

Family Literacy Coaching: Partnering With Parents for Reading Success

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Abstract

It is known that parent involvement contributes to children's overall educational achievement as well as their literacy development. Home literacy, in particular, is critical in helping children who read below grade level. Studies also found that the quality of the interaction between the child and parent is as important as interactive opportunities. This article reports findings from a small multilingual and multicultural book bag program implemented among third grade elementary students for a semester. The main purpose of the study was to teach the participating parents to be literacy coaches for their children in order to enhance read-aloud experiences and to become more effective in helping their children with reading. Findings showed highly positive results evidenced by parent-child interactions. Participating parents reported that through strategy instruction provided by the researchers and interacting with other participating parents, they acquired more tools to be effective literacy coaches. Findings also revealed the difficult nature of promoting family literacy activities with busy parents, especially those who do not believe reading aloud can help their children improve their reading.

Key Words: home, family literacy coaching, multicultural, bilingual, interactive literacy, reading, parent-child interactions, elementary English learners

Introduction

In an era of unprecedented accountability and standardized assessment, reading has become a high-stakes subject, and English learners (ELs) are especially vulnerable. Teachers' instructional practices, undoubtedly, are paramount in helping children develop literacy, but teachers' efforts alone may not be sufficient. Research shows a clear connection between parental involvement and children's overall educational achievement, and this is particularly true for literacy development (Epstein, 2001; Kenner, 2005; Krashen, 2004). Parent and child literacy experiences can raise students' achievement on high-stakes assessments when authentic cultural literature and resources are included (Piazza, Rao, & Protacio, 2015). When home literacy practices align with school expectations, families—including bilingual families—can prepare their children for school tasks and mitigate negative academic consequences like low test scores. In so doing, they may socialize their children in English literacy competency as well as in meaningful bilingual interactions between family and texts (McConnochie & Figueroa, 2017).

In addition, teachers expect that children bring background knowledge gained from book reading and literacy activities in the home (Bialystok, 2002; Heath, 1983). "Family literacy" or "home literacy" involves family members participating in literacy activities within the home environment, especially intergenerationally (Packard, 2001). Social practices that reflect their beliefs and goals are shared by members of a cultural group, and literacy experiences that young children have in the home are an important element of family academic socialization (Sonnenschein, Metzger, Dowling, & Baker, 2017). Literacy starts at home. However, not every family engages in literacy the same way (Britto, 2006; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Sénéchal & Lefevre, 2001), and literacy practices vary across socioeconomic status (SES) strata as well as across cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2011). A 2001 study revealed that mothers from higher SES homes are twice as likely as less affluent mothers to read to their children three or more times a week (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & García-Coll, 2001). Dixon and Wu (2014) highlighted multiple studies that showed immigrant parents were less likely to read regularly with their children (Diener, Wright, Julian, & Byington, 2003; Krashen & Brown, 2005; Leyendecker, Jäkel, Kademoğlu, & Yagmurlu, 2011; Scheele, Leseman, & Mayo, 2010). In addition, the number of culturally and linguistically diverse children in U.S. schools is rapidly growing as are the number of low-income families (O'Brien et al., 2014).

Statistics from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as "the nation's report card," additionally show that many culturally and

linguistically diverse students read below grade level and a great deal behind their fully English-proficient peers. Accordingly, students who are classified as ELs, by definition, typically read below grade level (Brown & Broemmel, 2011). ELs who have the additional complicating factor of low SES, then, have a pressing need for literacy development beyond what they likely receive at home.

Educators encourage all parents to involve their children in literacy practices at home, but special care is necessary when working with EL parents who may not believe they can contribute to their children's reading success because of their own EL status and unfamiliarity with literacy practices expected by U.S. schools. EL parents may not be aware of the fact that reinforcing children's literacy in their native language strengthens their ability to read in English (Cummins, 1991, 2000; Krashen, 1999, 2003; Roberts, 2008). It is imperative for educators to understand how to engage culturally and linguistically diverse families in early literacy programs that build upon home-based resources (Billings, 2009). Families may lack confidence in their own parent-child book interactions due to lack of experience in shared reading, limited English literacy skills, or lack of English language proficiency resulting in few to no English literacy practices in the home (Wessels, 2014). Parents' contributions to their children's reading development could therefore be enhanced if they were provided with the necessary knowledge and means to engage their children more actively, including in their native language (Cummins, 1991, 2000).

