the interview questions on the Y axis and the Interviewees and their highlighted comments on the X axis.
- A colleague in the field and I took notes on each question, identifying information that related most directly to the question's intent and how that question fit into the Calabrese Barton et al. (2004) EPE model.
- Below each set of responses I noted similarities within and documented the literature that addressed the responses.
- I then extracted information from each interview that told the "Ideal" story & the "Reality" story of each participant based on their responses
- I then identified the themes regarding the opportunities and obstacles to parental involvement.
- From that information each individual's parental involvement 'story' was developed

- The individual stories were then reviewed for similarities within groups (administrators, teachers, parents)
- Then individual stories were reviewed for similarities across groups (administrators & teachers) which created the School's Perspective

This method of analysis allowed me to sort, focus, discard and organize the data in a way to draw and verify final conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Similar procedures were utilized as I analyzed the data for Phase II. Again I followed Miles and Huberman's (1984) recommendations for reducing, displaying, and drawing conclusions from one's data. Initially, I:

- Designed a matrix that linked each research question to the data set/source that would potentially answer it (See Tables 1 and 2 for the matrix).
- I then read through the groups of transcripts (parent interviews, focus group sessions, and *CAMP with Kim* sessions) while making notes in the margin related to my interpretation of the participants' responses related to their opportunities and obstacles. *For example on the second CAMP session, dated April 27, 2010, Ms. Betty's comment "I thought she done good" as she evaluated Ariel's reading, I noted [Practice empowered parents]*
- Next, I reread the transcripts, and along with the coding notes in the margin, I listed the literature that supported the noted actions. *For example, using the above example, I noted [Opportunity allowed parent to gain trust and comfort—Calabrese Barton et al.]*.

- Following that step, I designed a graphic representation where I listed each research question individually along with the data sources implemented to answer that specific research question.
- Next, I inserted specific comments/actions made by a participant that supported a potential answer to the research question onto the chart. These insertions were placed on the graphic representation under the data source from which it was retrieved with--the date, participant and any additional information that would assist me in later retrieval of that information (chain of evidence).
- Additionally while reviewing the responses, I indicated the supporting theories in which the comment/action was grounded. *For example—same example mentioned above, I noted [Built confidence & motivation—SDT—Self Determination Theory].*
- Next, I moved the coding to a more explanatory/inferential level by looking at the extent to which the different opportunities and obstacles related to the research literature (Calabrese Barton et al.'s (2004) Ecologies of Parental Engagement model; Moll and Greenberg's (1990) Funds of Knowledge; and Pomerantz and Moorman's (2010) climate, skill and motivation toward children's developmental context). Commonalities among these frameworks served as the foundation for the identification of themes in my coding.
- Then I used pattern codes to identify and categorize overarching themes within the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994) related to

each participant's evaluation of the PIR tutoring program and Phase II's goals (a) to develop a plan that provided struggling readers quality time to read and be read to as a way to increase their reading achievement, (b) to develop an informal pathway for parents to become actively involved at the school level, utilizing a difference-based model, and (c) to develop a way for teachers and parents to link home literacies to the school curriculum.

Additionally, triangulation reduces the risk of reflecting only one perspective/point of view, while also broadening my knowledge and understanding of the parental involvement issues/concerns related to my participants. Thus, in using such a variety of data sources, as well my own field notes, my data was triangulated (Fielding & Fielding, 1986).

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

This mixed-methods case study investigated, in two-phases, the school-based parental involvement of families with limited financial resources who have early grade children struggling with reading. The study's propositions were (a) when given the opportunity to participate via appropriate pathways; parents' involvement will increase, and (b) to the extent that parents are involved directly in their children's education, students' reading progress and parents' involvement will increase. The findings for this study will be presented as I answer each research question. Initially, I will share Phase I results to the research questions based on the interviews that were administered to the individual participants. Then, I will share the Phase II results, both qualitative and quantitative, relative to the research questions and interventions. I initially will discuss the results within individual cases, and then describe the results I discovered across all cases.

#### **Phase I—Research Question 1**

The first research question guiding Phase I of this study was, "*What do administrators and teachers view as opportunities for and challenges to increasing parental involvement at their school?*" To answer this question, I interviewed two administrators (principal and parent liaison) and two first grade teachers of Thompson Primary School on their perceptions of parental involvement of families with limited

financial resources, the reasons for their limited involvement, the structure of parental involvement opportunities available at this school, and the literacy struggles of the children from families with limited financial resources (See Appendix A for Administrator Interview Protocol and Appendix B for Teacher Interview Protocol).

### **Administrators' Interviews**

**Principal interview.** The principal wanted parents to be actively involved with their children's social, emotional, and academic development. As she stated, "It takes a whole village to raise a child," and everyone benefits—school, child, and family—when students are successful at school. Parental involvement did not entail one thing such as attending PTA meetings. It required this attendance as well as a host of others (e.g. helping with homework, attending school carnivals, etc.). Such involvement was critical because it instilled the values that children needed to be successful in school; without such values, she questioned whether schools could meet students' learning needs. While she used the middle class family as her model of involvement—their children have good vocabularies, check out books from the library, and demonstrate positive self-esteem, social skills, and self-discipline—she believed all parents wanted their children to do well. She did not have knowledge of students' home literacy practices.

She described parental involvement at her school by noting the following beliefs. "Parents who volunteered frequently and attended school events, felt comfortable in the school, had good relationships with teachers, and had children who needed minimal, if any, academic assistance" (Interview, June 15, 2009). Per her calculations and district reports, an estimated one-third of the parents attended the school's Book Fairs, Cultural

Nights, and Covered Dish Dinners; fewer parents attended the school's sponsored Accountability Night. To stress the importance of reading, volunteers or even parents were NOT allowed in classrooms during a protected ninety-minute literacy block each morning. She was aware of the fact that parents whose children needed academic assistance did not volunteer because they often worked more than one job, could not take time off from work during the day, did not have available transportation, lacked adequate English skills, or would have had to bring their young, non-school aged children with them to school. The current economic downturn exacerbated the challenges of parent involvement they faced as a school and increased the community's alcohol and drug problems. Despite these challenges, the principal wanted parents to overcome their situations to become more involved: she stated, "Where there is a will, there is a way" (Interview, June 15, 2009).

**Parent liaison interview.** According to the parent liaison, whose role is to assist parents and school personnel in their communication especially with regards to student attendance, medical issues, exceptional children's files, and reaching the 'hard to locate' parent for school conferences and legal paperwork, "the principal sets the tone for parent involvement through her vision as a leader" (Interview, May 28, 2009). The parent liaison witnessed and worried about the decline in parent involvement as the child progressed through school. Depending on the parents' knowledge of the school's procedures and pathways for involvement, she wanted "all parents to take a vested interest in their children's education beyond the primary school years" (Interview, May 28, 2009). She observed varied levels of involvement for parents (e.g., completing

homework, attending PTA meetings and conferences, sending in supplies, or getting the child to school). Such interactions included the involvement of less educated parents who required her assistance.

The ideal situation was for parents to advocate for children, whether in parent-teacher meetings or group intervention meetings. She mainly dealt with those parents who seldom attended or volunteered at school functions. When asked about her successes, she recalled a specific parent whom she coached to, “Speak from the heart” when she addressed the school about her child. As a result of her coaching the parent, she learned the importance of taking the initiative and advocating for her child. Calabrese Barton et al. (2004) speak of how this coaching builds home-school relationships and provides parents with a growing sense of confidence to participate.

When asked about the current levels of parent involvement at Thompson Primary, she listed concerns regarding the school’s needs for extra help and supplies; employers’ failure to allow parents to attend school during work hours; parents’ lack of understanding about school’s expectations and procedures; lack of transportation, sense of personal school failure, and general sense of “being intimidated by the whole school thing” (Interview, May 28, 2009). While she spoke of her personal goal to increase involvement, she admitted that many “. . . parents still don’t have a clear understanding of what their expectations are in a classroom—academically” and they refuse to just sit in a classroom to watch and observe the teacher at work. She also acknowledged how some teachers, “. . . hindered our parents from feeling they are a part of our environment” due to their own fears, inadequacies or lack of knowledge about parents. She noted an

increase in parent attendance at meetings when she took the initiative to hold meetings in the community, which reinforced the school's commitment to bridging the efforts of home and school and increased parental knowledge about school as well as their involvement. Additionally, in an attempt to keep parents informed, the main form of communication, used by the school and its individual teachers, was written notices or phone calls both in English and Spanish.

**Summary of administrators' interviews.** Both administrators (Principal and Parent Liaison) sought home-based as well as school-based involvement from parents. While both praised the benefits of parental involvement, their comments varied based on their administrative responsibilities. The principal presented a more global perspective and linked parent involvement with the acquisition of certain values, most notably those demonstrated by middle class parents, who were currently involved in volunteering at the school. The liaison's responsibilities brought her into frequent contact with those parents who were typically not involved and whose children struggled academically. Her approach mainly centered on working with parents/families on an individual basis to build confidence and knowledge. Despite their many efforts to involve parents at the school level, both administrators acknowledged their dissatisfaction with the school's present status of parental involvement—they chiefly lacked the involvement of diverse families with limited financial resources, who also had children struggling academically, and their attempts to involve parents basically met the criteria deficit-based.

### **Teacher Interviews**

**Mrs. Lawson.** Mrs. Lawson described herself as “kind and caring” person who could be firm when explaining unwelcomed news to parents. Even though parents might not want to acknowledge academic difficulties, she stressed the importance of being ‘straight’ with them. It was the teacher’s responsibility to be direct and honest when discussing a student’s progress (or the lack thereof). She felt parents could become involved by helping in her classroom or by sending supplies. The benefits from that involvement were threefold—parents learned about the classroom’s educational activities; realized how they could support the school’s efforts to help their children achieve; and students saw parents (not necessarily their own) caring about them and their education, possibly their “I don’t care attitudes” would also change. She noted some challenges to school based involvement as the economic downturn, the difficulties of “living paycheck to paycheck,” no transportation, and a lack of knowledge regarding what they might do to help students (Interview, June 1, 2009). Regardless of these challenges, she continued to extend invitations to parents through letters and phone calls, even though less than half were ever answered. She felt, despite day-to-day challenges, if parents wanted to be involved they would make more of an effort to be available for the school, for their children.

Throughout the interview, Mrs. Lawson repeatedly indicated her need to have as many parents as possible to be in her classroom to help meet students’ needs. As for the families she referred for this study, Mrs. Lawson thought their home literacy activities varied from being satisfactory to not acceptable. She also recognized the need to

differentiate assignments for struggling students yet felt it was difficult at times to do so because of her students' multiple demands. She also stated she could use any parent volunteers to tutor and remediate students, even if they had minimal education themselves. She agreed with the principal's views on parental involvement—if there was the will, parents would find a way.

**Mrs. Little.** Mrs. Little describes herself as a thoughtful and caring teacher who tried to bring motivation and energy into her classroom. She is a veteran teacher who “sets high expectations” for all students as well as herself. She readily acknowledges that her students often are a “handful;” however, she “loves it” [the challenge of teaching them] because learning is a direct by product of parental involvement, Ms. Little wishes more of her colleagues at Thompson Primary, would practice “an open-door policy because it builds positive relationships and reinforces the importance of schooling and its application to students' daily lives” (Interview, May 20, 2009). As a means of informing her parents, she developed PowerPoint presentations with helpful tips for parent involvement that she shared at various PTA meetings. Some admitted how “some parents needed guidance” and she provided the support through her website and weekly newsletters: both provided information regarding, lunchtime, special events at school, and encouragement to read with children nightly. A large percentage of her parents attended the open house and provided classroom supplies upon request, however, when she was unable to contact parents for varied reasons, she did not travel to their homes; instead, she used the parent liaison.

Mrs. Little believed the failing economy affected parents' school-based involvement, because they were not able to take time off of work for fear of losing their jobs. She also held the school responsible for some of the obstacles that perpetuated a lack of parental involvement, such as the, "protected reading time" which restricted parent visitation in the classrooms. Despite this barrier, she invited all parents to become involved through, lunch invitations, reading with a child, brief drop-ins, or visitation at any point during the day. When asked about her knowledge of the home literacy practices of her students and their families, she felt parents were not involved enough in their children's reading and believed their confidence to assist would improve if they became more involved.

**Summary of teacher interviews.** Both teachers strongly believed parental involvement at school and home denoted support for the school, the child and the teacher; however Ms. Lawson additionally linked involvement to the care shown by parents and student achievement. She [Mrs. Lawson] presented a more personal connection to involvement even if the parent assisted other children than his/her own. Lawson essentially seemed to blame parents for their lack of involvement, claiming that if they wanted to they would find a way to be more involved. Mrs. Little, on the other hand, saw the benefit of relationship building, as a way to demonstrate to children that school is important. As traditional pathways of communication are the preferred avenues by both teachers for reaching parents, Mrs. Little extended the boundaries as well as utilized the assistance of the Parent Liaison if parents were difficult to reach/involve, demonstrating a 'never-give-up' attitude toward the students.

### **School's Perspective**

Administrators and teachers made assumptions about the benefits--equating them mainly with the acquisition of the appropriate values within the home (e.g., if parents modeled appropriate life values, their children would achieve academically, simply because they understood the importance of education and studying.) Furthermore, administrators and teachers felt it necessary to inform many parents, especially those with limited economic resources, "how to do school," possibly due to the fact that they considered many of the non-involved parents to be illiterate and lacking the appropriate school-related values. Overall, they offered little awareness to families' home literacy practices.

As a whole, school personnel took pride in the great emphasis placed on the multiple pathways they extended to involve parents with the school lives of their children, (e.g., sending letters/fliers & making phone calls to invite parents to meetings, programs, and simple tasks such as reading to a child, eating lunch, or visiting and helping within the child's classroom). They found it disappointing when parents failed to attend these traditional activities. The least attended meetings were district mandated accountability sessions where parents could learn more about testing and why it is so important in today's schools. Furthermore, teachers expressed frustration with the various academic needs of students, particularly those from diverse families with limited financial resources, and with the diminishing resources available because of the recent economic downturn. For these and many other reasons, teachers welcomed any and all types of assistance from parents or other adults. Though teachers and administrators

mentioned many ways the school could utilize parents' assistance in the classrooms; their descriptions basically wanted parents to serve as observers, classroom assistants--offering an extra set of hands to oversee small activities and projects. Even though parents faced many obstacles in their daily lives, the educators believed that they should be able to find time if they really cared about their children's well-being.

### **Phase I—Research Question 2**

The second research question guiding Phase I of this study was, “What do parents *of low socioeconomic status view as opportunities for and challenges to increasing their levels of involvement at school?*” To answer this question, I interviewed four parents of Thompson Primary School, who were identified by the two first grade homeroom teachers as having limited financial resources, lacking in school-based parental involvement and had a child struggling with elementary literacy (see Appendix D for Parent Interview Protocol).

#### **Parent Interviews**

**Ms. Silver.** Ms. Silver is a single, Hispanic mother of four children (three in elementary, one entering college), who defines parent involvement as “being in contact with the teacher in order to know what is going on at school” (Interview, June 10, 2009). It also helps parents “to learn about the school” as well. She felt that all parents had an equal opportunity to become involved at this school, but also indicted, “if they did not feel as comfortable [as she did], they would not participate.”

Ms. Silver moved to the United States from the Dominion Republic, as a child several months after learning to speak English as her second language. As a child, she

loved school and did very well academically. She recalled her own parents, especially her mother, being actively involved at school and attributes her own interest in volunteering, to her past involvement. Her parents strongly supported her education as they continued to do with her children. Recently they sent money for her daughter to register for classes at the local community college. She eagerly shared the story of how volunteering to translate in church showed her how she could be a role model for others. She continues to serve in this role, as church translator, and her daughter recently started to share this responsibility. Ms. Silver had great aspirations for herself and her children and indicated that if the opportunity arose, she would “like to start a bilingual class for parents and students” because she wanted her children and others to speak English and Spanish with knowledge and pride.

Although she thought parents had an equal opportunity to become involved at Thompson Primary, she also felt that many parents, particularly Hispanics, were fearful because they had not mastered English, did not want to “draw attention to themselves by asking for a translator,” and did not understand how schools operated. Additionally, her work schedule and an uncooperative supervisor kept her from volunteering at the school; however, she told teachers to contact her for anything. Other challenges included being a single parent with four children. When she was laid off towards the end of the school year, Ms. Silver did not volunteer at school because she hoped to take translation courses at the community college. She claimed that unlike many of her Hispanic friends and neighbors, she was comfortable at the school and felt that if necessary she could even

chair a fundraising event. Praising and explaining her own willingness to work with people, she claims, “You learn a lot from others and they learn from you.”

**Ms. Camboli.** Ms. Camboli is a single, Hispanic mother with three young children, one of whom was of elementary school age; the middle child, a hearing impaired son, began school the following year, and the third was still of preschool age. She grew up in this district and attended local schools. She believed that most parents became involved because they felt comfortable and wanted to help; however, she did “not feel comfortable” (Interview, August 5, 2009) because of her negative experiences as an elementary school student. To her, parent involvement meant “working on school assignments” to build her child’s confidence and “attending [required] conferences.” She proudly met these responsibilities by making flashcards and by checking to see if her child completed her homework. She believed teachers appreciated her efforts because they rewarded her child with homework passes when she turned in assignments on time.

Though very shy and soft-spoken during the interview, she claimed if she had time, she would like to “assist at school during science” (Interview, August 5, 2009). Her love of science was shown during the interview when her young daughter interrupted us to let her know that she discovered “another snakeskin.” Ms. Camboli hastily stopped the interview to check on some baby kittens living under the house, because she wanted to “make sure they were safe.” She also shared that although she would enjoy teaching science, she would “be nervous about what to do and what they [teachers & administrators] might say.” When asked how she could overcome her hesitancy, she stated that other parents might help her to “*fit in.*”

**Mr. Goode.** Mr. Goode is an unemployed, single, European-American father, who has severe literacy issues; he has sole custody of his three children (8- and 13-year-old daughters and an 11-year-old son). Even though he knew school was important, he caused problems as a young student because he found school to be “boring” (Interview, November 14, 2009). His weak reading skills may be related to the fact that he dropped out of school in the ninth grade. Yet, repeating history, as a child, his father was the sole provider for him and his siblings, and at the time of this interview, he lived across the street from his father. Regarding availability for volunteering at school, Mr. Goode stated, “I am with my three kids 24 hours a day,” making sure that “they are fed, clean, and show up for school.” That was his contribution to parental involvement.