Delpit (1988) posited that explicitly teaching the means of communication, or "codes" of the mainstream culture, to non-members facilitates their full participation in that culture. Explicitly teaching ELs' parents about effective ways to read and discuss books with their children would familiarize them with the school's expectations regarding literacy practices, thus enabling their children to participate more fully. With Delpit's (1988) notion of explicitly teaching mainstream codes in mind, we reasoned that promoting family literacy by training and educating parents to work more effectively in reading with their children would likely serve to increase their children's reading skills and boost the parents' confidence in working with them. We thus posed the following overall question: How do we encourage and equip parents whose children read below grade level to adopt a more active and effective role in their children's literacy development? Rather than simply acknowledging that parents play an important role in literacy development, we deduced from Delpit's notion that educators need to teach the parents ways in which they can provide effective and meaningful literacy at home. The purpose of Project Helping Parents Help Children ("Project HPHC") was, then, to provide the parents with a wide variety of literacy-building strategies. Through the implementation of

Project HPHC, we sought to answer the following research question: In what ways did the participating parents report that Project HPHC helped them engage in family literacy with their children?

Background of the Study

Project HPHC, dubbed “Literacy Night” by the participants, was inceptioned to help parents become aware of the ways in which their accumulated knowledge could be leveraged and enhanced to impact children’s literacy acquisition. The project was made possible by a modest amount of community outreach grant funds given to the first author from the university. Project HPHC was a book bag program intended to nurture participating parents as home reading coaches for their children. Each student was given a book bag containing a book for each session. As a research team, we met biweekly for five months in the school library for a total of 10 sessions. On meeting nights, students generally came with a parent or a grandparent, who sometimes brought younger siblings as childcare presented a challenge. The school principal also attended each session to make sure the program ran smoothly.

Theoretical Framework: Family Literacy Through Bronfenbrenner

Involving parents in their children’s literacy development has been identified as one of the most effective supports for children’s academic success (Casanova, García-Linares, de la Torre, & de la Villa Carpio, 2005; Jeynes, 2011). Bronfenbrenner (1979), in his ecological systems theory, posited that a child’s development is the product of parental involvement and various other factors. His framework helps educators visualize the impact of parental involvement and other environmental elements surrounding a child as a system of impacting agents on literacy development. In Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model, a child’s well-being occupies the center of the system, which consists of five interconnected subsystems that influence a child’s development: (1) the microsystem, (2) the mesosystem, (3) the exosystem, (4) the macrosystem, and (5) the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The following sections expound on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system as applied to literacy development through family literacy practices.

Microsystem: Shared Reading Practice

The home environment is a part of the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system. Among literacy practices in the home, interactive read-alouds have been shown to enhance reading comprehension as students must actively engage in meaning construction. The co-constructive nature of shared

reading encourages students' engagement and stimulates cognitive involvement (Bernard & Cummins, 2004). Morrow and Britain (2009), however, underscore the importance of the "quality of interaction" during read-alouds or shared reading and warn against merely reading stories to a child, which has no "magical effect on literacy development" (p. 144). Picture walks—looking at the illustrations in a book before reading—provide quality opportunities for prereading interaction that familiarize children with a text through a preview of pictures or other graphic features. Parents may guide children in activating prior knowledge and making predictions to boost comprehension (Clay, 1991; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). A child's active participation in shared reading and picture walks, including answering open-ended questions, making predictions, and summarizing, leads to greater benefits than just passive listening (Newland et al., 2011; Phillips, Norris, & Anderson, 2008).

The benefits of active engagement in shared reading include gains in vocabulary (Min, Kushner, Mudrey-Camino, & Steiner, 2010; Sénéchal, Pagan, Lever, & Ouellette, 2008), oral language production, and oral language complexity (Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008; Moll, Bus, de Jong, & Smeets, 2008; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Pappas, 1991). It is critical to improve vocabulary skills, as they are important predictors of children's literacy development (Sonnenschein et al., 2017). Through print exposure, children also develop phonemic awareness (Justice, Kaderavek, Bowles, & Grimm, 2005), print concepts, (Purcell-Gates, 1996, 2000; Ro & Cheatham, 2009; Scheele et al., 2010), reading strategies (Roberts, 2013), and background knowledge (Trelease, 2011).