Regarding involvement, his role was to make sure his children attended school each day and completed homework assignments regularly. His oldest daughter was responsible for making sure that her sister completed her homework. Mr. Goode had a desire to be at school if he could serve in a non-academic role (e.g., shelve books or do janitorial tasks). When asked why he felt comfortable with tasks of this nature, he replied, “I could keep my eyes on them [the children] and make sure they wouldn’t get hurt.” To do so, he believed that he would have to overcome his shyness and fit it into his already busy schedule.

**Mr. and Mrs. Parks.** Mr. and Mrs. Parks are a middle-aged, married European-American couple with four school-aged children, ranging in ages from 6-18 years, one of whom is a male first grader with autism. Both view parental involvement as an effort that begins at home with the “expectations parents set for their children” as well as

“expectations of the educational system” (Interview, October 19, 2009). They claimed to make an effort to “insure that learning takes place both at school and at home.” They identified themselves as their children’s “first teachers,” and noted their early involvement as “setting the stage for future education.” Without this support, Mr. Parks states, “We are doing our children a disservice.” Such involvement is essential and parents have the responsibility to become involved in their child’s education.

While they are more involved at home than school, Mr. Parks believed their involvement promoted “intrinsic motivation’ because their assistance at home gives their children comfort in knowing that if there’s a problem they get help rather than punishment. Mrs. Parks echoed this response by stating that school involvement made her “children proud.” She also welcomed her own mother’s involvement, as she served on the PTA boards and “dragged us” to meetings. Even though both Mr. and Mrs. Parks acknowledged the importance of school-based involvement, they were not as involved at school as they would like because life’s challenges got in the way. Mr. Parks stated, he “drives their only family car they have, twenty miles to work” in a neighboring city leaving his “wife at home unable to get to school.” They truly cared about what happens at school, but could not find the time at this point in their lives to actively be involved.

They both applauded the school’s efforts, especially the teachers, in encouraging, informing, and involving them in school-wide efforts. Additionally, they felt their son’s need for an IEP (individualized education plan) kept them in constant contact with the school; they also felt involved and informed with their older daughters, who were in the advanced learners’ program. When asked what they would do if they were able to

volunteer, Mr. Parks spoke about his quest for scientific knowledge and how he'd like to share that with students. Mrs. Parks added "working in a garden", stating that this would be something "all children could" get excited about, even those with special needs.

**Summary of parent interviews.** The parents represented themselves as partners in their children's education by monitoring homework completion; by helping them to memorize spelling words and math facts; by going over required reading; and by attending teacher requested meetings. While parents were aware of and collectively applauded the school's efforts to offer multiple pathways to increase their involvement, these pathways were not in synch with the multiple challenges of their daily lives. Each of the families had multiple school-aged children; three were fearful of participating because they were unsuccessful when they were students; two had children with special needs; only one family had consistent employment; and every family had transportation issues. Given these obstacles, it appeared unrealistic for them to attend large school events, to volunteer in the classroom, or to take part in any school related activities that cost money (e.g., lunch with your child and book fairs). Each parent, in his or her own way, knew and expressed the importance of parental involvement; yet interfering obstacles overpowered their aspirations.

### **Phase I—Research Question 3**

The third and last research question from the Phase I portion of this study was, *"What is the relationship among parents,' teachers,' and the administrators' views regarding opportunities for and challenges to increasing school involvement of low socioeconomic status parents?"* To answer this question, I reviewed each participant's

responses and used charts (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and data displays to organize similarities and differences (Berg, 2004).

From the school's perspective, if parents had the right values towards education, they would model these values, which, in turn, helped their children to do well in school because they would realize the importance of obtaining a good education. Conversely, if students were not doing well academically, parents must not be modeling the appropriate educational values. Regarding opportunities, schools wanted parents to attend PTA meetings, other whole school activities and parent conferences; to help at home with homework; and to read to their children daily. Participation in the school's multiple outreach activities would give parents an opportunity to acquire the necessary values to improve their children's academic performances and attitudes. While schools recognized parents' employment, transportation, and childcare obstacles, they expected them to overcome these difficulties if they wanted their children to do well in school.

Administrators and teachers were not aware of or discounted the present contributions of parents, quite possibly, because they were not visible or because their children continued to struggle.

Additionally, although I found explicit evidence of families' funds of knowledge, teachers and administrators were not aware of them and thus did not use them as alternative pathways to increase parents' involvement. Given these findings, I established several goals for this study's second phase. First, I wanted to develop (a) informal pathways for parents to become actively involved, (b) a way for teachers and parents to link home literacies to the school's curriculum, and (c) a plan to provide struggling

readers with more opportunities to improve their reading abilities. These goals allowed me to create the interventions used in this study's Phase II.

### **Summary of Phase I**

Based on the research questions from Phase I, administrators and teachers strongly supported parental involvement and linked certain values related to its demonstration from parents to children (e.g., if parents modeled appropriate life values, children would achieve because they would understand the importance of education) and they took great pride in the emphasis placed on the multiple pathways they extended to involve parents with the school lives of their children. Teachers expressed some frustration with the academic needs of students from families with limited economic resources, and wished more parents would serve as volunteers in the classroom. Finally, parents strongly believed in parental involvement and praised its benefits, but they did not become involved except for homework unless teachers requested a meeting to discuss their child. Negative childhood school experiences, difficulties with employment or transportation, or dispositional factors were reasons why parents avoided school-based parental involvement opportunities. Thus, each partner's efforts did not appear to support the other's expectations, nor did the sum total of their efforts appear to improve students' academic achievement because students were still struggling. Therefore as pessimistic as the results seemed even with the efforts of all the different partners, I did not want to share the depressing results for fear of inciting resentment among them or towards me as the 'outsider' posing implications in their world. As a result, I decided to create a tutoring program which included teachers and parents as partners, thus Phase II was designed to

give students more opportunities to strengthen their reading abilities while simultaneously working to improve the home-school relations.

### **Phase II—Research Question 1**

The first research question guiding Phase II of this study was, “*How will parents and teachers respond to opportunities to become partners in tutoring struggling readers?*” To answer this question, opportunities must first be defined. Opportunities for the parents in this study, for this particular question, included *CAMP with Kim*, through which parents were introduced to literacy goals, the modeling and practicing of literacy strategies, application of Partners in Reading (PIR) tutoring procedures (while I served as the facilitator providing feedback upon practice), as well as the application of PIR independently (whether at home or during *CAMP* sessions) with the ability to share ideas and ask questions during follow-up *CAMP* sessions. *CAMP with Kim* was intended to provide parents the support and guidance (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004) as well as the confidence and empowerment needed by diverse families with limited financial resources, to implement such a program (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010).

Over the course of two and one half months, through seven *CAMP with Kim* sessions, my goal was for parents to acquire enough knowledge and expertise to be able to interact with teachers as equitable partners. In Phase I, teachers did not view parents as having the appropriate values; therefore, their children continued to struggle academically and teachers wanted parents to become more involved in the academic lives of their children. The expected means of involvement teachers desired, did not relate directly towards helping the students to become better readers; instead, they wanted

parents to assume roles that were normally the responsibility of the classroom assistant. Moreover, while I viewed parents as having the necessary values, they did not actually have the necessary knowledge to tutor their children and they needed to develop this expertise for the teachers to view them as equitable partners in this intervention.

To achieve this goal, I situated my analysis in self-determination theory-SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) which primarily promotes an interest in learning, the valuing of education, and confidence in one's own abilities. This is a result of feeling valued, therefore producing motivation to succeed. Research indicates these processes result in high-quality learning as well as improved personal growth. I used the three components of SDT: *relatedness*, *competence* and *autonomy*. As I began the *CAMP with Kim* sessions, I addressed parents' relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000) or their sense of belonging, in two specific ways. One purpose was mainly social, in that, I wanted to make them comfortable with the *CAMP* and the other was to use this familiarity as a springboard to improve their competence and autonomy.

I started with relatedness with their social interactions because the parents did not know each other or me, and they had not shown any involvement with the school. During each *CAMP* session, I began with a 'Getting to Know You' activity to allow more of a connection with someone or the group as a whole. We learned more about one another in hopes of discovering and divulging information which would be helpful to someone or to many. This relatedness was designed to lower parents' anxieties and develop a sense of trust among the group as a whole; however, as we learned more about one another in the 'Getting to Know You' activities I wanted parents to also witness a connection to the

goal of academic success. To the extent that they developed a sense of belonging, I assumed that they would be more willing to take the necessary risks to acquire the expertise to tutor their children.

This specific Getting to Know You activity during the second *CAMP* session (April 27, 2010) I brought in a basket of random household items. Included in the basket were a battery, an orange, popcorn, a pack of pencils, a small stuffed animal, tape, a mug, a spoon, travel-size tissue, and a candle. The directions were to take two items out of the basket that you would use to describe yourself. This way we would learn more about one another in a fun and creative way. Even though we were few in attendance, Ms. Betty showed a bit of anxiety (lacked the necessary relatedness to feel comfortable) when asked to describe herself using any two items. She chose to yield to my lead, so I first shared my own description.

***Pemberton:*** This time our Getting to Know You game is called, *Which Item Describes You Best*. I have a basket full of just stuff, and you get to pick out two things that you think describe you. Then you have to tell us why those two things describe you. Would you like to go first Ms. Betty or me?

***Ariel:*** I want my grandma to go.

***Ms. Betty:*** No, you go ahead [yielding to me].

***Pemberton:*** Okay, I'm going to start, I'm going to take an orange and I'm going to take the batteries. These two things describe me because . . .

Ms. Betty then took her turn. Following my lead allowed her time to overcome her initial anxiety. After several opportunities to engage with the group and me, her comments at the closing Celebration Dinner confirmed a sense of her belongingness in the group. She

grew to know the group and me well enough to feel relaxed in our company. As all participants were asked to introduce themselves and share an unknown or unusual fact with the group, Ms. Betty's comments below came after I inadvertently skipped and forgot to allow her self-introduction:

**Ms. Betty:** Yeah, you forgot all 'bout me huh? [laughter] That's alright. Well, my name is [Betty Smith] and I am the great grandmother of [Ariel] and her brothers here. I retired after 42 years of working. I'm widowed. What y'all don't know about me is I'm a dancer. I loves to dance—any kinda' dancing. I can do it all. Me and my husband used to really cut 'a rug when we used to go to dances. Y'all would 'a never thought that huh? [Laughing].

The transition from being anxious to becoming comfortable was evident with other parents as well. This sense of belonging connects to what Pomerantz et al. (2010) describe as a proper way to build a trusting climate by providing structure and support in a positive manner.

The next type of relatedness dealt with parents' growing sense of competency. This relatedness involved their trust of each other and me as they acquired the necessary tutoring skills. I expected difficulties with learning these skills and I did not want them to feel ridiculed or embarrassed because either outcome would undermine their willingness to participate. While learning these skills, parents again went from being anxious to confident as I tried to get them to focus on the process of learning how to tutor (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010).

Ms. Silver shows her initial anxiety with very few words to assist her child's reading errors during an early *CAMP* session (May 6, 2010):

**Stanford:** The air condition is broke.

**Ms. Silver:** Broken.

**Stanford:** Broken. The air condition did umm,

**Ms. Silver:** The air conditioning

**Stanford:** The air conditioning . . . the air speaks umm,

**Ms. Silver:** Either

**Stanford:** Either speak of

**Ms. Silver:** Speaking

**Stanford:** Either speaking

**Ms. Silver:** of

**Stanford:** Speaking of the

**Ms. Silver:** (?)

Notice how she offers very little assistance other than the word Stanford struggles to read or pronounce. However, during a literacy game of Vocabulary Concentration, approximately two weeks later (May 18, 2010), Ms. Silver released herself from the initial anxiety and became fully engaged:

**Pemberton:** Good, and now you have to find a word that has a PH sound in it. Does it have the sound in it? Put it down so everybody can see it after turning it over, because someone else might need to look at that. All right, [Frankie], it's your turn.

**Ms. Silver:** [Frankie], pick one. Pick a orange one.

**Pemberton:** Okay. That's what?

**Frankie:** ARM

**Pemberton:** ARM good for you. Now find one over here that has ARM. Do you see ARM? Nope. He's gonna try again. Does it have ARM? All right we'll put that one back [Indicating Frankie did not select a matching pair]. We're back to [Ariel's] turn.

**Ms. Silver:** Lay it down please. I can't see it. Thank you.

**Pemberton:** What do you have?

**Ms. Silver:** ART.

**Ariel:** ART.

**Pemberton:** ART, good you remembered where it was from last time. Now try to figure out that word.

**Ariel:** ART-UR

**Pemberton:** Put it all together. No it's not OR, you've got to look at the word.

**Ms. Silver:** Oh keep trying you almost got it.

**Ariel:** ART-TREE

**Pemberton:** ARTERY. Artery is the word. And that's a grown up word, that's what we have in our bodies to keep our blood flowing.

**Ms. Silver:** That was a tough one Miss Kim. You trying to trick us.

**Ariel:** I get to keep it?

**Pemberton:** Yes, you do get to keep it, that's exactly right. I didn't trick you did I?

**Ms. Silver:** Smart girl! [NOTE: Ms. Silver is even encouraging other children during the literacy game, not just her own]

The other method of developing participants' relatedness was the explicit manner in which I shared the literacy activities, allowing parents to observe my modeling and explanation, providing time for parents to practice with the child, coaching with my

immediate feedback, and following-up with individual questions and comments once parents attempted their literacy instruction at home with the child. By following this routine, I encouraged their involvement and sent a message of respect and value to the parents. Once parents were able to comfortably demonstrate their use of these strategies with their children, both during *CAMP* practice sessions and independently at home, they too experienced satisfaction, which triggered continuous attempts at helping their children become successful readers. The following example comes after participants practiced ‘chunking words’ to read new or unknown vocabulary.

**Ms. Myra:** Good, now put it together.

**Caity:** /ST/

**Ms. Myra:** Now put the two together.

**Caity:** /ST/-/OUT/.

**Ms. Myra:** Yeah, STOUT.

**Pemberton:** Ah, you knew this part of it because you said SHOUT when you were reading it. But now you know it’s . . . what is the word?

**Caity:** Stout.

**Ms. Myra:** Yeah, STOUT.

**Pemberton:** Good. Do you know what STOUT means?

**Caity:** Uh uh.

**Pemberton:** Stout means chunky, thick, or fat. So he says he’s gonna fatten up the vegetables so they are stout and fine. So would you like a stout vegetable or you want a skimpy vegetable . . .

I made the practice routines as concrete as possible, focusing on one strategy or skill at a time, and allowing for multiple opportunities for feedback and application. Thus, these seemingly simple tasks reduced the parents' initial anxiety of implementing new concepts to the point where they were comfortable enough to demonstrate their ability over time. I used the term 'simple' when referring to the tasks based on the ease with which parents demonstrated their understanding in each *CAMP with Kim* session. I believe parents' ability to complete these tasks successfully was also related to their sense of trust from their participation in the Getting to Know You activities.

Another example of this profile follows with Ms. Camboli, who was shy and extremely quiet. During the Station Rotation *CAMP* session (May 6, 2010), I explicitly introduced, then demonstrated, the use of comprehension question stems. I followed that initial introduction with another opportunity to answer a question stem related to a different story version of Goldilocks and the three Bears, which I read. I then allowed each parent to select a stem, complete the question with relevance to the story, and ask their child for the answer. I asked Ms. Camboli to try this approach to questioning and after a seemingly endless wait time, she finally responded.

**Pemberton:** . . . Now Ms. [Camboli] it's your turn to ask a question.

**Camboli:** um, um . . . um

**Pemberton:** Use any one that you want [referencing the sheet of question stems provided for parents' home use].

**Camboli:** [silence for a long time] Oh, here's one. Draw a picture of what you think [blank] looks like. Um, what you think . . . the forest looks like.

**Pemberton:** Great Job. You picked one of the creating stems . . .

After examples, practice and ample time, Ms. Camboli was successful at her attempt. Another example of parents' increased willingness to attempt and be successful with the tutoring program is demonstrated as Ms. Betty listened to my explicit details on the factors to determine if a book is too hard, too easy or just right for the reader (*CAMP* session, April 27, 2010). She was then given the opportunity to listen to her great-grandchild read and determine the difficulty level of the book according to the newly learned strategy.

***Pemberton:*** Okay. I want you [Ariel] to read it. I'll let you read about three or four pages and we'll see if it's just right, too hard or too easy.

***Ariel:*** I Will Surprise My Friend./ Look he said./ What are you doing?/ I am going to surprise my friend./ Shhh . . . Here she comes.

***Pemberton:*** I want you to stop right there. All right Grandma, just right, too hard or too easy?

***Ms. Betty:*** I thought she done good.

***Pemberton:*** So which is it . . . just right, too hard or too easy?

***Ms. Betty:*** I believe it was just right.

***Pemberton:*** And you are just right. Great job . . .

In both examples, Ms Camboli and Ms. Betty demonstrate their developing competency as tutors. This competency developed after they acquired a sense of relatedness with the group and comfort with the tutoring procedures. Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2000) confirm this sense of accomplishment or satisfactory as a means by which individuals "will more likely adopt and internalize a goal if they understand it and

have the relevant skills to succeed at it” (p. 65). Thus, their success prompted more attempts and ultimately more success among their children.

Though parents were developing the necessary competency, I considered their competence only to a certain level as they still exposed some lack of knowledge in other areas, indicating they may not have reached full autonomy. They still needed assistance; therefore whenever they lacked the knowledge, they developed more autonomy by seeking the answers they needed and therefore developed more competence; a win-win situation that continued in a cycle of gaining knowledge to maneuver through school-related dealings. The conversation below with Ms. Betty reveals her lack of knowledge and demonstrates her willingness to become more autonomous in order to improve her competency.

**Ms. Betty:** Do you have to go to the library to get those books or can you buy them?

**Pemberton:** Oh sure, you can go to the library, or you can buy them. But you know the best place, like your second hand shops or Goodwill or yard sales on Saturday morning, when people like me whose children are grown up and no longer need these, they sell them sometimes for a quarter.

**Ms. Betty:** Really?

**Pemberton:** Yes. You can take like a laundry basket, to a yard sale and load up. You can buy books, or you can go to the Public library. Is there a Public library near you? Maybe that’s one thing, if you can’t maybe, if [Ariel] is gonna be the only one next time we can stop by the public library, go in and sign her up for a card, and that’s one way to keep her reading through the summer. That’s what I did with my children. Go in, get about five books, and take them home and each night we’d read over them, or let them read some, or re-read some.

**Ariel:** Read it over?

**Pemberton:** Yeah. Sometimes you read it over and over. And then you just take them back the next week and get five more.

**Ms. Betty:** I umm, I'd rather buy them if I can because if they get tore up and I get them from the library then I gotta pay for them.

**Pemberton:** I understand.

**Ms. Betty:** I do buy books and her mama gets them for her too, but I'd like to get books like that [pointing to and referencing the storybook we just read—Clifford's Sports Day], if I can buy them. Then that way if they get tore up or smashed or anything well, I ain't gonna have to pay nobody.

Their developing autonomy also was demonstrated in other ways such as their parent-teacher communication logs. They were able to go home, provide tutoring for their children, write comments to the teacher and follow through for two and a half months of tutoring.

In summary, the parents responded to the camaraderie we developed in the *CAMP* sessions through Getting to Know You activities. This allowed them to trust the group members enough to open up and share while also allowing themselves to learn and have fun. Additionally, the parents responded positively to the partnership they formed with teachers when teachers took the time to work one-on-one with their child and take the time to share positive results referencing the successful work they accomplished as partners for the child.

The following section looks at how the teachers responded to the tutoring intervention. Unlike the parents, my challenges with the teachers were to deal with their (a) doubts regarding the parents' expertise and willingness to serve as a reading tutor for their children, and (b) convincing teachers about how the PIR program would fit into

their already busy schedules. Opportunities for the teachers in this study differed from those experienced by the parents because the teachers already possessed the necessary knowledge or competence about how to teach reading. Thus, their opportunities included one after school meeting where they learned the tutoring procedures and informal contacts and during the school day when I visited to monitor the program's progress. My goals for the teachers directly related to the previously stated challenges.

First, as stated in Phase I, teachers and administrators viewed parents as generally responsible for their children's academic difficulties because they lacked the appropriate values regarding school achievement. Thus, my goal was to have the teachers accept the parents as equitable partners. To achieve this goal, I continued to use the three components of self-determination theory (SDT)—*relatedness*, *competence* and *autonomy*, but I used them at a different pace and progression.

To the extent *relatedness* was the initial component for the parents as a means to gain trust and become acquainted; a level of trust was already established among these teachers and me because I supervised at this school. However, even though teachers worked with the children and their families for the first seven months of school, their familiarity did not promote the necessary levels of trust between them as they entered into a partnership for tutoring. Instead of providing activities to strengthen this trust, I decided to let this trust develop as the teachers realized the parents' competency through the communication logs. Teachers needed to believe in the capability and commitment of the parents and parents needed to fully witness this level of confidence for them by

teachers. Thus, I needed to convince teachers of the parents' sense of belonging so that they felt a sense of relatedness with the parents.

The following example demonstrates the level of teacher doubt for parent participation. Ms. James shared her apprehension about contacting Ariel's mother (Ms. Camboli). She made comments such as, "I'll bet no one will know what I'm talking about when I call" or "Who will even work with her at home with the reading" (Informal Interview, April 28, 2010). My main method of dealing with dispositions of this nature was to solely let parents' participation speak to their commitment. Therefore, I worked even more diligently with parents to disprove this myth. I strongly encouraged parents to continue communication with teachers via the parent-teacher communication logs and I reviewed and commented on parents' log entries during *CAMP* sessions. As parents kept their end of the 'deal,' teachers were more inclined to fulfill theirs, thus a more cohesive partnership was merged.

Tutors were asked to keep a record of the suggested bi-weekly communications with each other on the parent-teacher communication logs. The logs were designed to capture the correspondence between tutors and document the progress of the tutee. Teachers, for the most part were much better sources in keeping this document updated as it was their means and reasons for positive communication. Even though teachers initially viewed this communication as "just another chore," they continued to assume this role (Informal Interview, April 19, 2010). By continuing to encourage parents to keep their logs up-to-date, I served as their intermediary. The parents' contributions showed their commitment to teachers. Even though their role was somewhat passive, the parents'

contributions were significant enough for teachers to accept them as equitable partners.

The following communication documents the teachers' appreciation of parents' contributions.

Documented on Ms. James' communication log for Ariel was the following:

*Entry on (5-7-10):* 'spoke with Mom and she has read some books with [Ariel]. Seemed like most books were read by grandmother who cares for kids afterschool.' [*Teacher Report of Books in Pockets: Read to Child-3 Read Together-8 Read Alone-8. Parent Report of Books in Pockets: Read to Child-1 Read Together-4 Read Alone-7*].

Again, Ms. James made contact during week four of the tutoring, via a phone call initiated by her to the mother. During that dialogue she indicated:

*Entry on (5-21-10)* "heightened level of interest [by Ariel] to read with [Ms. James] and the class intern."

Those positive phone reports to Ms. Camboli fostered the initial step in building a positive relationship between home and school, especially due to the behavior issues Ariel frequently exhibited. An additional three comments (5-25-10; 5-31-10; 6-2-10), on the parent-teacher communication log from Ms. James indicated positive encounters and positive reports on Ariel and her reading/behavior progress:

*Entry on (5-25-10):* Insisted on rereading a book from pocket #2 so she could move it into pocket #3.

*Entry on (5-31-10):* Behavior has improved especially when PIR is done in the morning after breakfast.

Ms. Camboli's verbal input about the communication with the teacher indicated an added amount of respect for the teacher as she took pride in sharing the boastful comments with *CAMP* participants, of Ariel's academic and social progress.

*Field Note Entry May 18, 2010:* As we prepared to leave today's *CAMP* session, Ms. Camboli made the following comment: Lord, the teacher called the house the other night and I just knew it was a bad report, but she told me how my girl is getting her work done and behaving in class. I was so proud of her I couldn't help but hug her neck (Both Mom & Ariel smiled with pride as the story was shared).

Thus, my method of taking no notice of teachers' doubts and concerns of parents' competence and working diligently with parents to stay current with their PIR data and communication log entries helped teachers to overcome their doubts.

As doubts were rectified in one area (relatedness) and parents and teachers constructed a working bond between them, some level of doubt was still apparent in other areas (autonomy and competence). Teachers' later doubt was linked to parents' ability to carry out the literacy tutor responsibilities alone (autonomy) as well as the knowledge to help the students learn (competence) how to understand and manage the information.

As parents demonstrated the ability to manage their responsibilities alone, autonomy was then achieved among teachers as they were excited and encouraged by the fact that parents really were working with them toward one essential goal—literacy success for struggling students. Thus with this transition toward autonomy, then competence, the outlook of student progress also changed. The next example is another demonstration of how parent and teacher communication fostered autonomy, as they both rallied together for children's success.

**Mr. Rich (Stanford's Teacher)**

Mr. Rich was very eager to begin the PIR process with Stanford, as he was desperately seeking something that would “ignite a little fire in [Stanford]” (Informal interview, April 21, 2010). His initial contact was made on May 17, 2010, via phone call to the mother. This was several weeks after PIR began, because the school did not have an operating number for the family. Ms. Silver previously gave me her cell number to call and remind her about *CAMP* sessions. I passed the number on to Mr. Rich and the communication between the two continued regularly. The following was documented on the communication log by Mr. Rich:

*Entry on (5-24-10):* Called Mom about PIR. She offered excuses about her school work, but said he and his siblings all read together each night. [*Teacher Report of Books in Pockets: 1 Read To Child/ 3 Read Together/1 Read Alone—Please Note: There was No Parent Report of Books in Pockets on this date.*]

Eventually both tutors agreed on the reality of Stanford's reading struggles; though they approached it differently in their comments. Mr. Rich seemed to encourage Stanford, while from a teacher's aspect, he also realized how difficult it would be for the child to achieve grade level reading status, by the year's end. Mr. Rich made the following comment in two separate entries:

*Entries on (5-31-10 & 6-7-10):* “[Stanford] is enjoying the reading time,” yet still “reading below grade level.” However, Mom seemed optimistic beyond reality to a certain degree with the comment:

*Entry on (5-18-10):* “Doing a good job; He likes to read”

She, as a hopeful mother, continued to see his attempts get better with each report, even though the independently read book levels were not increasing.

As both parents and teachers demonstrated their participation via communication logs and phone calls and parents demonstrated their concerted efforts, teachers were then finally convinced of parent competence as well as their commitment, thus teacher doubt was lessened and later diminished. This level of both competence and commitment by parents allowed teachers to become more autonomous and diligent with the tutoring responsibility at school, as parents' autonomy was evident.

The second challenge of bringing parents and teachers together as equitable partners in this tutoring process was teacher's valuable time. Yet this challenge seemed to remedy itself once teachers noticed how well the program was going; all stakeholders were accountable for their role of implementation, parents were doing their share (communication logs provided proof) and the students were getting better (successful implementation of PIR sessions with students). Thus, teachers managed to make time (an initial verbalized obstacle) for PIR during the course of their already busy school day. After full implementation teachers reported the ease of PIR tutoring, the personal benefits to students both socially and academically, and they praised its dual role as a great program and a resourceful record keeping device for students' literacy progress. The following are comments related to benefits of PIR from teachers during the May 13, 2010 Teacher Only Focus Group.

**Ms. Baynes:** I got a chance to spend personal time with [Evan].

**Ms. James:** The one-on-one [time] has extremely benefitted her on a behavior level.

**Mr. Rich:** His reading has picked up from what it was. He's made progress throughout the year . . . one-on-one has helped fuel his drive to read . . . It has also helped him become more organized.

As the study came to a close there were two occasions where teachers and parents came together--during one focus group session and during the final Celebration Dinner. I noticed an overall transitional change in both as they seemed quite capable and willing to establish more of an academic partnership. The dialogued segments below represent the level of change which occurred during the study. When teachers were initially asked the question in their focus group session "*What are some things you feel you can implement in your classroom that will involve parents coming in to assist?*" responses were:

. . . Come in and just sit and observe me teaching. . . . Just listen to students read one-on-one. . . . Monitor during whole or small group activities, and . . . Just watch and learn with their child during teacher directed instruction [in order to assist them during independent follow-up activities].

None of these answers demonstrated a strong conviction by teachers, of the parents' ability to offer academic assistance, and initially when asked to partner with parents in this study, teacher conviction then was just as weak; yet during the combined focus group session on May 27, 2010 the disposition of teachers changed. The session ended with a similar question to both parents and teachers. Parents responded to the question, "*How can you provide assistance in your child's classroom? What are you willing to do to help out?*" with the following ideas:

I can help do PIR with some students . . . I can work with a small group of students if I know ahead of time what I can do . . . I don't always know when I can be here, but I can make sure kids pay attention and be on the right page when they [teachers] be teaching.

Each of these answers demonstrated not only academic commitment, but active engagement by the parents. Following the parent volunteerism or their conviction and willingness to be involved, the teachers' responses to the question "*How can you involve these parents in your classroom?*" revealed a new mind-set toward parental capability and commitment. The teachers' new replies were:

If you could do PIR with a couple of kids a week that would be great . . . I think listening to students during SSR [silent sustained reading] and using some of the tips you all just did [referencing activities implemented during *CAMP* sessions and shared with teachers] that could help the students out a lot . . . Having some extra adults in the room to help with projects like art and science when I don't have my assistant would be a possibility.

Thus the example of growth toward a partnership between home and school was a major emphasis that seemed to occur for both parents and the teachers over time.

### **Summary**

I used the three components of self-determination theory: *relatedness*, *competence* and *autonomy* as the major lens for observing both parent and teacher transitions; although in an alternate sequence for teachers than parents, as well as differing situations/issues. As the researcher, I observed different needs therefore worked together with both sets of participants with the support their needs implied. Thus as autonomy was eventually achieved by both parties, at different points of reference and for different

reasons, a positive partnership was also created, all for one exclusive purpose—the academic benefit of the child.

### **Phase II—Research Question 2**

The second research question guiding Phase II of this study was, “*How will student literacy progress be impacted using the Partners-in-Reading (PIR) literacy program with parents and teachers acting as tutors?*” As I answered this question I examined students’ literacy growth using the following data sources: the beginning of the study DRA scores as pre-assessment data and the end of study DRA scores as post-assessment data. In viewing those scores, I used the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening Book Levels Equivalencies chart (<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/2193>) to determine the grade level equivalent from each student’s literacy scores. I also used as a related source, the Partners-in Reading folders from each teacher and each parent (thus each tutee had at least two folders with PIR reading documentation). Additionally, using all of the aforementioned sources, I developed a matrix to capture the complete data picture for each student (see Table 5 for Literacy Scores and PIR Information).

In response to this question, I will initially provide a brief literacy overview based on the school literacy documentation (provided by teachers), explain each of the students in narrative form including their progress on each data source, and then summarize the findings across the cases. A profile of each child is presented below.

**Table 5**

***Literacy Scores & PIR Tutoring Information***

<b>RQ #1c--How will student literacy progress be impacted using the Partners-in-Reading (PIR) literacy program with parents and teachers acting as tutors?</b>													
<b>Students</b>	<b>Total % of CAMP Sessions attended</b>	<b>School's Reading Scores</b>			<b>Total # of PIR Sessions</b>					<b>Total Books Per Pocket</b>			
		Pre Aug'09	Beg. of CAMP Mar '10	Post May '10	Home	Teacher	Intern	Total Sessions	Read to Me	Read with Me	Read Alone	Total Books	
Ariel	100%	16 Late 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	18 Early 2nd Grade	20 Mid-2nd Grade	22	13	26	12	73	29 4 moved (level J-K)	52 8 moved 6 repeated (level F-H)	59 3 repeated (Level H - K)	140
Stanford	86%	12 Early 1st Grade	12 Early 1st Grade	16 Late 1st Grade	24		28	19	71	3 2 moved (level N)	14 4 moved 4 repeated (level H-J)	5 2 repeated several times (Level G - I)	22
*Caity	57%	12 Early 1st Grade	14 Mid-1st Grade	16 Late 1st Grade	10	23	16	21	70	70	19 2 moved (level F)	16 (level D- E)	105
*Evan	0%	12 Early 1st Grade	14 Mid-1st Grade	14 Mid-1st Grade	None documented		17	13	30	11 4 repeated (level K-N)	15 1 repeated (level H-J)	3 3 repeated several times (Level G-H)	29

\* EC student

- 1<sup>st</sup> Grade DRA Levels are 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 & 16
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade DRA Levels are 14, 16, 18, 20, 24 & 28
- 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Guided Reading Levels are B, C, D, E, F, G, H & I
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Guided Reading Levels are H, I, J, K, L & M

**Ariel Camboli**

*Ariel* attended all of the *CAMP* sessions with her mother or great-grandmother, Ms. Betty, who raised Ariel's mother, and provided the family's before- and after-school care. Ariel's two brothers also attended one session as well as the final celebration dinner with the mother and great grandmother. Ms. Betty often emphasized that she "didn't have much schooling herself" but she was willing to "help out where I can." Initially, she seemed very reserved and cautious with her group interactions; however on one evening, she shared her "story." She was widowed after thirty plus years of marriage. She and her husband worked in a local mill and upon his death she later worked domestically for a few more years for a total of 42 years of labor-intensive work. The conversation indicated her compassion for family and the importance of a good education—both of which were her reasons for attending the sessions with Ariel. Though she was representing Mom, she never let me forget that Mom was the primary decision maker. During the first *CAMP* session, she stated, "I ain't the Momma, but I will help out where I can." Additionally, as any assignment was introduced to the group, she always stated, "I'll let her Momma know that." After the first three sessions, Ms Betty left town and attended her great-niece's graduation from high school. From that point, Ariel's Mom took over the responsibility of attending all subsequent sessions. During the final celebration, both Mom and Ms. Betty attended in Ariel's behalf along with her two younger brothers. Ariel came to the fifth *CAMP* session, on crutches, following a school playground accident where she broke her ankle; despite this accident, she never missed a day of *CAMP*

sessions and only missed one day of school (when she was at the hospital following the accident) for the entire year.

Though I had only witnessed Ariel's eagerness to read, I was surprised to find out that she had classroom behavior problems. Ariel's teacher, Ms. James, spoke of her improved behavior and as well as her focus in class. She based her improvement on the one-on-one PIR attention Ariel was receiving. More specifically, immediately preceding the sixth *CAMP* session, (parent & teacher focus group) the principal entered the media center, and right away hugged Ariel while walking with her over to her mother stating, "I am so proud of her and I know you are too. Her behavior has improved so much. When I pass her in the hall now she just smiles and says, I'm still on green" (indicating her positive status on the classroom management plan). The intern also indicated on the parent-teacher communication log (April 14, 2010), how Ariel was "acting better in class."

Ariel entered second grade with a DRA reading score of 16, equivalent to a late first grade reading level. After the first seven months of school she improved to the early second grade level, a gain of one level (DRA Level 18) or .14 of a level per month. After two months of tutoring, Ariel improved to the mid second grade, an increase of one DRA level or .50 level per month. She made far more monthly progress in reading during tutoring than she did during the first seven months of regular instruction without tutoring.

Ariel participated in a total of 73 PIR sessions (22 with her mother, 13 with her great-grandmother, 26 with her teacher and 12 with the university intern who met with her at least twice a week). She read or reread a total of 140 books, ranging from F-K

according to Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading Levels, which indicate early first grade to mid-second grade reading levels. At the beginning of the school year, Ariel set a goal of reading 100 books during the school year and exceeded this goal with the PIR tutoring. As a result, she participated in the school's Parade of Excellence celebration, an annual event for the community, led by the city's mayor and other dignitaries, the local high school cheerleaders and a marching band. Ariel led her class in the parade, wearing her *CAMP with Kim* t-shirt, seated in a wheelchair (because of her broken ankle) and adorned with banners, pom-poms and a handmade sign indicating her success at meeting her goal.

### **Stanford Silver**

*Stanford's* family attended 6 of the 7 *CAMP* sessions. Both an older and younger brother attended the *CAMP* sessions with Stanford and their mother. The older brother served as a mentor who frequently encouraged both brothers by saying, "Ahh, come on. You know that word. Try it again" (*CAMP* session # 4- May 18, 2010). This comment was his tactic to motivate Stanford when I was introducing word-chunking strategies as a method to build vocabulary. Stanford continued to try after this prompting from his brother. The younger brother, Frankie, a preschooler, was very interested in reading and having books read to him and he also seemed to serve as an encourager to Stanford. Stanford gave his all when reading to Frankie and readily supported his brother's efforts just as the eldest brother did for him. Ms. Silver, a student herself, set a great example for the children as she attended most *CAMP* sessions. She initially attended without the boys, but once she saw other children providing encouragement, her boys attended and worked during all of the following sessions. She allowed them to interact with the adults and

other students, always offering support when they seemed to struggle with the answer. She offered words such as, “Ah, calm down. You can read that better. Take your time” (*CAMP* Session #4 during PIR reading segment). Stanford looked up at Mom, took a deep breath and continued reading with fewer mistakes, yet longer hesitations. She was also heard saying, “He is trying to remember. Can you remember where it was Frankie?” speaking to the younger son as we played Vocabulary Concentration (*CAMP* Session #4).