Chrono- and Exosystems: The Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Literacy Development

The chronosystem of the ecological model involves the aspect of time in the child's environment, for example, the effect of persistent and prolonged harsh economic situations on the child's school achievement. Similarly, the exosystem corresponds to indirect influences of the larger social system on a child, for example, the effect of a parent's work schedule on the child's well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Heymann & Earle, 2001). Both systems affect how families practice literacy in the home. Studies show that home literacy activities which emulate school literacy are more frequently practiced among middle SES families than low SES families (Bialystok, 2002; Dixon & Wu, 2014; Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2011).

A major factor contributing to this situation is lack of time, particularly in terms of parental working hours. Parents in low SES families are more likely to hold down multiple jobs and/or arrive home very late at night, leaving no time for reading to their children (Epstein, 2001; Heymann & Earle, 2001).

Culturally and linguistically diverse families in the low SES strata may especially face cumulative pressures of economic hardship and lack of time (Aikins & Barbarin, 2008; Lesaux, 2012). Accordingly, even extraordinary efforts by low SES families may yield inconsistent home literacy practices. The cycle of low literacy may thus be perpetuated in these diverse households with low SES (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Krashen & Brown, 2005; Willingham, 2012). Collaborating in different ways to affirm home cultures and languages require teachers to interact with families in new ways (Brown, 2016).

In spite of the challenges children from low SES families face, they demonstrate comparable reading abilities to their high SES counterparts when their home literacy environments are similar (Krashen, 2004). Home literacy practices appear to counteract the disadvantages usually associated with low SES (Krashen, 2016; Krashen & Brown, 2005). Increasing parent involvement with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families from low-income households may enhance student achievement, improve parents' confidence in literacy engagement, and distinguish a parent's role in children's home literacy experiences.

Mesosystem: Parent Coaching for Home Literacy

The mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is comprised of connections between layers of the system, that is, the connection between teachers and parents. The mesosystem ideal advocates for educators to *work directly* with parents to amplify the impact of school literacy programs. As research emphasizes the importance of a school-home relationship, schools must actively reach out to parents to establish partnerships so that children can achieve a higher level of literacy (Darling, 2004). Even federal legislation, through the Reading Excellence Act of 1998, acknowledges that "training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children" is important for children's literacy development (Gadsden, 2002). The benefits of initiatives that train parents to work with their children are well documented. Levin and Aram (2012) found that coaching low SES mothers in interactive storybook reading increased reading-related dialogues with their children. A program such as Parents as Teachers (PAT), with national grassroots organization, shows that working with parents in developing children's literacy yields positive results in reading achievement (Zigler, Pfannenstiel, & Seitz, 2008). Additionally, as mentors, parents' use of literature in the home is guided by shared understandings of cultural norms, such as the families' schema, values, and ideals, which activities should be used or avoided, and the guidelines of interactions (Brown, 2016). Home literacy creates a positive experience for both children and parents which in turn increases parents' confidence as literacy coaches (Brown,

2016). Family-based literacy programs that incorporate shared reading, teaching specific literacy skills, dialogic reading, paraphrasing text, families' cultural and linguistic resources, and home-school partnerships contribute to literacy development within culturally and linguistically diverse families.

Macrosystem: Positive Influence of Native Language Literacy

The macrosystem includes cultural values and customs that dictate all the systems described thus far and includes the influence of native language. Native language literacy can have a positive effect on the development of English literacy. A study of Spanish-speaking and Hmong preschool children from low SES families demonstrated that native language storybook reading in the home has a significant, positive effect on the acquisition of English vocabulary (Roberts, 2008). Native language use, however, remains largely an oral tradition in many homes because parents may not be aware that reading in the native language can foster literacy development in English. In addition, immigrant parents may no longer have the opportunity to read books in their native language because they are not readily available within the community (Moll, Velez-Ibanez, & Rivera, 1990). When the practice of reading in the native language is not transmitted to the children, a valuable resource for developing English literacy is consequently lost (Moll, 2010; Moll et al., 1990). Parents and children, then, would benefit from access to books in their native language, which would help ameliorate the risk factors associated with being an English learner. Additionally, literacy interactions between parents and young children foster phonemic awareness and receptive and expressive vocabularies in first and second languages, which can reduce negative effects of poverty in low-income culturally and linguistically diverse families (Sénéchal et al., 2008). When both primary and secondary languages are exercised in peer discourse with higher order thinking skills, ELs' participation and engagement increases (Mellom et al., 2018). Studies in which native language was transmitted to English in early literacy experiences also improved family engagement (Driver, Powell, Xin, & Tzur, 2017).

The Study: Project Helping Parents Helping Children (HPHC)

In this section of the article, along with the participant information and methods regarding the data collection and data analysis, the details regarding the ways in which HPHC was implemented are provided.

Participants

Following IRB approval, we contacted administrators in a local school to arrange a face-to-face meeting between the research team, the administrators,

and a third grade teacher with a large representation of ELs in her class. The purpose of the meeting was to explain the proposed grant activity’s purpose and action plan. The teacher recommended five English-speaking students and five Spanish-speaking ELs, all 10 identified as struggling readers, for the program. The students were recommended based on their reading scores from the Discovery Education Assessment (www.discoveryeducation.com), indicating they were reading below grade level at the beginning of their third grade year. The teacher noted that she also recommended these particular students based on their parents’ support of them. Accordingly, consent from the parents and assent from the students were obtained, and the study was launched. Participant information is presented in Table 1; pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants.

Table 1. Participants

Student	Father	Mother	Grand-parent	Reading Level	First Language	English Learners
Suzy		Susan		Low	English	No
Brittany	Bob			Intermediate	English	No
Mike		Molly		Low	English	No
Jessica	John			Low	English	No
Daniel		Mary		Low	English	No
Jesus	Jorge			Intermediate	Spanish	Yes
Ventura			Veronica	Low	Spanish	Yes
Juan		Julia		Intermediate	Spanish	Yes
Carla	Carlos			Low	Spanish	Yes
Alberto		Alma		Low	Spanish	Yes

Data Collection

Project HPHC collected six different types of qualitative data: (1) preinterview data from the participating parents surveying their existing home literacy activities, (2) postinterview data from the parents about any changes in family literacy practices, (3) observation notes during each session to capture interactions between the parents and their children as well as conversation among the parents and the first author, (4) an exit interview from the participating students on how they felt about the project, (5) a teacher interview upon completion of the project, and (6) the researchers’ reflection notes taken after each session with the parents (Cho & Trent, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2011).

All the interviews were audiorecorded and transcribed. The third author, who has a native-like proficiency in Spanish, transcribed and translated the Spanish data into English. All data were compiled and read several times to identify themes existing across different data sets including pre- and postinterviews (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2016). The preinterview data suggested that parents would benefit from information on ways to engage their children in discussion prior to and while reading together. Initial codes were developed from all the other data based on the prevalence of the repeated themes: (1) discussing together (DT), and (2) doing the picture walk (PW). From the initially codified data flagged with DT and PW, we went through data reduction procedures to finalize the themes that encompass the essence of the initial codes yet contain distilled specifications of properties of the theme (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2016). The rest of the authors provided another layer of confidence check in code development and analyses. Two themes became apparent among both the parents and children: (1) the positive experience of the roundtable discussion, and (2) the beneficial impact of a picture walk (see Table 4 for data reduction examples). The third finding was based on the teacher's account, which supported the efficacy and verified the positive nature of the HPHC.

Book Selection

The rationale behind the book selection was to select books with (1) exciting content, (2) enticing visuals that would stimulate students' imaginations and provide many opportunities for parental questioning, (3) close cultural connotations to Latin America (e.g., making tamales or a grandma being referred to as "Abuela," i.e., "grandmother" in Spanish), (4) a reading level below third grade because books that are too challenging can discourage struggling readers with fragile reading egos, and (5) an available Spanish version, in order to avoid discouraging EL parents who potentially lacked English literacy.