Additionally, Ms. Silver was always eager to share her results upon returning to *CAMP* sessions and frequently asked follow-up questions that caused her to rethink the information shared in the previous session. For example, she said; “My son want me to read same book, over and over again. He have me read it, then go to his sister to read it, then his brother to read it and I think why he want that book over and over again. We got lots of books to read” (*CAMP* session # 3-May 6, 2010). These questions allowed me an opportunity to clarify issues, such as “Rereading is a good thing . . .” as a way to explain the benefits of rereading. This same concern was later revisited more thoroughly in a *CAMP* session that focused on how rereading builds fluency.

Stanford entered second grade in August of 2009 with a DRA reading score of 12, equivalent to an early first grade reading level. During the first seven months of second grade, Stanford remained at the same reading level; however, after two months of tutoring, Stanford gained two levels (DRA Level 16) or a 1.0 level per month increase. He ended the school year reading at a late first grade level.

During these two months, Stanford had 71 tutoring sessions (24 with his family; 28 with the teacher; and 19 with the university intern). During these sessions, he read a

total of 22 books, 14 at his instructional level and 5 at his independent reading level.

Stanford's teacher indicated on the PIR parent-teacher communication log, dated April 27, 2010, how he was "more excited to read independently" and how he was "keeping up with his media center books better." Mom indicated on her parent-teacher communication log, dated April 13, 2010, how he was "reading books to his little brother at home." There was even a picture, on the family's Photo Inventory, where the two boys were crouched in the same chair in the living room reading a book.

Though this data shows some level of literacy success, as Stanford made a year's worth of growth in reading, he ended the school year, still below grade level. His teacher, the administrators, the school's Student-Staff Services Team, school translator, and Stanford's mother have decided that he would remain in second grade for the next school year, giving him time to reach his suggested reading level for second grade. His mother stated, she was "please with his progress," yet she knew he was still "behind where he needs to be, and I don't want him to struggle and get frustrated with school."

### **Caity Goode**

*Caity* attended 4 of the 7 *CAMP* sessions. She attended with her paternal Aunt Mae, who brought her own daughter, Helen, a struggling second grade reader. Aunt Mae stated during the first session, "I ain't trying to take the place of their Momma, but I might as well be 'cause they with me all the time, her brother and sister and my two children be together all the time." Aunt Mae wanted to read more with the children, but didn't have "a lot of free time to always do it"; therefore Caity and Helen or the other sibling (older daughter-age 13) spent time reading to each other. Aunt Mae, Mr. Goode

(Caity's father), and the grandfather lived in very close proximity and shared parenting duties.

Caity is identified as a mildly impaired exceptional student, which means her intellectual and adaptive behavior is impaired and her development reflects a reduced rate of learning. At the beginning of the year, Caity had a DRA reading score of 12, equivalent to an early first grade reading level. This classified Caity as a below grade level reader, approximately a year behind where she needed to be at this point. During the first seven months of school, Caity gained only one reading level (DRA Level 14) or .14 of a level monthly. After two months of tutoring, Caity gained another reading level (DRA Level 16) for a literacy increase of .50 of a level per month, placing her at a late first grade reading level. While she made some progress in tutoring, she ended the school year still below grade level in reading.

During the course of the study, according to the documentation turned in by Aunt Mae, Caity completed only ten PIR sessions at home. Though her home sessions were few, Caity experienced 23 PIR sessions with her classroom teacher, who referred to Caity in a focus group session (May 13, 2010) as a "very shy and reserved child" and "rarely [approached her] to initiate a PIR session." Caity also participated in 16 tutoring sessions with her exceptional children's resource teacher and 21 tutoring sessions with the intern in her classroom, for a total of 70 PIR tutorial sessions. During these sessions, Caity accumulated 70 books in the first pocket (Read to Me), 19 books in the second pocket (Read with Me) and 16 books in the third pocket (Read Alone), reading/rereading a total of 105 books during tutoring, the majority of which were read at school.

**Evan Parks**

Evan, nor any family member, attended *CAMP with Kim*, nor did they provide tutoring at home. He did, however, participate in the PIR tutoring at school with his classroom teacher, Ms Baynes, and the university intern. Evan, identified as a child with autism (*a developmental disorder that affects the brain's normal development of social and communication skills*) entered the second grade with a DRA score of 12, equivalent to an early first grade reading level. During the first seven months of second grade, Evan made a gain of one level (DRA Level 14); however, after two months of PIR tutoring at school there were no literacy gains made.

During the focus group (May 13, 2010), Ms. Baynes explained that as the study began, Evan consistently received 3 PIR tutoring sessions each week when she had the university intern assisting her. However, once the intern was no longer available, Ms. Baynes admits that with Evan's extended amount of time with the resource teacher (maximum pull-out), it was difficult to get all three tutoring sessions in per week; therefore, he more often received two sessions weekly during the second month of this study. She also reported that she saw Evan take a greater interest toward his effort to read, "He will at least try to pronounce new or unfamiliar words now, whereas before he would just stop and stare at the page . . . He wouldn't read on until someone told him the word." (Focus Group, May 13, 2010). She also shared how Evan enjoyed reading certain books; therefore she always had his favorite books to select from, as a method of motivation for him. She stated, "If he had his way he would read the same one [book] every day about dinosaurs and dragons, so a lot of times, I let him choose the book . . .

Now, his mood determines if he reads at his best, which is why I always include his favorites.” The intern reported on the parent-teacher communication log on several occasions (March 31, 2001; April 14, 2010; & April 26, 2010) how it was “difficult to keep him focused,” and she soon found out that she too needed to include “many science related [expository] texts to capture and keep his attention.”

During the two months of tutoring, Evan had a total of 30 tutoring sessions (17 with the teacher; and 13 with the university intern). During these sessions, he read a total of 29 books, often repeating readings, yet only reading three mid-to-late first grade level books on his own (pocket #3). In his PIR folder, most of his books were above his reading level and were read to him or with assistance.

### **Summary of PIR Results**

This research question was based on the assumed relationship between parental involvement and student literacy achievement. It was designed to understand how this assumed relationship applied to diverse families with limited financial resources in a particular Title 1 school. In this chapter each student’s literacy story was described through school assessments and their PIR participation with teachers and parents. There was 100% participation in PIR tutoring in school with teachers and interns and 75% participation at home with parent/extended family members. During the seven months of school prior to the start of *CAMP with Kim*, none of the four students experienced more than a 2-level increase on the DRA reading assessment with one of the students showing no gain. After tutoring, for those three students who attended *CAMP with Kim*, each one demonstrated at least a 2-level increase in two months with one student gaining four

levels (almost a year's growth). Despite receiving tutoring at school, the student who did not attend *CAMP with Kim* sessions and received no tutoring at home, failed to experience any gain during the two-month tutoring period. Each child who received PIR tutoring at home made literacy gains; nevertheless, all students will enter the next school year still at least one grade below their expected reading level. Only two months of tutoring did not allow enough opportunities for students to read at the grade placement level. Though their monthly progress far surpassed the initial seven months of second grade and their growth surpassed Evan's (the student without PIR home support). Students with the greater *CAMP* attendance made greater literacy gains and likewise, those students with greater commitment from home accumulated more PIR sessions and thus made greater literacy gains overall.

### **Phase II—Research Question 3**

The third research question guiding Phase II of this study was, “*How will parents respond to opportunities to become involved at school through informal/non-traditional pathways?*” Before answering this question, I must re-establish the definition of informal, alternative or non-traditional pathways, which are terms I use interchangeably to refer to opportunities for school-based involvement which exhibit difference-based attributes by accepting one's uniqueness and meeting an individual where they are without reference to what may be missing or what may be deficient. *CAMP with Kim* was the alternative opportunity afforded to the participating parents in this study. It was designed to encourage parents to participate at the school level by means of a positive environment, which integrated the resources parents needed to assist their children's academic growth.

In creating this positive environment, which integrated the necessary academic resources, I utilized a difference-based paradigm, which incorporates the experiences with which an individual is familiar and bridges them with new information in an attempt at increasing the individual's knowledge base. This difference-based paradigm was the foundation for which all other study theories were built.

The intervention was the home-school connection, built on the premise that every household is an educational setting where the social sharing or 'funds of knowledge' (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) provide the basis for schools to build a bridge connecting the home's cultural experiences and literacy activities with the school's curriculum (Nieto, 1996). Moll and Greenberg's (1990) 'funds of knowledge' research on the social histories of the household emphasized the various forms of literacy utilized within a household and the importance of connecting such literacies to curricular-based activities in the classroom. The primary goal of this intervention was to have parents with limited financial resources to visit the classrooms of their children in order to share their home literacy practices and their cultural experiences. I wanted them to be comfortable about their involvement and the acceptance by the school. This second goal was to allow teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their children's family lives and experiences without viewing them as through a deficit-lens (socially or academically).

Using the three activities implemented within this intervention—a parent home literacy interview, a photo inventory of home literacy practices and cultural experiences, and the parent's presentation of the photo inventory in the child's classroom, I will provide a brief overview of the home-school connection project, discuss each family

individually via those three activities with funds of knowledge and the ecologies of parental engagement as my foundation. Then I'll present a summary across all families.

To achieve the goals of having parents sharing their 'funds of knowledge' and teachers learning more about their students' families, I interviewed parents, using my parent home literacy protocol, to increase my own knowledge and awareness of families' home literacies, in order to focus the photo inventory portion of the study in the direction of the goals. This information gave me the knowledge to situate parents in a comfortable setting, acknowledging their value and worth (Lopez, 2001). The interview data provided me with a greater understanding of the family's home literacy experiences, parents' ideas about the importance of literacy, and parents' level of comfort with their own literacy skills (see Appendix F for Interview Protocol). It also reinforced to parents how their existing practices were valuable and needed to be shared with the school.

The interview data informed me of the funds of knowledge available in each home, many of which the school was unaware of, per the Phase I interviews with administrators and teachers. Ms. Silver shared with me the weekly Bible study sessions the family attends and the home assignments they complete, "sometimes as a family" (Parent Literacy Interview, May 14, 2010).

We go to church every Wednesday to study catechism and we do the homework together before we go back . . . We usually take turns reading. (Parent Literacy Interview, May 14, 2010)

Ms. Camboli shared her love for reading and the library card she acquired to keep her up-to-date on the latest romance novels. She also indicated the written expressions located throughout her kitchen for the family:

I write notes all the time . . . We have a calendar in the kitchen with all their doctor's appointments and stuff like that on it. (Parent Literacy Interview, May 18, 2010)

Similarly, Ms. Parks indicated the plaques as well as the numerous books each family member had.

We got lots of scriptures and poems up on the walls . . . Everybody got their own favorite books in their room . . . We got magazines in the living room for when company be at the house . . . (Parent Literacy Interview, March 30, 2010)

As parents shared so many of their family literacy activities and routines, I knew this was information I wanted teachers and school personnel to be aware of, as they indicated in Phase I they did not know much of their families' funds of knowledge, especially for the struggling students. Therefore I thought the photo inventory of their home literacy and cultural experiences would be beneficial information teachers could integrate within their daily instruction.

The photo inventory was a research activity by the Lancaster Literacy Research Group's program, 'Photographing Literacy Practices' (Barton et al., 1993), designed to capture literacy practices in their students' homes to document the range of literacy resources in the home and their participants. This activity allowed my parents to bring their funds of knowledge and cultural experiences into the school and to ultimately bridge

the gap that could break the cycle of struggling students from families with limited economic resources (Auerbach, 2007; Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Epstein, 1986, 1995). My idea was for parents to take home the cameras and get snapshots of their daily practices of homework routines, bedtime stories, collection of books, magazines, letters, notes and cards, calendars marked with birthdays and appointments, plaques and wall hangings with special meanings, etc. I knew these literacy items existed in these homes because I observed many of them during the Phase I interviews and parents discussed others in conversations. However, I did not mention them specifically in the introduction of this assignment because I wanted parents to be empowered with the knowledge of sharing what they felt was important to their families—my attempt at pursuing a difference-based approach.

Their initial pictures included only ‘staged’ and repeated snapshots of their children completing homework and reading books, (either alone or with siblings)--all traditional activities. Only one picture in approximately 25 photos was of a wall hanging, depicting the religious Last Supper; however, Ms. Betty, the great grandmother who attended the sessions, had no idea why it was taken. However, knowing our work together was literacy and school related; I felt parents took pictures of what they thought I wanted to see opposed to their regular home literacy routines and activities.

With the previous success I had with parents understanding my explicit tutoring instructions, (the segment of this study which I perceived to be the most difficult for parents) I failed to accept the implication that parents completely did not understand this assignment. Maybe they misinterpreted my directions or my assumptions regarding the

assignment may have been too narrow, but whatever the reason, their pictures did not show the literacy I knew existed in their homes. Therefore, I tried another method. My second attempt at the photo inventory was to capture the “real” home literacies and experiences. I revisited this activity within a *CAMP* session using photographs of my own home literacies and evoked dialogue among participants about what the pictures told them about the family. Pictures of books on shelves, CD & DVD stands with multiple cases, a praying hands carving & Bible, a computer, a video gaming center, a couple of bicycles, a softball, bat and glove, a keyboard and sheet music, and even a picture of a table with cereal boxes and a bowl all expressed different literacy and culturally related information.

Parents were very receptive to this activity and during *CAMP* session, #4, May 18, 2010 they even questioned some of the literacy related items in their home. Ms. Silver asked, “So you mean like the video games the boys play can be in a picture?” Ms. Myra followed with, “What about when they write in the driveway with that chalk stuff? Does that count?” With these inquiries I felt we were headed toward the family literacy ideas I assumed would initially be captured and discovered by classroom teachers. After a second try with the cameras and another follow-up discussion about the pictures they took and what I still noted was missing, Ms. Silver asked me to “come to the house” after the *CAMP* session “to take more photos.” Ms. Camboli echoed her request stating, “You can come to mine too.” Together we were able to capture and discuss a number of their home literacies and cultural experience for the visual display and classroom presentations.

As we discussed the pictures during a *CAMP* session and worked on the displays, I questioned parents ‘deeper’ about the meanings of the pictures and how these pictures told their family story. Questions and probes such as, “*Why do you have the religious display of Jesus and angels in your front yard/hanging on your wall*” or “*Tell me more about the bookshelves in each child’s room, the pets . . .*” allowed parents practice to go into greater detail and explanation, as opposed to, “This is a picture of . . .” When Ms. Camboli was asked about the picture of her entertainment center and the books she was pointing to on one of the shelves, she replied:

That is where we watch TV . . . and the kids have some video games they play . . . They gotta read the stuff so they know how to play the games. The books down there [referencing a lower shelf] are all Ariel’s books when she was a baby . . . that is her favorite book ‘bout Peter Rabbit (*CAMP* Session #6, June 1, 2010)

This group dialogue of questions from other parent participants, children and me encouraged parents’ ease with delivery and revealed the “real story” within each home, as they shared their family presentations with their child’s class. Each family’s case, related to all three activities, (parent home interview, photo inventory and photo presentation to child’s classmates) is captured and explained here.

### **Stanford Silver’s Family**

Ms. Silver was interviewed four weeks into the *CAMP* sessions, and she expressed her pleasure related to the progress she saw Stanford making in reading. She shared how his teacher praised both Stanford and her efforts, and “it made [her] feel good.” Though Stanford was reading prior to attending school in kindergarten, he currently struggles with his reading comprehension. Mom identified comprehension as

his current issue stating, “. . . Because he don’t always remember what he read” (Parent Literacy Interview, May, 14, 2010). The final photo inventory showed home literacies via bookshelves in each of the bedrooms as well as books, magazines, and school textbooks in the main areas of the home (living room and den) and home video-game centers in both the living room and one bedroom. Culturally the photographs taken depicted animals/household pets, religion, family togetherness, crafts and sports in Stanford’s home (none of which were depicted in the initial pictures taken).

As individual as each set of photos turned out, it was also interesting for me to witness how each parent approached the presentation in the classroom. Ms. Silver approached the photo display in an excited and energetic manner. As she prepared her display during a *CAMP* session (June 1, 2010) she began working on it upon immediate arrival without having dinner first. She stated, “I’ll eat later, I wanna be sure I have time to do this.” As the other participants ate she worked diligently at a back table and ultimately took her dinner home with her. On the day of the classroom presentations, Ms. Silver arrived with her project in hand. As we entered the classroom, Stanford beamed with pride and joined his mother at the front of the class with a hug. Although this was the 90-minute protected reading time when parents and visitors were not allowed, Mr. Rich had modified his schedule to accommodate the parent and support her involvement, which was the goal for the research study. Mr. Rich gathered the students on the carpeted area of the room and introduced both Ms. Silver and me. I then briefly introduced the photo inventory project and turned it over to Ms. Silver. She presented her photo inventory titled, “Stanford’s Space” with great detail and clarification, as Stanford stood

by proudly. There was no indication of anxiety for either Ms. Silver or Stanford. She clearly explained what was in each photo, in addition to giving much background knowledge for her second grade audience. For example, as she shared the family pets, she stated . . .

And that's a picture of Lele, our pet parakeet. She speaks Spanish, because we speak Spanish at home sometimes. She's a lovely bird and every morning she say Buenos Dias. That's the first words that she say every morning. Buenos Dias means Good Morning in Spanish, so every morning when we take the cover off the cage she say, Buenos Dias!

Students also gained additional cultural knowledge about Stanford and his family when she introduced their dog.

**Ms. Silver:** And there is Stanford, with our dog. We have a little dog, what is a schnauzer.

**Stanford:** It's a puppy! We just got her! [No apprehension on his part either]

**Ms. Silver:** Yes. Her name is Negra. Why, because in Spanish, Negro it means black, and then it's a black dog, that's why the name is Negra.

Two girls seated in front, who appeared to be of Hispanic decent smiled at each other when the Spanish connections were shared. Ms. Silver appealed to them with a smile and a nod of her head, acknowledging their smiles and apparent agreement with her knowledge of the language. Though Spanish is not spoken in Stanford's home often, it is very important for Ms. Silver to teach her children as she pointed out in the interview, "I want them to know Spanish to communicate with our older family who never come to

this country. When we call to celebrate birthdays they must know how to communicate, so we speak Spanish at home sometimes” (Ms. Silver, Interview, May 14, 2010).