Providing Spanish-speaking parents with English books, we felt at first, would undermine the very essence of shared reading; hence, English-speaking parents received books written in English, and ELs' parents were provided with the books in Spanish. This, however, caused an unanticipated dilemma. In session five, one of the children, Ventura, started crying during the read-aloud time with his grandmother. He was distraught by the fact that he was asked to read in Spanish, and he did not know how. After session five, the books distributed were all in English in an effort to prevent more possible stress to the children. The Spanish-speaking grandmother who did not read in English performed a picture walk in Spanish. Her grandson (who did not read in Spanish) read the English version of the storybook and responded to her questions in

Spanish. While this event shed light on the complexities of working with bilingual children and parents or grandparents who may be literate in one language, not both, the episode became a good reminder of the essence of intergenerational family literacy. That is, it is the interactive dialogue between a parent/grandparent and a child about a story that accomplishes family literacy, not the medium of language.

Coaching Parents Via Roundtable Discussion

Sessions began with pizza and drinks for the participants, and while parents participated in roundtable discussions, the children participated in group activities led by graduate student volunteers. A Spanish-speaking graduate student served as interpreter. The purpose of the roundtable discussion was two-fold: (1) to model the read-alouds to the parents so that they gained insight as to what makes interactions between the parent and child meaningful and enriching, and (2) to provide the parents opportunities to plan their engagement with their child while practicing with other parents. To ensure quality parent engagement, we, the research team, met prior to each Project HPHC session to plan the specific content of the roundtable discussion. We analyzed each session's book by selecting essential vocabulary to be covered and detailed discussion points using key **D**etail questions, **U**se of contextual cue questions, **C**ritical thinking questions, **V**ocabulary questions, **I**nfERENCE questions, and **P**ersonalization questions, or DUCVIP (see Table 2 for details) as a guide for questioning. During the first roundtable session, DUCVIP, as a coaching technique, was introduced and explained to the parents who then applied DUCVIP to each book discussion. The DUCVIP acronym was developed specifically for this project, loosely based on the Common Core State Standards for reading comprehension. It was designed to coach parents about quality dialogue with the children when reading, as emphasized by Morrow and Britain (2009) and Keene and Zimmerman (1997). Each parent was given a laminated DUCVIP paper as a reminder, when reading aloud to their child, to ask questions from each of the six domains: (a) key details, (b) using contextual cues, (c) critical thinking, (d) vocabulary, (e) inference, and (f) personalization.

During each roundtable discussion, the topic of the story and the focus for the night's session were introduced along with the text. The first author read aloud and demonstrated how to use DUCVIP with a specific book page by page (see Table 3 for details). The English/Spanish interpreter followed suit in Spanish. Once the demo was completed, in-depth discussions regarding how to ask questions related to DUCVIP were co-constructed among the parents. Once the parents completed the practice with DUCVIP, they found their child in the room and found a place to read together.

Table 2. DUCVIP Domains

Acronym	Read-Aloud Objectives	CCSS English Language Arts Standards
<i>D</i>	Key detail questions	Key Ideas and Details
<i>U</i>	Use of contextual-cue questions	Craft and Structure
<i>C</i>	Critical thinking questions	Craft and Structure Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
<i>V</i>	Vocabulary questions	Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
<i>I</i>	Inference questions	Craft and Structure
<i>P</i>	Personalization questions	Craft and Structure

Table 3. Exemplary Roundtable Discussion Questions for Jack and Bean Stalk

	Text Verbatim	Discussion Verbatim for Parents
<i>D</i>	“Fee, fi, foe, fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman” to his wife.	Details related to a story are important in order to comprehend how parts of the story are interconnected and to bring out specific events. “Please ask, ‘What does it mean when Giant says that to his wife?’ to help your child infer, (1) Giant correctly smells the human’s presence, which is Jack, (2) but he does not know Jack is hiding in the kitchen; and (3) he is not suspecting it either. This creates tension on the story.” A parent added his own question: “We can ask, ‘Do you think Jack is going to be caught? Do you think he is scared to be caught?’”
<i>U</i>	...the Giant began counting his gold. He soon fell asleep. Just a little gold would feed mother and me for a long time, Jack thought. He snatched a small bag and climbed down the beanstalk.	“In this segment, you want to make sure your child figures out that Jack is stealing gold from the Giant; however, you will need to have your child think about the nature of what Jack thought before carrying out his plan—stealing gold. Jack is justifying (excusing) his action. If your child does not grasp, use a real-life example, for example, not sharing food with others because you said you were hungry....”
<i>C</i>	“It is my husband. Hide so he does not eat you.”	“Why do you think Giant’s wife tells Jack to hide? In the story, Giant’s wife is a protagonist. Why is she protecting Jack from her husband who will be eventually killed by Jack? Would she have helped Jack had she known that Jack would kill him? Children need to have opportunities to orally express their observations and perceptions and learn there are diverse perspectives in life with which they may or may not agree.”

<p>V</p>	<p>Once upon a time, a poor widow lived with her son, Jack.</p>	<p>The word, widow, is a concrete and simple word, yet, children are not necessarily accustomed to interpreting the word beyond the definition and applying to the context of the story to figure out other related aspects. You may want to ask, “Who is a <i>widow</i>?” That means Jack’s mother does not have a husband, and Jack does not have a father. Prime your child if there might be connections between their being poor and not having a father because Jack would find out that Giant killed his father and robbed them of their gold.</p>
<p>I</p>	<p>“Jack,” said the man, “I will give you five magic beans for your cow.” Jack traded the cow for the beans. He went home, very pleased with the deal.</p>	<p>Discuss with your child that a cow is very valuable, and it would bring much more money than just five beans, and there really are no such things as magic beans. It implies that Jack will be in trouble with his mother who will be very angry.</p>
<p>P</p>		<p>Once shared reading is completed, please ask questions like, “Would you have the courage to do what Jack did?” “Would you do what Giant’s wife did knowing the story ending?” “If you didn’t have money to buy food, what would you have done?” Create opportunities for your child to make connections between the story characters and him- or herself.</p>

Findings

Community-Based Support Through Roundtable Discussions

The roundtable discussions in Project HPHC were based on coaching approaches to family literacy, but they differed from traditional, “pre-scripted” activities for parents (Neuman & Dickinson, 2013). It was more of an informal forum where all parents participated in the discussions and exchanged ideas on equal footing with each other (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Newman, 1996). The purpose of the roundtable discussions was manifold. Most importantly, parents went through a learning experience themselves by sharing ideas with their peer parents. The first author guided each discussion; nevertheless, answers to the discussion questions came from the parents. In addition, parents learned reading strategies regarding the types of questions they could use as their children’s reading coaches (e.g., inferencing questions, critical thinking questions) that help reading comprehension. Furthermore, parents learned how to navigate texts so that a deeper level of comprehension could take place when reading with their children. Finally, they learned ways to explain new vocabulary words instead of simply telling their children the meaning of words.

Jesus's father and Jessica's father indicated that "roundtable strategy discussions" were great because they could learn from each other:

Jessica's father (John): It was great because we listened to each other. Other people have, maybe, different ideas, and different from mine. I don't necessarily think that. That was great...I learn so much from just listening to them. It gives me better ideas what to ask and how I should ask Jessica questions about the pictures and things.

Jesus' father (Jorge): I learn from people here. I go like, I haven't thought of it...that is a good idea. I will need to ask that question with him [Jesus]. I think discussing together with other parents is good. I like that.

Suzy's mother (Susan): During the discussion time, I am thinking about... how am I going to connect what we are reading with what we read before. We learned "a widower" from Cinderella, and tonight we are reading about "a widow." I think about things like that. I didn't think that way before I came to Literacy Night.

Ventura's grandmother (Veronica): Pienso yo hacer la pregunta de los tesoros y por qué se los robaron. [I'm thinking about asking about the treasure and why they stole them.] Ya sé cómo le tengo que enseñar que se mean las palabras que ellos no saben que van [a] estar en la historia después. [I know now how I have to teach them the words they don't know, what the words "mean" that are going to be in the story later.]

Parents also said that, after participating in HPHC, they definitely spent more time together reading with their children. John said that his daughter loves when he reads aloud to her. He has seen a great improvement in her reading as well as in her vocabulary and her overall attitude towards reading.