Following The Silver’s photo presentation I later saw Mr. Rich in the hallway. He was elated at the way Stanford expressed himself and commented on how the children noticed his newly found sense of confidence (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Mr. Rich’s conversation was audio-taped and several segments related to Stanford’s presentation with his mother follow:

**Mr. Rich:** After hearing Stanford at the PIR [*CAMP* Celebration] Dinner the other night and his presentation with his mom today that is the clearest and the loudest he has spoken all year. I don’t know if it’s . . . Well, I’m guessing it has a lot to do with home, and what he actually knows. Besides, if you don’t know yourself, then that’s a problem, but him talking today . . . that’s the best presentation he’s given all year.

**Pemberton:** What were his presentations like before?

**Mr. Rich:** Sometimes he mumbles, and it’s hard to really understand what he’s trying to say, and I don’t know if it’s because he’s nervous or if he realizes he’s a little lower than the majority of the students, but he was so confident today. I mean, after ya’ll left he talked about his pictures more with the kids. I asked the class, What did ya’ll notice about Stanford? And the kids said, He was so clear. . . . and he was so loud and confident. Complete confidence is what I saw in him today and the other night too.

**Pemberton:** I’ll bet he was grinning from ear to ear.

**Mr. Rich:** Yes, and after ya’ll left he kept saying, Can I tell the boys and girls something else? I know he talked [about his photo presentation] for a good fifteen more minutes. Just talking . . . I loved it and so did he!

Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González’s (1992) study urged teachers to use activities that “involve students as thoughtful learners in socially meaningful tasks” (p. 137). Mr. Rich’s thoughtful adaptation of the protected reading time to accommodate Mom’s

schedule and the extension of time allotted for Stanford's continuous discussion and boost in confidence in his delivery with Mom, demonstrates how beneficial this approach is. The newfound information about the family's experiences can be used to devise innovative instructional strategies (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) which may further encourage Stanford's literacy progress. Mr. Rich should be applauded as this brief presentation could be the spark he was initially searching for to "ignite a little fire in Stanford" (Informal interview, April 21, 2010).

### **Ariel Camboli's Family**

Ms. Camboli was interviewed before the *CAMP* sessions began; however, when *CAMP* sessions did begin Ms. Betty (Ariel's great-grandmother) was the family representative for approximately three weeks. Ms. Camboli approached the interview session much like she did my interview in Phase I, very quiet and reserved. When asked about Ariel's reading she replied, "It's good, but she need to concentrate more." She claimed Ariel did not like to read much and she even added how she, "Dreads to read" unless the books are "about Barbie or animals" (preferably pets). Homework was also a long and dreaded time, especially when Ariel had difficulty; however Ms. Camboli handled this difficult disposition merely by stating, "You have to do it to learn." Though it was sometimes a chore to get Ariel to read, Mom claimed they "Read about twenty minutes each night at bedtime." Though she never displayed a feeling of dread toward reading while with the *CAMP* participants, she did like to listen to others read more than she liked to actually read aloud herself. When reading with an adult she shared the reading responsibility; yet most often selected the pages with fewer words for herself.

Mom indicated she used to have a library card herself, but no longer has it. At home the family has story books, adult love novels, poetry and a newspaper subscription. The children see individuals reading these materials as well as mail and 'kid reminders' which are usually posted around the kitchen (refrigerator or microwave) quite often. Ms. Camboli loves to read; however the kids usually don't witness this as she uses it as a relaxing reward for herself, thus she retreats to her bedroom for this quality time alone. However, with three children under the age of eight years old, this only occurs for the most part about an hour a week. Though Ms. Camboli initially shared in Phase I how she disliked school because the other children were cruel to her, she now remembers her reading time at school being a fun time which she enjoyed. The final photo inventory titled "Ariel's Atmosphere" included pictures of the children's books, (specifically pointing out the storybook Ariel loved as a baby, *Peter Rabbit*), the entertainment center with CDs and DVDs, the Last Supper wall hanging, (in the original snapshots) the dogs outside and pictures of the children playing outside also reading together and independently.

As the time for this presentation assignment came closer, I noticed reoccurring anxiety with Ms. Camboli. She worked independently and became extremely quiet, even more so than usual. On the first evening when we prepared the photo inventory displays, during a *CAMP* session, her two younger sons attended the session and due to her focus and dedication or anxiety related to this assignment, she did not acknowledge their rambunctious behavior in and out of the Media Center. Their behavior was so distracting that the older Silver child, Donnie, remarked to me, "No one under five should be

allowed at this *CAMP*” yet Ms. Camboli remained focused on her display and never said a word to them. She had several pictures and would not consider omitting any. She adamantly made space to include each of them in her display.

On the morning of the presentations, we (Ms. Silver and I) expected Ms. Camboli to meet us in the Media Center. We were planning to travel together for the presentations. I thought they still needed a support system; therefore I wanted to provide that for each parent. Additionally, I thought witnessing Ms. Silver’s presentation would build Ms. Camboli’s confidence while also hopefully reducing her anxiety, enhanced by her excessive shyness. However, Ms. Camboli did not arrive early enough to accompany us. She arrived as we were leaving the first presentation and we found her headed to the first grade wing of the building (Please note she is the parent who stated on her first night of *CAMP*, “I have not been in this building in a long time” as she stood in place yet looked around). As she was tardy and we were on a time schedule with the teacher’s, she had no time to warm up and get comfortable, and I could tell, from getting to know her for two and one half months, this was bothering her. As we entered Ariel’s classroom, she was excited to see us. Ms. James got the attention of the students and gave them a brief introduction of us. I continued to notice the uneasiness of Ms. Camboli, therefore, I took it upon myself to talk with the students about the project and their (the students) part in the next phase of the project. The class already started the ‘take home camera project’ (explained further in RQ4) so I dialogued a few minutes about it, giving Ms. Camboli time to compose herself. Once Ms. Camboli seemed to smile and acknowledge the students’ comments I assumed she was ready, I re-introduced her and let her and Ariel

begin their presentation. Unlike the Silver presentation, she allowed Ariel to hold the display and initiate the conversation about each photo.

**Ariel:** That one's me when I'm in my room reading a book. It's my book from when I was a little girl. That's my brother . . . playing. He playing with his ball. And that one's me in the kitchen. I was doing my homework at the table. And that one's me again. I'm standing in my living room.

**Pemberton:** And what are you doing there in the living room?

**Ariel:** Reading another book.

It seemed as though Mom wanted Ariel to continue; yet I wanted Mom to have some conversation with the students; therefore I interrupted Ariel's dialogue and solicited Mom's.

**Pemberton:** All right mommy, you can share what you wrote about each picture or maybe a few of them?

**Ms. Camboli:** All right, this is my littlest son, he's holding the basketball on top of his head. They love playing outside. And that's one of my dogs hiding behind that tree. We had them dogs since the kids was little.

**Ariel:** That's Harper! [Stating the dog's name]

**Ms. Camboli:** Yes, This is Harper. He is a good dog and he likes to play with the kids too.

**Ariel:** And this one is Panther.

**Ms. Camboli:** Yes, this one's name is Harper, this one's Panther, and this is Ariel outside with the dogs. She like being outside with them too. And this is Ariel at the table reading one of her books. That's where she do her homework every day after school.

Though her initial disposition seemed anxious and possibly fearful of the presentation experience, Ms. Camboli continued as she talked about the things in the home and their meaning to the family.

**Ms. Camboli:** That is a picture of the living room where we watch TV together. Under there [pointing to the area beneath the entertainment center] is where Ariel have some of her books she like to read and the boys have some games under there too.

**Ariel:** My brothers like playing cards.

**Ms. Camboli:** Yes, and sometimes she will read books to them or we read them all together.

**Ariel:** Yea, but they don't always listen to me.

As Ms. Camboli finished her presentation, she referenced the religious picture of the Last Supper wall hanging. The initial picture I longed to hear the reason she gave for taking it, was in her words a mistake: “. . . and this one is the one my littlest son took by accident.” When asked how it was an accident she replied, “He just picked up the camera and took it.” I found this explanation hard to believe as the picture which was on a wall about four feet from the ground was perfectly centered and taken from a level position. Her written description of the picture merely indicated, “This is a picture in my living room.” Though the task may have been different than anything she was previously asked to do, and a little uncomfortable, Ms. Camboli did follow through and her child and teacher expressed sincere appreciation for her efforts. The teacher remarked,

**Ms. James:** Boys and girls let's thank Ariel and her Mom and Mrs. Pemberton for sharing these pictures with us. Maybe some of your parents can come in one day

and do the same thing. [Several children eagerly raised their hands as if she wanted volunteers at this time].

Ariel followed us to the door and hugged her mom until Ms. Camboli had to pry her arms off of her and promise to come back later. As we exited the room, Ms. Camboli let out a big sigh and stated, “Whew, that wasn’t as bad as I thought.” Of course, my response to that statement was, “Would you be willing to do that again?” to which she remarked, “Maybe I could.” We both walked down the hall smiling over our latest success—a step closer to parental involvement.

### **Caity Goode’s Family**

Ms. Myra, Caity’s aunt/family representative during *CAMP* sessions was administered the home literacy interview with much lament, as she postponed this appointment three times wanting her brother (Caity’s father and legal guardian) to be the spokesperson for his child. Dad’s apparent work schedule and possibly his level of illiteracy (This is the parent from Phase I who dropped out of school in the ninth grade) kept him from participating, yet his sister continued to request that all information should come from him. After several attempts to interview Dad and additional attempts to schedule and interview his sister, she finally consented to the interview on his behalf, because as she indicated, “He probably ain’t gonna do it, so I guess I will.” (Phone Communication, April 17, 2010).

Ms. Myra began the interview, stating, “I may not know all the answers ‘bout Caity, like I would my own kids, but I’ll try the best I know.” She credited Caity’s sweet disposition and how “She try to please people,” as the reason her teacher wanted to,

“Help her read better.” Caity reads books at home and at her aunt’s house, but “Has a hard time with it [reading], ‘cause she read slow and miss a lot of words.” As Caity interacted with the others during *CAMP*, she laughed and chatted during dinner; however, she was very quiet and reserved during literacy games and group interactions. The following is an example of just how reserved Caity was, compared to the other students as they set PIR reading goals for the following week.

**Helen:** I’m gonna read 6 books.

**Pemberton:** Okay, good. Now how about you Caity?

**Caity:** (?)

**Ms. Myra:** What if she don’t never read to me?

**Pemberton:** Do you mean you don’t have time?

**Ms. Myra:** No, I try reading with them every day, but she don’t never want to read the book. She always want me to do all the reading.

**Pemberton:** Okay Ms. Caity, if you want to get some books in this last pocket [refereeing to pocket #3 of the PIR folder] what do you need to do?

**Caity:** (?)

**Pemberton:** Come on, talk to Ms Kim. What are you gonna have to do to get some books in this last pocket.

**Caity:** Read.

**Pemberton:** Exactly, you will have to read some books all by yourself. Auntie can listen to you, but you will have to read some of them all by yourself. Do you think you can do that?

**Caity:** (?)

**Pemberton:** Do you think you can read some books by yourself?

**Caity:** uh huh

**Pemberton:** Sure you can. How many do you think you can read by the next time we meet?

**Caity:** uh 5?

**Pemberton:** Okay Ms. Myra you heard that. She's going to have five books read by the next time we meet. Is that five by yourself or five in all?

**Caity:** In all.

**Pemberton:** Okay, that should be a book a day & I want to see some in each pocket. Okay?

**Caity:** Okay.

Though her words were few, it was obvious how much Caity listened and comprehended so much of the information shared and explained during literacy instruction.

Pictures for Caity's photo inventory were taken of both homes by her Aunt. As with each family, the initial pictures were staged snapshots of the girls completing homework at the kitchen table, yet there was an assortment of school supplies within reach (a pencil box, crayon and markers and a ruler) indicating the importance of school to the family by providing the needed materials. There were also pictures of the girls reading together at a table in what appeared to be a living room/den area. In that same picture, there was an unfolded newspaper and advertisement/coupon section on one end of the sofa and the girls each had a couple of additional books on their laps. The final inventory entitled "Caity's Castle" displayed pictures of a hopscotch drawing on the driveway, dolls and stuffed animals in the bedroom lined up as students in front of an easel-typed chalk board, school work posted on bedroom walls, closets and the

refrigerator door, a Good Citizen Award posted, a magazine rack in the living room near a recliner, and a TV guide and other pleasure reading materials on the living room table. There was a work shirt hanging over the door leading into a bedroom with Dad's first name on it and work boots just inside the front door. All of these pictures indicate an emphasis on school, pleasure reading at home, and blue collar employment all meaningful to this extended family.

Ms. Myra tentatively (unsure of work hours) scheduled her photo presentation on the same morning as the other parents, yet to my dismay, but not to my surprise, she did not show up that morning at all. As a matter of fact, I never saw Ms. Myra after the Celebration Dinner and Caity's class (also Ariel's class) never enjoyed the presentation she put together. Caity kept watching the classroom door when Ariel and Mom were presenting, yet her Aunt never showed. Per a follow-up phone conversation Ms. Myra indicated her, "Work schedule was pretty busy" and she "Was not gonna have time to come over to the school during the day." I'm unsure if the fact that Ms. Myra was sharing information second hand, as Caity was her niece and not her own child, caused her concern, because from day one, she never let me forget that she was not Caity's parent, but she was there to assist her, "I ain't trying to take the place of her Mother, but I may as well be her Mother some days. She with me almost all the time . . ." (*CAMP* session #1, April 13, 2010).

### **Parent Photo Presentation Summary**

This research question was based on the finding from Phase I, indicative of how teachers were not aware of or familiar with the family literacy practices of their students.

Additionally in Phase I, parents indicated the desire to be more involved in school and their ideas of involvement supported their own interests and funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). This intervention was designed to develop a method for parents to share their home literacies and cultural experiences at the school level—an opportunity for parents with limited financial resources to become actively involved through non-traditional, difference-based opportunities. Parent participants admitted their lack of involvement at the school level in the initial interviews in Phase I and Ms. Camboli even acknowledged her shyness stating, “I don’t talk much” (Interview, August 5, 2009), yet over the course of the *CAMP* sessions, parent participation increased from an initial 50% family representation to 75% family representation and initial anxiety was reduced (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010) as parents who began as quiet and passive became more vocal and participatory.

#### **Phase II—Research Question 4**

The fourth and final research question guiding Phase II of this study was, “*How will teachers respond to opportunities to utilize families’ funds of knowledge in their daily classroom instruction?*” This question was based on the information teachers learned about families’ funds of knowledge and their home literacy practices and whether teachers could/would integrate the information they learned from the photo presentation into their daily instruction as a way to bridge home and school. The goal of this question was to provide teachers with information related to the routines familiar to the students and their families as a better way of connecting their knowledge and enhancing their comprehension of the curriculum. The follow-up class project to the photo inventory was

a similar project designed to involve each child and their family in a home photo inventory. This photo inventory was a way to also welcome parent volunteers into the individual classrooms while learning about and possibly bridging home literacies and cultural experiences of all students into the daily curriculum.

I provided each of the three participating classes with four disposal cameras and a very detailed letter with directions to take two-three pictures of anything that would tell the teacher and students in the class more about their home life and literacy experiences. Examples were included in the letter such as, a picture of the family playing a video game, or on a trip which indicated family *fun times*; a picture of the family pet, indicated the *love of animals or responsibility*; or a picture of someone reading the newspaper or a book, indicated the *passion for learning or the joy of reading*. Once the pictures were taken, the letter asked parents to sign their name on the attached roster, to indicate they took pictures and when they were available to share the family photos with the class. The students were encouraged to bring the camera back on the very next school day. As this project discussion took place among teachers, they devised a plan that would send the camera home with more responsible students (those who would complete the task and remember to return the camera) over the weekend.

There were several students/families from each class to follow the directions and returned the cameras. However, much like the photo inventory for the *CAMP* participants, it appeared my expectations and parent responses did not match up. Some classes had cameras returned with half the roll taken after going home with only one child, children brought in photos from previously taken on vacations, and one class had

one camera never to be returned. Yet with all of the instructions and incentives, none of the families in either class volunteered to come in to the classroom and share their home literacy or cultural events with the class during the final week of school; therefore this research question can only be answered by the teachers' reactions to the photo inventory presentations of *CAMP* participants. A follow-up email was sent to teacher participants asking what they learned and how they can/will use the information. The following explains the teachers' individual perceptions and how they responded to the new information they acquired.

Mr. Rich indicated:

. . . After listening to the presentation I learned more ideas to use as I give examples to the children of how to look for literacy, words, letters, etc. in their everyday lives . . . I have information on things in the home that I can use to help them make connections at school . . . The presentation included things that I had not even thought of to include in my lessons . . . I also have an idea of a newspaper or magazines based home activity I'd like to incorporate; but didn't because I thought some students would not have access and I didn't want to impose on their family finances, so I omitted it . . . This information will probably help me go further into reaching each child . . . and helping them make a connection that I may have overlooked or forgotten about" (Email Communication, July, 2010)

When asked if he learned anything that he would include in his daily curriculum his response was:

I like the whole idea of the camera project and having parents to come in and share themselves . . . If there's one thing everyone knows its themselves . . . Hopefully I can try this camera project sometime next year with my whole class. I want to encourage more parents to get involved and I saw how well it worked with Stanford and his Mom. (Email Communication, July, 2010)

Ms. James' responded to the same questions and she replied similarly:

I enjoyed the presentation and learned a lot. Having the parents come in helped me to see what they do at home and what I can do for the kids here to help make learning fun and familiar. I like the idea of parents coming in with their kids to do the project and maybe that will make them more comfortable about being in the classroom and volunteering for other things. (Email Communication, July, 2010)

When asked if she thought she'd like to try this project again with the whole class, her response was:

Sure, I'd like to see if I could have a better response with the camera activity. Maybe if it was at the beginning of the school year when everyone is more excited more parents would come in. (Email Communication, July, 2010)

Both teachers shared how much they learned from the photo inventory presentations and both have incorporated some of the information in their instruction during the current school year with a new group of students. Mr. Rich "had students bring in newspapers and magazines for a language arts assignment." He stated, "In the past I would have solicited them from co-workers and friends." Ms. James sent a survey home with her students for parents to sign-up to volunteer in the classroom for clerical work, reading, projects, and even field trip chaperones. She had several sign up, "But none have actually come in yet." Her plans to follow up on the volunteers will possibly happen, "During the first report card conferences" [in October] if she doesn't "have time prior to then" (Field Notes, September, 2010).