Tangible Strategies Through Picture Walk

The first author demonstrated the very first picture walk to the parents during the first session to have them experience how a picture walk could pique children's interest and motivate them to read. After the picture walk, parents were asked to read the book employing DUCVIP activities. The participating parents affirmed in the exit interviews that picture walks were a positive experience that helped them motivate their child because of the highly engaging nature of reading together in more purposeful ways. On his way out after the session one night, Jessica's father mentioned that he would not have gone into describing the pictures in such detail before learning about DUCVIP. Other parents reported similarly positive experiences with the picture walks.

Jessica's father (John): Kids can use their imagination when they are talking about the pictures; that can get them excited to read and find out what happens. I think Jessica likes me to do the picture walk. It's fun.

Suzy's mother (Susan): This helps Suzy a lot because she struggles a lot with the words and doesn't understand what she reads. I read at home with Suzy all the time, but she struggles with letters and trying very hard to sound out, so she doesn't like to read. But with a picture walk, she doesn't have to start with sounding out. Doing the picture walk and saying the words helps her read them later. It works better when I read to her first instead of her struggling through the book.

Jesus' father (Jorge): When I ask Jesus to read, he doesn't like it because I ask many questions and it becomes boring for him, but with a picture walk, I think it is very imaginative and he will enjoy.

Children also responded enthusiastically to the activity. During the picture walk, children were laughing along with their parents and making jokes about the pictures. They were enticed to find out what happened in the story, so they were excited to actually read it themselves. One child, Jesus, sat with his head resting on his father's shoulder, listening and answering questions. When it was time to leave, he said, "It's fun. I don't want to go."

After going through the book with her mother, Suzy commented, "the story is more interesting after the picture walk." Her enthusiasm was evident in the following conversation, so much so that she could not wait to actually read the book.

Susan: Maybe, we'll see. She's all sad, so something might happen. What would you say?

Suzy: Probably, like, her friend, her...

Susan: That looks like evil. That looks like, maybe a witch, or...something quite evil.

Suzy: I want to read it!

Susan: We're gonna read it in a minute. And she's asking her for something. Oh, look, she's on land. Looks like she's got legs, look at that.

The picture walks proved to be a great tool for engaging these children, as the parents recognized that their initial reading of the book made reading less intimidating for their child because the picture walks afforded them meaningful interactions without placing the burden of reading the text on the child. The participating children were struggling readers who were usually asked to orally demonstrate their reading in front of adults. Removing such a weight

can help struggling readers take more pleasure in reading, which is fundamental for improving reading in these children (Kamil, 2003).

One contrasting finding was a parent who was not convinced that his reading aloud would improve the child's reading proficiency. This negative case (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), further described in a later section, powerfully demonstrated the inherent challenges and potential for pushback in family literacy when working with parents.

Teachers' Perspectives: A Good, Small Start for the Children

As part of the data triangulation (Flick, 2004), Mrs. Smith, the participating students' homeroom teacher, was interviewed to obtain her perspectives regarding any noticeable behavioral changes of them as readers. She described what she observed in class regarding their "reader behavior," or more precisely, their *changed* reader behavior, as the students became more motivated to read.

Mrs. Smith attributed the previously unmotivated children's increased interest to HPHC. One of the characteristics of low readers is that they do not like to read at school or at home.

Mrs. Smith: I see them working a little bit harder. They want to do more than they used to do. That's a huge development for them. They have more confidence, and I noticed that they took more risks, which is huge, huge for these children. And they have asked for more books that interest them specifically, which is really good. They did not do that before...I've been able to get [them] some books to take home. You know, it kind of piqued their interest, which is good. Even though they couldn't read all the words, they're still looking at the pictures...and putting eyes on print. That's a big deal. Even if the changes have been subtle, I have seen some positive changes in their behavior. If something is difficult, students don't like to do it because it's not fun, and if they don't enjoy it, they won't do it very often.

Research underscores self-motivation as a base for developing literacy skills, as Mrs. Smith rightly pointed out. Reading instruction alone, without motivation, cannot help students become better readers (Kamil, 2003), as they would not be authentically engaged (Irvin, Meltzer, & Dukes, 2007).