Although both teachers were excited about the photo presentation and their responses seemed positive, neither have used the photo inventory project to find out more

about their current students and families home literacies and cultural experiences, but claim they will. This further validates the need for the climate and camaraderie which was developed within the *CAMP* sessions among the parents and me.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DISCUSSION**

This mixed methods case study investigated the opportunities and obstacles of parental involvement for families with limited financial resources in one Title I elementary school. It further investigated parents' responses to non-traditional pathways of engagement at the school level as well as their responses to opportunities to partner with teachers as reading tutors for their elementary children who struggle with literacy achievement.

#### **Phase I**

In the first phase, I assessed parental involvement by evaluating (a) the extent to which administrators' and teachers' provided pathways for parental involvement, and (b) how parents' from families with limited financial resources responded to the school's efforts to increase their involvement. Both foci served as a lens to analyze whether the schools' and parents' current roles and responsibilities served as opportunities or obstacles toward promoting students' academic achievement (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004).

Since there is research which links parental involvement to higher student achievement (Crozier, 2001; DePlaney, Coulter-Kern, Duchane, 2007; Epstein, 1995; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill & Craft, 2003; Stevenson & Baker, 1987) district administrators view schools as ultimately responsible for promoting both outcomes (U.S.

Department of Education, 2002, 2006). From PowerPoint presentations, to electronic weekly newsletters, community meetings in churches, and various PTA activities, the administrators and teachers at Thompson Primary School (TPS) reached out to parents to increase their involvement. The causal link between parent involvement and student achievement was an unquestioned rationale for the school's outreach efforts to increase the school-based involvement of families, especially those with limited financial resources. Such efforts supported the "more is better" model of parental involvement (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010), in that, school officials assumed achievement would improve as parents' involvement increased. Schools looked to parents to become partners in this new endeavor: they no longer viewed themselves as capable of addressing this challenge of increasing student achievement alone.

The opportunities and obstacles offered by each partner, however, did not necessarily align with the other's expectations or to the likelihood of increasing student achievement. The school offered numerous opportunities for parents to get involved. They wanted parents to attend PTA meetings, achievement accountability nights, carnivals, book fairs and other whole school activities, as well as parent conferences. Additionally, TPS desired for parents to help at home with homework; and to read to their children daily. Although the school recognized parents' employment, transportation, and childcare obstacles, they still expected parents to somehow overcome these difficulties if they really wanted their children to do well in school. Their justification was that participation in the school's multiple outreach activities would give parents an opportunity to acquire the necessary values to improve their children's academic

performances and attitudes. However, the motivation of having the “right values” lacked any cognitive components; thus, it was not appropriate for this study’s population because students needed a specific type of assistance, parents lacked the knowledge to support their children academically, and teachers did not have the time or resources to devote towards implementation (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). Furthermore, parents from diverse populations with limited financial resources seldom involve themselves at the school level (Epstein, 1986; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006), and more importantly they typically do not gravitate toward traditional pathways (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

From the school’s perspective, if parents had the right values toward education, they would model these dispositions, which, in turn, would help their children to achieve in school, because then students would realize the importance of obtaining a good education (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). On the other hand, if students were not doing well academically, school personnel assumed parents must not be modeling the appropriate educational values. This view presented a no-win situation for parents because they could avoid this negative evaluation by the school only if their children performed successfully academically. The possibility of this academic improvement occurring was further minimized because the school lacked the necessary resources to provide extra assistance to their struggling children (Allington, 2004), and what appeared to be missing in their interactions were any conscious efforts to provide the necessary assistance to help students to become stronger readers (Allington, 2001). Additionally, none of the school’s existing efforts provided the necessary ‘direct effect’ to improve

students' reading abilities because unfortunately students maintained their status as struggling readers (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). Additionally, the school personnel supported parental involvement and associated educational values with its demonstration from parents to children. They were also pleased with the many pathways of opportunities they purposely extended to involve all parents in the academic lives of their children.

From the parents' perspective, their educational values were intact. They viewed themselves, as well as represented themselves as committed partners in the education of their children, by monitoring homework completion; helping to memorize spelling words and math facts; completing daily-required reading; and attending teacher requested meetings. Administrators and teachers appeared to be unaware of or discounted these at home contributions, quite possibly, because they were not visible and because the children still struggled academically. Parents were, however, well aware of and collectively praised the school's efforts to offer multiple pathways to increase their involvement, yet these pathways were not in synch with the multiple challenges of their daily lives; therefore they did not become involved (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Reynolds, 1992).

Each of the four families in this study had multiple school-aged children; three were fearful of participating because they were unsuccessful when they were students; two had children with special needs; only one family had consistent employment; and everyone had transportation issues. Also, their daily responsibilities made it difficult to attend the school offered events and attending such events would further decrease the

amount of available time to assist their children. Given these obstacles, it was apparently unreasonable for them to attend large school events, to volunteer in the classrooms or to take part in school related activities that cost money (e.g., lunch with your child, school carnivals and book fairs). These challenges were well documented in the literature (Cotton & Wiklund, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005; Eccles et. al, 1993).

Additionally, teachers and administrators did not have any knowledge of the families' funds of knowledge, (Moll & Greenberg, 1990), which meant their lessons and activities lacked any relationship between the home's literacy and school's instructional practices. This lack negated the possibility for families' funds of knowledge to play a critical role in this partnership (Heath, 1983; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). That is, teachers were unable to use familiar experiences from home for the students as potential opportunities to create alternative pathways to increase both parental involvement as well as academic achievement (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004). Ultimately an impasse existed because each partner's efforts did not appear to support the other's expectations, nor did the sum total of their efforts appear to improve the academic achievement of their struggling readers.

### **Summary**

Our nation's educational policymakers (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) support the "more is better" (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hill & Craft, 2003) approach through legislation to require parental involvement. Thus, increased student achievement was the expected outcome of their involvement. The school offered a variety of events and activities for parents to become involved at the school level, yet the opportunities to

be involved did not meet the needs of families with limited financial resources (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004). Therefore, though pathways were made available, parents did not fully become involved. Parents, on the other hand did, however, felt they were offering what the school requested with homework, flash cards, daily reading, etc. The impasse between these efforts and students still struggling was more prominent for students from families with limited financial resources, thus these parents rarely participated in school-based activities.

The school assumed the absence and reduced visibility of parents with limited financial resources equated to them not caring and lacking in the appropriate educational values. By having such values, parents would definitely become involved and their children's academic achievement would increase as a result of their modeling. However, the pathways, being offered by the school, were not conducive to the lifestyles of the individual families within this study (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Reynolds, 1992). Therefore, while these results were limited to this one school, developing a partnership between the home and school based on different roles and responsibilities was necessary if TPS hoped to increase the achievement of struggling readers.

## **Phase II**

Given these challenges faced by parents in their daily lives and the fact that no research has investigated how parents and teachers can work together to improve student reading abilities while bridging the gap between the literacy practices of the home and school, I developed a partnership for administrators, teachers, and parents to adopt new roles and responsibilities, initially through their participation as partners in a tutoring

program with the struggling readers, and then by bringing the families' home literacy practices into the classroom. The joint effort made each partner more aware of the other's intentions and helped to promote students' achievement

The study posed certain challenges. The first was how to share Phase I findings with the school or families because any one of the potential partners might be offended by the other's perception and refuse to participate. For example, administrators and teachers believed parents were not doing enough to help their children whereas the parents believed otherwise. Because everyone wanted students to achieve, these findings were not shared; instead, I developed a partnership to directly improve the students' achievement. The second challenge related to convincing parents of their potential to tutor and teachers of the feasibility of adding tutoring into their busy daily schedules.

Phase II of this study was based on the findings from Phase I. A tutoring program (Miller, 2003, 2009) was implemented with the goal of having a direct effect on students' reading abilities (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). Secondly, to increase teachers' and administrators' understanding of home literacy practices, I incorporated a photo inventory (Gemma Moss, 2001) and parents visited the classrooms and shared their cultural experiences and home literacy practices. To achieve these goals, I designed *CAMP (Comforting And Motivating Parents) with Kim*, an interactive program established to teach literacy strategies to parents while building bridges between the families' home literacy practices and the school's curriculum (Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). Subsequently, with the two interventions, Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) served as a framework to understand why the different

participants resisted or became involved; Moll and Greenberg's (1990) Funds of Knowledge provided a basis for understanding different forms of literacy practices across different contexts; Calabrese Barton et al.'s (2004) Ecologies of Parental Engagement offered a framework to evaluate how the structural components of the school as an organization influenced different participants' roles and responsibilities; and Pomerantz and Moorman's (2010) Interventions to Promote Parental Involvement showed how and why different interventions either promoted or limited parental involvement.

### **Tutoring Intervention**

Within the two months of tutoring, the students who fully participated (at home and at school) made almost twice as much growth during the timeframe of the study as they did in seven months of regular instruction. The resources students received via tutoring, appeared to have a direct effect (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010) on their literacy achievement and both parents and teachers were pleased with not only the reading growth of the students but, in one child's case (Ariel), with her behavior improvement.

As parents slowly became involved in the tutoring process, the ease of their role as well as the enjoyment the children experienced fostered their commitment to continue the tutoring program. This tutoring opportunity presented parents with the social capital they needed to interact as equals with the teachers and administrators (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Comer, 1993). Another interesting discovery for parents was the notion of extended family. The tutoring aspect of this study would not have met such levels of success for any of the participants had the extended family members not been able and willing to participate. In each case, there was an extended family member to 'fill the

shoes' of the parent participant when the responsibilities identified by one parent as "life's obstacles" interfered.

Despite teachers' initial apprehension about parents' commitment with the tutoring program and the increased time it would take to implement, a partnership between parents and teachers was developed. Once teachers realized the parents' valuing of and commitment to the tutoring through the parent-teacher communication logs of PIR, they escalated their support. Teachers viewed parents as equal partners in their efforts to improve student achievement, giving them both a new set of roles and responsibilities (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004). Additionally, as teachers witnessed, parental support, follow-through, and time constraints, which were an initial issue, no longer remained a hindrance; tutoring helped develop additional reading time and quality/bonding opportunities with students, further emphasizing this intervention's motivational effect (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). Teachers praised students' increased self-confidence and lack of fear when reading in front of their peers. Students were willing to take risks and were positively engaged in reading.

### **Home-School Connection**

While parents initially were eager to complete the photo inventory and its follow-through, only two families visited the classrooms. Their presentations convinced teachers of parents' desire and ability to become actively involved, thus developing the first step to bridging the cultural connections between home and school (Heath, 1983). Accordingly, consistent with Moll et al.'s (1992) recommendation for the use of activities to "involve students as thoughtful learners in socially meaningful tasks" (p. 137), teachers

welcomed parents into their classrooms. For example, Mr. Rich's thoughtful adaptation of the protected reading time to accommodate Ms. Silver's schedule and the extension of time allotted for Stanford's continuous discussion, demonstrated the value of this approach. Teachers can use this newfound information about the family's cultural experiences to devise innovative instructional strategies (Moll & Greenberg, 1990), which may further encourage students' literacy progress. Mr. Rich should be applauded as this brief presentation could be the spark he was initially searching for to "ignite a little fire" in students. Stanford's opportunity to continue his dialogue with his classmates was definitely a boost to his confidence and a way for Mr. Rich to gather the information about Stanford's home literacy practices.

The Phase II findings revealed five steps to building parent-teacher partnerships. I term this five-step approach, *Pemberton's Quint-R (PQR) Approach (to Parent-Teacher Relations)*. The PQR Approach consists of resistance, reality, rapport, respect, and relationship. This PQR Approach begins with Step 1: the initial *resistance* from teachers due to past performance of parents with struggling students and from parents with limited financial resources, possibly due to their internalized oppressive views of themselves. Internalized oppression is the way an oppressed group comes to use the logic of their oppressor against themselves, or in other words they start to believe in the negative stereotypes of themselves (Deutsch, 2006).

While such resistance should be expected, it did not undermine the interventions' successes. In Step 2, participants became aware of *realities* of trying to move beyond initial tensions to understand the ultimate goals of the partnership. For example, with the

communication logs, teachers were pleased with students' progress yet often stressed the need for further growth whereas parents were pleased with this growth given its lack in the previous seven months. In Step 3, a *rapport* was established among teachers and parents as they both appreciated how their joint efforts helped students. Their care and concern led them to look at previous tensions in more constructive ways. In Step 4, a level of mutual *respect* was developed between the partners. This placed value on the child's ability to reach the intended goal of academic success. Lastly, in Step 5: the *relationship* between the teacher and parent became a *relationship* between the home and school.

### **Intervention Summary**

During the two and one half months of *CAMP* sessions, participants learned strategies to assist their children with reading, developed a networking system within the school through two-way dialogue with teachers, increased their level of self-confidence, all while feeling valuable and appreciated by school personnel. This *CAMP* was the medium that allowed the implementation of the intervention strategies (Partners-in-Reading and Home-School Connections). It presented the recommended climate to foster parental involvement (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010), provided the resources to increase academic achievement (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010), and resulted in a feeling of value through the sharing of cultural experiences from home (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Parents and students viewed this pathway as a "comfort zone" for learning and sharing. Furthermore, as parents became more knowledgeable of the literacy strategies, they were motivated to become involved. This level of comfort and

motivation is consistent with the tenets of Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory.

### **Implications**

People are often moved by external factors such as reward systems, grades, evaluations, or the opinions they fear others might have of them (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In this study, parents were motivated by their newfound knowledge as well as the success of their attempts and the reading progress of their children. Each participant experienced the three components of SDT—relatedness, competence and autonomy as they interacted with each other throughout this study. For example with relatedness, parents initially were reluctant to take part as the first night of *CAMP* consisted of two extended family members and not the parents. As trust developed, families readily participated and brought additional siblings with them. Teachers commented on the relatedness or bonding that they felt with students during the one-on-one tutoring. Eventually, parents and teachers formed a stronger sense of relatedness with each other through their joint commitment. As the study concluded, parents expressed a willingness to be active participants by tutoring students in the school and teachers welcomed their new sense of autonomy. The self-determination theory-SDT served different purposes with different participants.

The second intervention, the home-school connection, had unique challenges. First, I thought this intervention would be the easiest of the tasks for my parents because it simply involved the taking of photos and presenting them in the classroom. Perhaps the classroom visits raised anxieties more so than the tutoring because it more dramatically

changed parents' roles and responsibilities (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004). Or perhaps this intervention was difficult because parents had instinctively internalized the school's traditional notions of literacy and classroom visits reminded them of their deficit status based on the school's perspective (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Cooper, 2009; Valencia, 1997; Yosso, 2005). The fear of being rejected or looked upon as different from the school's norm, especially when the schools had not taken their perspectives into consideration before, could have increased the complexity and difficulty level of this intervention. Regardless, changing the traditional roles and responsibilities of the school's operating structure (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004) was a more daunting task than previously expected.

NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) mandates increased student achievement through parental involvement. Traditional activities serve the important function of motivating parents and building school solidarity; nevertheless, something else is needed for parents with struggling readers to cause a direct effect on students' academic success (Pomerantz & Moorman, 2010). Perhaps by changing the roles and responsibilities of parents (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004) and allowing more time, the photo interview activities would have similar direct effects. Regardless, based on this study's results, the 'more is better' approach may only work after educators find pathways where there is a 'direct effect' on students' achievement.

The school's parent liaison's responsibilities might better serve the families of limited financial resources if they included more of my role as the *CAMP* facilitator. Bridging opportunities for parents to feel comfortable and welcomed while interacting

with teachers and students to increase both parental involvement and student reading achievement seemed to be the key which kept all participants, especially parents motivated.

### **Implications Regarding Future Studies**

The question of whether parental involvement with tutoring is essential for its success is supported by this data, in that, there appears to be a direct relationship between reading success and parent involvement. Evan was the only student, who did not fully participate in the program, and, in turn, he was the only student who did not make any reading gains during the study duration. He did receive tutoring at school from both the teacher and the student intern; yet the missing home component and buy-in from the family may have contributed to his stagnate reading level. Future studies need to examine this relationship further because there were too few families in this study to fully address this question. Also, why parents do not choose to become involved needs more attention.

Future studies can also look at how long it will take to get students up to grade level, as this two months timeframe only touched upon the potential progress of students. Despite making significant progress over two months, students still need to improve to read at grade level. Such findings are common across tutoring studies (Allington, 1977; 2001; Fontas & Pinnell, 1996). If students are to catch up to their classmates, parents, teachers, and schools will have to make the necessary commitment.

### **Limitations**

One limitation to this study is the scale on which it was conducted; only one school with only four families. To obtain the different perspectives of participants I chose

a small sample to gain the rich data and to hear the true voices of the participants; however, the small scale limits generalizations. The length of time for the study was also a limitation. Though each participating student made gains, longer studies are needed to evaluate the integrity of the program. More parents and schools, as well as more time, is needed to strengthen this study's findings.

### **Conclusion**

This two-phase mixed methods research investigated the school-based parental involvement of families with limited financial resources who have children struggling with reading in the elementary grades. Results of this study documented improved reading achievement for students and the implementation of initial pathways between the literacy practices of the school and home. As a result of the interventions and the *CAMP with Kim* focus group initiative for parents, this study extends the research of parental involvement and student achievement as it encompasses families with limited financial resources as well as struggling elementary readers in the research equation. Furthermore, parents and teachers were able to work as tutoring partners for the struggling readers and make an academic difference in the lives of the children.

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## APPENDIX A

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study the following terms are defined:

***Academic Achievement***—the growth of a student’s academic performance based on their understanding of the curriculum resulting from mandatory (district or state) assessments.

***Deficit-based***—the notion that students, particularly low income minority students, fail in school because such students and their families experience deficiencies that obstruct the learning process, such as: limited intelligence, lack of motivation and inadequate home socialization (Valencia, 1997).

***Difference-Based***—the notion to incorporate one’s experiences and bridge them with new information making an attempt at increasing one’s knowledge base. Academically, this may incorporate one’s experiences at home with the curriculum to be taught as a means of ‘making a connection’ for the learner.

***Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)***—a research based assessment used to determine a child’s independent reading level. It enables teachers to systematically observe, record, and evaluate change in student reading performance and to plan for and teach what each student needs to learn next (Pearson Education, Inc., 2010).

***Family Literacy***—the ways parents, children, and extended family members weave literacy into their everyday routines at home and in their community; Morrow (2003) contends that family literacy activities may also reflect the ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage/experiences of the families.

***Funds of Knowledge***—the daily routines a family participates in at home that can be used to connect to the curriculum (e.g., using a pattern to sew—incorporates math; using a recipe to bake-incorporates reading and math, etc.).

***Limited Economic/Financial Resources***—the sum of the household’s income that does not rise above the poverty level; students receiving free or reduced meals at school based on reported household income (also referred to as Low Socioeconomic Status or Low SES).

***Non-Traditional Pathways***—opportunities for school-based involvement which have a difference-based quality; schools’ acceptance of one’s uniqueness and method of meeting individuals/families where they are without reference to what may be missing or what may be different from what the school is accustomed to; opportunities and events the school designs to include/involve parents and families that differ from the norm (can be used interchangeably with *informal* or *alternative* pathways).

***Obstacles***—opportunities which deter parents from becoming involved; (e. g., job responsibilities, lack of child care, etc.).

***Opportunities***—events and activities made available by schools which allow parents to become involved.

***Parental Involvement***—a regular, two-way and meaningful communication about student learning and other school activities, including: Assisting in their child’s learning; Being actively involved in their child’s education at school; Serving as full partners in their child’s education and being included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child (NCLB, 2001); this involvement takes place at the school or at the home.

**APPENDIX B**

**ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW**

**TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

Good \_\_\_\_\_, as you know I am a doctoral student at UNCG, and I want to first thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my study of parental involvement.

I am going to ask you a few questions about your school's practices of involving parents. This interview is designed for you to help me to better understand the different levels of parents' involvement in school. It is not designed for me to judge you or your school's practices in any way, so please be as honest and as informative as you'd like. If I am unclear with a question, or you simply feel uncomfortable answering a question, please just let me know and I can adjust or eliminate that question altogether.

Are there any questions/comments before we get started? Once again, let me thank you for your participation.

**DEFINITION: Perspective**

1. First of all let's start with your own definition. Please tell me what *parent involvement (PI)* means to you, or how would you define PI for someone else?

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**UNDERSTANDING OF PI:** (*Now, I'd like to get some of your personal opinions about PI.*) **Knowledge & Perspective**

2. Do you think PI is important? YES\_\_\_NO\_\_\_
  - a. Explain how/why. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. On a scale of 1-5, how involved would you say the majority of parents here are. (1 being extremely involved and 5 being not involved at all). Explain

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4. Explain the benefits/opportunities from PI and who you feel actually benefits?  
(*may be already answered in previous question*)

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You have talked about the importance of \_\_\_\_\_ & the benefits of \_\_\_\_\_ in PI....

- a. Explain how these are benefits and why you feel this way.

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5. In a few words/phrases, describe some of your more involved parents.

**Perspective**

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- a. Of those parents you just described, explain any type of relationship/bond that has been formed with you/the school/other parents. **Relationship**

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- b. What opportunities/benefits related to PI do you feel these parents possess? **Perspective**

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- c. What obstacles related to PI do you feel other less involved parents have? **Perspective**

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- d. Of the reasons/situations you named, do you view these as “true obstacles” or do you feel there may be more to the parents’ lack of involvement? Explain. **Knowledge/Perspective**

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**PERSONAL EXPERIENCE:** (*Now I’m going to get a bit more personal with questions related to your own individual experiences with parents and their parental involvement. Remember, if you feel uncomfortable, please don’t hesitate to allow me to rephrase or even omit that question.*)

6. What types of involvement do you want from parents? Be as specific as possible.

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- a. Do you currently have parents involved in all of the events/activities you just named/listed?

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

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- b. Of the parents currently involved on a regular basis, can you identify their child(ren)?

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

- c. What do you know about the academic level of their child(ren)?

**Below** \_\_\_ **On** \_\_\_ **Above Grade Level**

- d. [*If below*] Would the parents’ involvement, in any way, affect how you would communicate/address unsatisfactory academic issues with this parent?

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

Explain\_\_\_\_\_

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7. How do you go about involving/soliciting parents to become involved in your school (i.e. *letters sent home, recommendations from others, past experiences, sign-up sheets, personal phone calls...*)? **Multiple Pathways**

- a. (*If applicable to #7*) Approximately what percentage of positive/affirming responses do you get from that initial request?

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- b. (*If applicable to #7*) If your response is low, then what is your next step?

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8. Tell me what you know about the at home literacy activities of your most involved parents.

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- a. How did you gain access to this information?

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- b. Explain how this information is useful to you in any way? (Does it impact your solicitation of parent volunteers...)?

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Tell me what you know about the at home literacy activities for your least-involved parents.

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c. How did you gain access to this information?

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d. Explain how this information is useful to you in any way? (Does it impact your solicitation of parent volunteers...)?

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9. If there is anything else you'd like to share with me that you think may be useful to this study, please feel free to do so at this time.

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Once again, thank you for your time and your valuable information. I may be in touch with you again in the near future to participate in other parts of this study. Thank You!

Time interview ended: \_\_\_\_\_ (turn off tape)

## APPENDIX C

### TEACHER INTERVIEW

**TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_AM/PM

Good \_\_\_\_\_, as you know I am a doctoral student at UNCG, and I want to first thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my study of parental involvement.

I am going to ask you a few questions about your class practices, and the children and families you recommended for my study. This interview is designed for you to help me to better understand the different levels of parents' involvement at school. It is not designed for me to judge you or your practices in any way, so please be as honest and as informative as you'd like. If I am unclear with a question, or you simply feel uncomfortable answering a question, please just let me know and I can adjust or eliminate that question altogether.

Are there any questions/comments before we get started? Once again, let me thank you for your participation.

**DEFINITION: Perspective**

1. First of all let's start with your own definition. Please tell me what *parent involvement* (PI) means to you, or how would you define PI for someone else?

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**UNDERSTANDING OF PI:** (*Now, I'd like to get some of your personal feelings about PI.*) **Knowledge & Perspective**

2. Do you think PI is important? YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_
  - a. Explain how/why. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Are there benefits/opportunities from PI? (*maybe be already answered in importance question*)

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You have talked about the importance of \_\_\_\_\_ & the benefits of \_\_\_\_\_ in PI....

- a. Explain how these are benefits and why you feel this way.

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4. Explain why of all the parents in your classroom, you referred these 2 parents \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ for my study. **Perspective**

- a. What opportunities/benefits related to PI do you feel they have?

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- b. What obstacles related to PI do you feel they have? **Perspective**

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- c. Do you view these as “true obstacles” or do you feel there may be more to their lack of involvement? Explain.

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**PERSONAL EXPERIENCE:** (*Now I'm going to get a bit more personal with questions related to your own classroom experiences with parental involvement. Remember, if you feel uncomfortable, please don't hesitate to allow me to rephrase or even delete that question.*)

5. How do you go about involving parents in your classroom (i.e. *letters to whole class, sign-up sheets, personal phone calls...*)? **Multiple Pathways**

a. Approximately what percentage of responses do you get from that initial request?

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b. If your response is low, then what is your next step?

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6. What type of involvement do you want from parents?

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a. Do you currently have parents doing all of the things you just named/listed?

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

b. Of the parents currently involved on a regular basis, what is the academic level of their child in reading?

**Below** \_\_\_ **On** \_\_\_ **Above** Grade Level

c. [*If below*] Would their involvement in any way affect how you communicate academic issues with this parent?

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

Explain \_\_\_\_\_

7. Tell me what you know about the at home literacy activities for these 2 families.

**Various Forms of Literacy**

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- a. How did you gain access to this information?

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- b. Explain how this information is useful to you in any way? (Does it impact your planning/lessons/activities...)?

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Once again, thank you for your time and your valuable information. I will be in touch with you again in the near future to participate in other parts of this study. Thank You!

Time interview ended: \_\_\_\_\_ (turn off tape)

## APPENDIX D

### PARENT INTERVIEW

*(Questions are based on Calabrese Barton's EPE model.)*

**TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

Good \_\_\_\_\_, I am Kim Pemberton, a doctoral student at UNCG, and I want to first thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my study of parents and their involvement at school. For my study, I am going to ask you a few questions about yourself, your child, your school experiences now and as a child, and possibly some information about your home environment. This interview is designed for you to help me to better understand parents' involvement at school. It is not designed for me to judge you or your participation in any way, so please be as honest and as informative as you'd like. If I am unclear with a question, or you simply feel uncomfortable answering a question, please just let me know and I can adjust or eliminate that question altogether.

Are there any questions/comments before we get started? Once again, let me thank you for your participation.

**DEFINITION: Perspective**

1. First of all let's start with your own definition. Please tell me what *parent involvement* (PI) means to you, or how would you define PI for someone else?

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2.

**UNDERSTANDING OF PI:** *(Now, I'd like to get some of your personal feelings about PI.)* **Knowledge & Perspective**

3. Do you think PI is important? YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

a. Explain how/why. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are there benefits from PI? (*maybe be already answered in importance question*)

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You have talked about the importance of \_\_\_\_\_ & the benefits of \_\_\_\_\_ in PI....

- a. Explain how these are benefits and why you feel this way.

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5. Is PI the same for all parents here at your school? **Roles/division of labor**  
YES\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_

- a. Explain this to me. \_\_\_\_\_

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- b. How do **you** know about the different aspects of PI here? **Positioning**

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- c. Do you think these “levels” of PI exist *at all schools* or are they only here at this particular school? Explain. **Rules for Participation**

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- d. If there are parents here who do not know about the different levels/types of involvement, how would you suggest they find out? **Capital**

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**PERSONAL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT EXPERIENCE:** *(Now I'm going to get a bit more personal with questions related to your own experiences with involvement. Remember, if you feel uncomfortable, please don't hesitate to allow me to rephrase or even delete that question.)* **Background & Perspective**

6. According to your definition (*read some of their own definition-pg 1*) are you an involved parent? YES\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_
- a. How do you feel about your involvement? Explain.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
7. Name some specific events/areas that you have personally participated in this school year. **Relationships/Gaining Access**
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- a. How did you become involved/find out about these (*previous question*) events/areas?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Explain to me **why** you do these things here at school?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
8. Tell me 3 words that your child's teacher would use to describe how involved you are at the school? Explain each of them. **Perspective**
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

9. How have you been involved in past years (Past 3 months if necessary)? (*previous schools/other children*)?

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- a. Why has it changed? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Have you ever felt you wanted to be involved with something specific here, but felt like you didn't quite fit in or just couldn't do it? **Comfort level**

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_

- a. How did you handle that situation? \_\_\_\_\_

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- b. How did you feel about that decision later? Why?

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11. What are some other areas here at school that you'd like to become involved, but the school hasn't/ doesn't offer them? **Rules for Participation**

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- a. What keeps you from organizing this on your own?

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- b. How would you go about starting up this activity here at this school? Where would you go for *help, approval, resources, a place to meet/work ...*? **Capital (all 3)**

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12. Do you think all parents have an equal chance to become involved at this school (*reasonable/unnecessary expectation*)? **Social Capital**

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13. Is it easier for some parents to become involved at your school than others?  
Explain. **Roles/Div of Labor**

YES\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_

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Are there any other reasons why it might be easier for some parents and not others? Do you feel there are specific individuals/parents best suited for PI and participation at this school? **Roles/Div of Labor**

- a. YES-Who are these parents and what qualifies them?

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14. Please share with me anything else I've not asked that you'd like me to know about **your personal experience** with PI here at this school?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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**PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AS A CHILD: Background/ Perspective/Values & Beliefs of PI** (*Okay, let's go back in time just a little. I want you to think about your own experiences in school as a young student.*)

15. Please explain how you felt about school as a child.

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- a. Tell me how a teacher would have described you as a student?

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- b. How would your parents have described you as a student?

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16. Share with me how/if your parents were involved in your school experience?

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- a. What 3 words would your teachers or administrators have used to describe your parents & their involvement? Explain each.

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17. (*If involved*), can you share with me any specific situations or events in which your parents were directly involved?

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- a. How did having (*not having*) your parents there and involved make you feel then? \_\_\_\_\_

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- b. ...and now as an adult how do you feel about their involvement (*lack of involvement*)?

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- c. ...has that involvement (*lack of involvement*) had any effect on your involvement with your child? Explain.

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18. Can you tell me about the school involvement of any other parents in the school when you were a child?

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**SCENARIOS** (Now, this last part will include imaginative, or what if questions. Please think hypothetically if these situations have never occurred for you here at this school.)

1. On a scale of 1-5 (*1=very comfortable & 5=not comfortable at all*) how would you rate the following areas to be involved here? Please explain your rating.

**Comfort level & space**

- a. Your child's classroom \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Chairing a committee or event( PTA/Book Fair) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Clerical duties( filing/checking papers) \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Tutorial duties (one-on-one/small group) \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you were given an opportunity to chair any committee/event at this school, what would it be and why? **Space--academic/non**

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- a. If that is a committee/event that doesn't already exist, which individuals would you first address to discuss starting it? Why these people?

**Relationships/Capital**

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3. If you needed materials/financial resources to complete this task for a specific committee, how would you get these items? **Capital**
- 
- 
4. Again, on a scale from 1-5 (*1=very comfortable & 5=not comfortable at all*) how would you feel about working with the following individuals if given the opportunity? Explain your reasons? **Relationships/Capital**
- a. teachers(specific or any) \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 
- b. other parents \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 
- c. certain committees/community sponsors \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 
- d. administrator(s) \_\_\_\_\_
5. We have finally come to the end. If there is anything else you'd like to share with me that you think may be useful to this study, please feel free to do so at this time.
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Once again, thank you for your time and your valuable information. I will be in touch with you again in the near future to participate in other parts of this study. Thank You!

Time interview ended: \_\_\_\_\_ (turn off tape)

## APPENDIX E

### INFORMATION LETTER AND PARENT AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT

**TO:** Parent  
**FROM:** Kim D. Pemberton, Doctoral Candidate at UNC-G  
**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_, 2010  
**RE:** *CAMP with Kim* Parent Focus Group

As I begin another phase of the Parental Involvement Study you participated in last semester, I would like your input regarding your availability to continue participation as well as the needs of you and/or your family for participation in the Parent Focus Group Sessions scheduled for this semester. Please answer the following statements according to your wishes and availability. I will also contact you via telephone or home visit and if you would like to complete the form then I am willing to accept it then. Otherwise, please return this to your child, \_\_\_\_\_'s, classroom teacher by **Friday**, \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you in advance for your speedy reply. I look forward to a great semester together.

1. I am willing to participate in the Focus Group Sessions.

Yes    No

2. I will commit to attending at least 6 of the 8 sessions.

Yes    No

3. I can meet 2-3 times a month with the Focus Group.

Yes    No

4. Thursdays are a good day for me to meet.

Yes    No

\*If **No**, please list a better day of the week for you to meet.

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5. A good time for me to meet is 5:30-7:30PM.

Yes No

\*If **No**, please list a better 2-hour time to meet.

\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

6. In order for me to participate I will need child care.

Yes No

\*If **Yes**, list age(s) of child/ren \_\_\_\_\_

Do any children needing child care have special needs that a sitter would need to know about? Please explain.

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7. In order for me to participate, my child will need homework help.

Yes No

\*If **Yes**, list the grade(s) of children needing homework help. \_\_\_\_\_

8. I can meet at Thomasville Primary with the Focus Group.

Yes No

\*If **No**, please list a better place for you to meet.

---

9. I will need transportation **to** the Focus Group.

Yes No

10. I will need transportation **from** the Focus Group.

Yes No

If there are any other requests that may make it easier for you to participate in the Focus Group Sessions with other parents, please list them here.

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Please return this to your child's teacher by **Friday, \_\_\_\_\_**.

## APPENDIX F

### PARENT LITERACY INTERVIEW

(#2 of 2)

*(Referencing Home Literacy Activities)*

**TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_AM/PM

Good \_\_\_\_\_, once again I am Kim Pemberton, a doctoral student at UNCG, and my focus for today's interview deals with the literacy development of your first grader. I am going to ask you a few questions about your child, and their reading experiences both at school and at home. Just as the earlier interview, this one is designed for you to help me to better understand the literacy challenges of your child if any, the school's input and your perception of it all. It will also be used to help me set up a support group for parents of children who are experiencing some difficulty in reading. It is not designed for me to judge you in any way. If I am unclear with a question, or you simply feel uncomfortable answering a question, please just let me know and I can adjust or eliminate that question altogether.

Are there any questions/comments before we get started? Once again, let me thank you for your participation.

#### **Part 1: Literacy at School: (Perspective & Experience)**

1. How do you feel about your child's reading ability?

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2. Please tell me about your child's reading experiences at school. (i.e.: when did s/he begin to read; how s/he feels about reading; what s/he enjoys reading...)

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3. How does the school involve you in the reading expectations of your child?

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a. Do you feel you should be involved? **Yes** \_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_

4. If you had a chance to learn more about what you could do to assist your child in reading, would you take advantage of it? **Yes** \_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_

Explain \_\_\_\_\_

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- a. What type of assistance do you think you would need to assist your child?

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5. Is the school doing all it can to assist your child? Explain.

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6. What do you feel the school should be doing differently to help your child's reading?

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7. How do you think your child would evaluate his/her ability to read? Explain.

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8. When you think about your child learning to read, how much of this responsibility is the school's and how much of it is the home's/parents'? (perhaps on a 100 percent rating).

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Explain why you feel this way?

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9. Are there any things I didn't ask that you feel are important, related to your child's reading and this school? If so please explain.

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**Part 2: Literacy at Home:** Since we've now talked a little about the home/parents' responsibility on literacy, the next few questions are related to any literacy activities you take part in at home.

10. What does the term literacy at home mean to you? (**Definition/Perspective**)

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11. When did your child begin reading?

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- a. What/Who sparked/started that reading? (older siblings, you, ...)

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- b. How was it sparked?

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12. What types of reading materials do you have in the home?

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- a. From that list, how often does your child select things to read on his/her own?

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- b. What are the topics/types of reading material your child selects most?

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c. Does    (child's name)    have his/her own books to read? **Yes** \_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_

d. What are some of his/her favorites?

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13. Do you have a public library card? **Yes** \_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_

a. Does the child? **Yes** \_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_

b. When did you get the library card? **Parent's** \_\_\_\_\_

• **Child's** \_\_\_\_\_

c. How often do you use it? **Parent's** \_\_\_\_\_

• **Child's** \_\_\_\_\_

d. For what purposes do you use the card? **Parent's** \_\_\_\_\_

• **Child's** \_\_\_\_\_

14. How often do you read with your child for fun?

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15. Of the reading material, mentioned earlier, (#11) that you have at home...

a. Do they come to your house on a regular subscription or do you purchase them then bring them home?

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16. Do you write notes/grocery lists, etc. in the home for    child's name    to see? Explain.

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a. Do you write notes only for    (child's name)    to read? Explain.

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17. What types of material does     (child's name)     see you reading at home?

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a. How often do you read these materials? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Are they for work or pleasure? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Explain your child's daily homework routine.

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a. Does s/he have a special homework area? Explain.

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19. Does your child have any difficulty with completing homework? **Yes** \_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_

20. How do you handle it?

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21. If there is anything you'd like to add that you feel is important to this study of your literacy practices at home, please share them now.

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**Part 3: Personal Reading Experiences:** Let me ask a few questions about your own reading habits. Please don't feel that if your answers show minimal reading at home that you will be thought of as a "bad parent." All circumstances and life styles will be taken into consideration when reviewing & analyzing this information. Therefore your true responses will be more beneficial than what you think I want to hear.

22. What do you do in your free time while at home?

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23. If you had more free time what would you do?

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24. Please indicate the amount of time you spend each week on recreational reading (not related to work) at home.

Less than 1 hour \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2 hours \_\_\_\_\_ 3-5 hours \_\_\_\_\_  
 6-10 hours \_\_\_\_\_ More than 10 hours \_\_\_\_\_

25. Please indicate how often you read each of the:

	Rarely/Never	Sometimes	Frequently
Newspaper			
Magazines			
Comic Books			
Poetry			
Letters/E-mails			
Novels			
Non-Fiction Books			

26. Share with me some of your memories of your own reading experiences when you were in school.

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27. Did you enjoy reading in school? Explain

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28. Explain how you remember reading time in elementary school (groups, round robin...)

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a. Were you comfortable with that procedure? **Yes** \_\_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_\_

b. Explain your reasons.

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- c. If you could have changed one thing about your elementary reading experience what would it be and why?

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- d. Explain any relationship to your elementary reading experiences and your adult reading experiences.

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29. Do you use reading in your present job?    **Yes** \_\_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_\_

Explain how.

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30. Is there anything that you feel I have omitted related to your home and the reading activities you participate in? If so please share them with me.

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**Part 4: Use of Outside Resources**

31. Does your child attend an afterschool program?    **Yes** \_\_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_\_

- a. How does your child get to this afterschool program?

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- b. Is homework completed in this program?    **Yes** \_\_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_\_

- c. Who helps to complete homework assignments?

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- d. Have you found it necessary to go back over the homework or are the assistants pretty good about helping your child understand and complete work?

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- e. Does your child have/need a tutor? Explain.

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Thank you so much for your time AGAIN and please know that I do appreciate your participation in this study.

Time interview ended: \_\_\_\_\_ (turn off tape)

## APPENDIX G

## CAMP WITH KIM CALENDAR

# CAMP with Kim Calendar

## CAMP with Kim Calendar

APRIL	
<b>Tues. 13<sup>th</sup></b> <b>(1<sup>st</sup> Focus Session)</b>  <b>(6:-7:30PM)</b>	<i>Parents</i> —introductions/bonding activities/discussion of <i>CAMP</i> intent -Introduce & explain PIR strategies to implement at home -Introduction of Photo Inventory (provide cameras)
<b>Thurs. 22<sup>nd</sup></b> <b>(no meeting)</b>	Collect cameras for developing pictures
<b>Tues. 27<sup>th</sup></b> <b>(2<sup>nd</sup> Focus Session)</b>  <b>(6:-7:30PM)</b>	<i>Parents</i> —Share results from previous activities & home literacy pictures - <i>KIM</i> : Demonstrate activity's connection to curriculum - <b>5-Finger rule</b> : Share & practice new activity for home -Discussion of involvement at school—Why/Why Not??
MAY	
<b>Thurs 6<sup>th</sup></b> <b>(3rd Focus Session)</b>  <b>(6:-7:30PM)</b>	<i>Parents</i> —Make & Take Session (first hour) and then how to implement at home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Unknown Words</i></li> <li>• <i>Comprehension Questions</i></li> <li>• <i>Leveling Texts—Just Right Books</i></li> <li>• <i>Building Fluency</i></li> </ul> [15 minute rotations-each station—Additional scouts, if needed to help man stations]
<b>11<sup>th</sup> OR 13<sup>th</sup></b> <b>(after school)</b>  <b>(3:-4:30PM)</b>	<i>Admin &amp; Teachers</i> -*May include other teachers as well*- -Provide w/ info (Ppt) and suggestions for implementation of strategies to welcome/include/and accept differences -Share info gathered from parents and activities implemented (photo activity, pocket folder reading, etc.) *Set up dates & times to share in

	<p>class-JUNE*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Discussion and allow feedback</li> <li>-How can Parents Help???</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tues. 18<sup>th</sup></b>  <b>(4<sup>th</sup> Focus Session)</b>  <b>(6:-7:30PM)</b></p>	<p><b>Parents--</b> Share results from previous Make &amp; Take activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Share how teachers/admin want help &amp; how WE can provide that * set up Photo Inventory share* (in JUNE)</li> <li>-PIR Reading sessions with students while I observe individually, interview parents, offer suggestions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Thurs. 27<sup>th</sup></b>  <b>(5<sup>th</sup> Focus Session)</b>    <b>(5:00-7:00PM)</b></p>	<p><b>Parent- Admin- Teachers --</b>Full Group-discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Brief introductions of all participants</li> <li>- Intro briefly literature &amp; goals of research</li> <li>-Share guidelines for group forum</li> <li>-Begin full group discussion</li> </ul>
<b>JUNE</b>	
<p><b>June 1<sup>st</sup></b>  <b>(6<sup>th</sup> Focus Session)</b>  <b>(6:-7:30PM)</b></p>	<p><b>Parents--</b> Final check up with parents &amp; review of last week's session</p>
<p><b>June 3<sup>rd</sup></b>    <b>(5:00-7:00PM)</b></p>	<p><b>Parent- Admin- Teachers</b></p> <p><b>Closing Celebration</b>-all invited  <b>Dinner served</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Introductions of ALL (<i>if new people attending</i>)</li> <li>-Orally review initial goals</li> <li>-Sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Admin share new info &amp; how they plan to make adjustments</li> <li>-Teachers share new info &amp; how it has/will make difference in classroom/report on parent sharing photo inventory...</li> <li>-2 Parents share activities/materials made/what they learned about child &amp; reading</li> <li>-2 Parents share home experiences &amp; any results with school</li> </ul> </li> <li>-Certificates for Participation (<b>C.A.M.P. w/ Kim</b> t-shirts)</li> <li>-Gifts for perfect <i>parent</i> attendance</li> <li>-Final drawing for 2 attendance incentives</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX H1

## CAMP AGENDA: SESSION 1

# CAMP with Kim

## CAMP with Kim

### Session 1-Agenda

April 13, 2010

6:00-6:15	Refreshments & pick-up materials [baggie, folder, strips, glue stick...]	
6:15-6:30	Introductions	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kim' shares background info of research (Parental Involvement, student achievement &amp; Partners-In Reading success)</li> <li>• <i>CAMP with Kim</i></li> </ul>	
6:30-6:40	Getting to Know You Activity – ( <i>Just Like Me</i> )	
6:40-7:00	Kim explains & demonstrates PIR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents try it with child</li> </ul>	
7:00-7:05	Questions from Parents	
7:05-7:10	Calendar of remaining <i>CAMP with Kim</i> Sessions	
7:10-7:20	Kim explains Photo Inventory [ <i>Distribute cameras</i> ]	
7:20	Set up dates/times for Parent Literacy Interviews (Current contact Information & Address)	
7:25-7:30	Questions from Parents [ <i>Parents select 3 books for folders</i> ]	
7:30	<b>Departure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 Door Prize Give-Aways</li> <li>- Parents take: cameras/folders/books/record sheet               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camera drop off date (<i>Thursday-April 22<sup>nd</sup></i>)</li> <li>• Next <i>CAMP</i> date- (<i>Tuesday-April 27<sup>th</sup></i>)</li> <li>• Assignments while away</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## APPENDIX H2

## CAMP AGENDA—SESSION 2

# CAMP with Kim

## CAMP with Kim

## Session 2-Agenda

April 27, 2010

- 6:00-6:15 Refreshments
- 6:15-6:30 Introductions
- Kim' shares background information of research (Parental Involvement, student achievement & Partners-In Reading success)
  - *CAMP with Kim*
- 6:30-6:40 Getting to Know You Activity—(*Which Item Describes You Best?*)
- 6:40-7:00 Kim explains & demonstrates *Choosing a Just Right Book*
- Provide & review booklets
  - Parents try it with child
- 7:00-7:05 Questions from Parents
- 7:05-7:10 Calendar of remaining *CAMP with Kim* Sessions
- 7:10-7:20 Adriana's Photo Inventory [share]
- 7:20 Set up dates/times for Parent Literacy Interviews  
(Current contact Information & Address)
- 7:25-7:30 Questions from Parents  
[Parents select 3 books for folders]
- 7:30 **Departure**
- 2 Door Prize Give-Aways
  - Parents take: folders/books/record sheet
  - Next *CAMP* date- (*Thursday-May 6<sup>th</sup>*)
  - Assignments while away



## APPENDIX H3

## CAMP AGENDA—SESSION 3

# CAMP with Kim

## CAMP with Kim

Session 3-Agenda

May 6, 2010

- 6:00-6:15 Refreshments
- 6:15-7:15 Station Introductions
- STATION #1-*Unknown Words*
  - STATION #2-*Comprehension Questions*
  - STATION #3-*Leveling Texts*
  - STATION #4-*Building Fluency*
- 7:15 Review of materials from stations
- 7:20 Helen's Photo Inventory [share]
- 7:25 Set up dates/times for Parent Literacy Interviews  
(Current contact Information & Address)



7:30 Departure

- 2 Door Prize Give-Aways

Parents take: materials made in stations

- Assignments while away—Use the materials made and be ready to discuss
- Next *CAMP* date- (*Thursday-May 18<sup>th</sup>*) share results from using materials made today



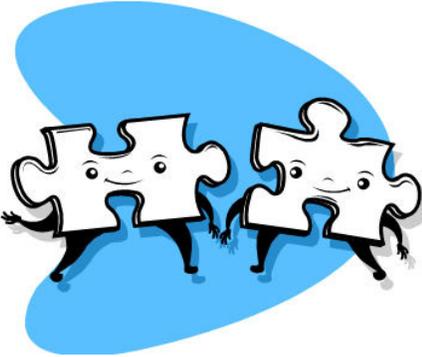
## APPENDIX H4

## CAMP AGENDA—SESSION 4

# CAMP with Kim

## Session 4-Agenda

May 18, 2010

6:00-6:15	Refreshments	
6:15-6:30	Have Parents Share Results from Last Session's Stations	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Unknown Words</i></li> <li>• <i>Comprehension Questions</i></li> <li>• <i>Leveling Texts—Just Right Books</i></li> <li>• <i>Building Fluency</i></li> </ul>	
6:30-6:50	Chunking Words to Build Vocabulary	
6:50-7:00	Share Report from Teachers	
7:00-7:10	View Photos for Literacy Links	
7:10-7:15	Concentration Game ( <i>with chunking strategies</i> )	
7:15-7:25	PIR Session with children ( <i>Kim monitors</i> )	
7:30	<b>Departure</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 Door Prize Give-Aways</li> <li>- Parents take: materials made in stations</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignments while away—Use the materials made and be ready to discuss</li> <li>• Next <i>CAMP</i> date- (<i>Thursday-May 27<sup>th</sup></i>)</li> </ul>	*New Time 5:00-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7:00PM (parents, teachers &amp; administration)</li> <li>○ Bring PIR folders</li> </ul>	



## APPENDIX H5

## CAMP AGENDA—SESSION 5

# CAMP with Kim

## CAMP with Kim

Session 5-Agenda

May 27, 2010

5:00-5:20	Refreshments
5:20-5:30	Introductions of Attendees
5:30-5:45	Overview of Literature & Goals of the Research

5:45-6:00 Share Literacy Activities from *CAMP* Sessions

- ❖ *Just Right Books*
- ❖ *Leveling Texts*
- ❖ *Comprehension Question Stems*
- ❖ *Fluency (stopwatch & Dolch flashcards)*
- ❖ *Stuck on a Word*
- ❖ *“Chunking” Words*
- ❖ *Photo Inventory*



6:00 Share Purpose & Guidelines for Group Forum

6:05-6:45 Group Forum

6:45 Question & Answer Session

7:00 **Departure**

- 4 Door Prize Give-Aways
- Set-Up Dates/Times for Parents to share
  - Assignment while away—Read new books and record in PIR folders
  - Next *CAMP* for Parents -(Tuesday-June 1<sup>st</sup>) 6:00-7:30PM
  - Final *CAMP* for All- (Thursday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>) 5:00-7:00PM
- Dinner, Activities, & Awards (*Distribute Invitations*)



## APPENDIX H6

## CAMP AGENDA—SESSION 6

# CAMP with Kim

## Session 6-Agenda

June 1, 2010

- 6:00-6:15 Refreshments
- 6:15-6:45 Construct Photo Inventory Displays
- *Select photographs to use*
  - *Write script for photographs*
  - *Set-up display*
- 6:50-7:00 Discuss Information to Share at the Final Celebration

7:00-7:10 Review PIR folders and update pockets

7:15

### Departure

- 2 Door Prize Give-Aways



Assignments while away—Continue to read using PIR

- Update PIR folders with new books
- Prepare discussion for presentation in classrooms
- Final *CAMP* Celebration-(*Thursday-June 3<sup>rd</sup>*)

New Time 5:00-7:00PM

- **Photo Share**-(Friday-June 4<sup>th</sup>) 9:00AM
- **Parade of Excellence**-(Friday-June 4<sup>th</sup>) 11:30AM



7:30-8:00 Home Visits for Additional Photos



**APPENDIX J****PHOTO INVENTORY CLASS LETTER**

June, 2010



Dear 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Families,

As we approach the end of this school year I invite you to help your child's class to learn how different and alike we all are. My name is Kim Pemberton, and I'm a student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G). I have worked with parents, teachers, and administrators here at Thomasville Primary this year on my research study to involve parents/families at school and here's how you can become involved.

Take the enclosed camera and take only 2-3 pictures of anything that would tell the students in your child's class more about you. For example, a picture of the family playing a video game, or on trip shares *family fun times*; a picture of the family pet, shares the *love of animals and responsibility*; a picture of someone reading the newspaper or a book, shares the *passion for learning* or *the joy of reading*. Now, sign your name on the roster indicating you took pictures and tell when you are available to share your family photos with the class. Please return the entire packet to school on **tomorrow** or the very next school day. When everything is returned on the next day your child will receive a special token/treat.

Once all students/families have taken pictures, I will develop them and parents/family members are invited to come into the classroom to share your photos. This will be a fun way to end the school year, learn more about each other, and involve families.

Thanks so much for your support of this project and your participation. Let's all have fun sharing and learning!

*Kim*

Kim Pemberton, *UNC-G Doctoral Candidate*

APPENDIX K

PARENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

September 18, 2009

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Kim Pemberton and I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G). I am working on a research study with some of the parents, teachers and administrators at Thompson Primary School. I have interviewed your child's 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, Ms. Little or Mrs. Lawson and she has recommended you as a parent participant for the study. In this study, I am looking at how we can improve parental involvement and student achievement.

Attached to this letter is a document that completely explains my purpose for the study and how your participation would help us. Please read the attached document and decide whether you would be willing to participate. I would greatly appreciate you signing and returning this letter to your child's teacher before, **Wednesday**, \_\_\_\_\_. I also may attempt to telephone you to see if you have any questions about the study. If you have any questions for me I can be reached at home at (336) xxx-xxxx.

Thank you in advance for your speedy reply to this request and your consent for participation.

Sincerely,  
Kim D. Pemberton

\*\*\*\*\**Sign & return to your child's teacher before* \_\_\_\_\_\*\*\*\*\*

\_\_\_\_ **YES**, I have read the letter and **would** like to participate in this study. You can contact me at the following address \_\_\_\_\_

and the following phone numbers:

\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ (home)  
\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ (cell)

\_\_\_\_ **NO**, I have read the letter and **would not** like to participate in this study for the following reason(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX L****FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

1. Please list the pros and cons of Partners-in-Reading as you know it.
2. How often are you able to implement the tutoring with your student?
3. How many book titles does your tutee have in each pocket? What are the levels?
4. What is the student's reaction to PIR?
5. How do you feel about the one-on-one time PIR offers? How does student feel?
6. Have you noticed any academic improvements since implementing PIR?
7. Have you observed any other changes in the student since implementing PIR?
8. What are your thoughts on continuing PIR next year?
9. Do you have any suggestions for the parents in the *CAMP with Kim* program?
10. Have you come up with any additional ways you can include parents in your classroom as volunteers?
11. Do you have any additional comments or feedback with reference to PIR?

**APPENDIX M**

**INFORMATION LETTER AND PARENT AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT**

**TO:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**FROM:** Kim D. Pemberton, Doctoral Candidate at UNC-G  
**DATE:** March 4, 2010  
**RE:** *CAMP with Kim* Parent Focus Group

As I begin another phase of the Parental Involvement Study you participated in last semester, I would like your input regarding your availability to continue participation as well as the needs of you and/or your family for participation in the Parent Focus Group Sessions scheduled for this semester. Please answer the following statements according to your wishes and availability. I will also contact you via telephone or home visit and if you would like to complete the form then I am willing to accept it then. Otherwise, please return this to your child, \_\_\_\_\_'s, classroom teacher by **Monday, \_\_\_\_\_**. Thank you in advance for your speedy reply. I look forward to a great semester together.

- 11. I am willing to participate in the Focus Group Sessions.      Yes    No
- 12. I will commit to attending at least 6 of the 8 sessions.      Yes    No
- 13. I can meet 2-3 times a month with the Focus Group.      Yes    No
- 14. Thursdays are a good day for me to meet.      Yes    No

\*If **No**, please list a better day of the week for you to meet. \_\_\_\_\_

- 15. A good time for me to meet is 5:30-7:30PM.      Yes    No

\*If **No**, please list a better 2-hour time to meet. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

- 16. In order for me to participate I will need child care.      Yes    No

\*If **Yes**, list age(s) of child/ren      \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_

Do any children needing child care have special needs that a sitter would need to know about? Please explain.

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17. In order for me to participate, my child will need homework help. Yes No

\*If Yes, list the grade(s) of children needing homework help.

\_\_\_\_\_

18. I can meet at Thomasville Primary with the Focus Group. Yes No

\*If No, please list a better place for you to meet.

\_\_\_\_\_

19. I will need transportation **to** the Focus Group. Yes No

20. I will need transportation **from** the Focus Group. Yes No

If there are any other requests that may make it easier for you to participate in the Focus Group Sessions with other parents, please list them here.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please return this to your child's teacher by **Monday**, \_\_\_\_\_