Table 4. Codes, Themes, and Properties

Initial Code	Final Theme	Property	Examples of Participants' Words
Discussing Together (DT)	Roundtable Discussions: Community-Based Support and Postinterview	<p>Listening to other parents provided better ideas that I would not have come along.</p> <p>Parents expressed that, by interacting in a group combining Spanish-speaking parents and English-speaking parents, they learned from each other as to how they interpret and apply the literacy coach strategies.</p>	<p>I get more out of doing the picture walk together.</p>
Doing Picture Walk (PW)	Tangible Strategies Through Picture Walk and Pre- and Postinterview Data	<p>Picture walk eases the children into reading without intimidating them with comprehension questions and unknown vocabulary.</p> <p>It is more fun for the children and they become more imaginative.</p>	<p>It works better when I read to her first instead of her struggling through the book. With a picture walk, she doesn't have to start with sounding out.</p> <p>When I ask Jorge to read, he doesn't like it, but with a picture walk, I think it is very imaginative and more fun. I never know about this, but it is good.</p> <p>Asking a few questions about the pictures, you know, like kind of letting him come up with his own ideas about what he thinks about it.</p>
Speaking Up More	Teacher's Recognition of Changed Reading Behavior in Class	<p>They work a little harder, and they want to do a little more.</p>	<p>Even if the changes have been subtle, I have seen some positive changes in their behavior.</p>
Negative Evidence			
Doubting the Benefit of Reading Aloud	Against the Grain: Why Am I Reading?	<p>This doesn't help.</p>	<p>How does my reading of the book help my daughter read better? It doesn't make sense.</p>

Against the Grain: Why Am I Reading?

The fourth theme of the findings is reported based on a single occurrence with one parent, which was entirely unexpected. Nevertheless, this negative case (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) highlights the scope of perspectives held by parents. On the first night, Brittany's father put his arm around her shoulders and animatedly read aloud to her as her head rested against his shoulder. Watching this interaction, we suspected that she might not get this kind of cozy, intimate time at home. Brittany eventually confirmed in an interview that she and her father did not read together at home like they did at Literacy Night. On his way out, Brittany's father deliberately stopped and asked, "If I am the one who reads a book, and my daughter is the one who needs help, how does this help her read better? It doesn't make sense." Brittany was reading below grade level, and her father could have contributed considerably to her improved reading by doing the picture walk and reading aloud, but having a parent read aloud instead of the child did not make sense to him. He did not return after the first night.

Brittany's father's response is not atypical among parents in general, however, when they are told that reading aloud with their child will improve their child's reading (Trelease, 2011). It is indeed counterintuitive since it is the parent, not the child, who reads. Reading is a complex cognitive activity based on print knowledge (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Piasta, Justice, Justice, McGinty, & Kaderavek, 2012). However, according to studies, reading is also developed significantly through social interactions in children's immediate environment, namely in the home. One study (Petrill et al., 2007) revealed that 66% and 80% of the reading growth measured by word/letter identification and sound awareness, respectively, were explained by environmental influences (e.g., ways in which the children were cared for, how much they were read to), not by genetic factors (e.g., cognitive phenotype). What a parent like Brittany's father does not realize is the missed opportunity for their child. Had he regularly read aloud to Brittany, she might have been more likely to become a fluent reader. The role of environment and parent involvement in reading development is irrefutable in that parents can decide to contribute to their children's steady improvement of reading. Knowing what we know as reading educators, we are then left with the question: How do we contend with this misconception and communicate to the parents that children's reading abilities are enhanced through exposure to and interaction with the books read and discussed by parents?

Discussion and Conclusion

Project HPHC was conducted to empower the parents of struggling readers by providing them with hands-on strategies so that they could take on the role of reading coach at home. As Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) postulates, children's development is heavily influenced by their environment on multiple levels. Two of the immediate environments that directly influence a child's development are home and school. An interpretation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model would be that, if one of the environmental systems has room for improvement, we could tweak that environment to an extent in order to induce more desirable outcomes. The participating parents in HPHC collectively attested that they were more knowledgeable about how to help their child with reading at home. Working directly with the parents so that they can take a more active role in their child's reading is a tangible way to adjust a child's home environment for the better as far as home literacy is concerned. Findings from the project corroborate previous research that suggests there should be concerted efforts to maintain close, strong connections between home and school to improve children's reading (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995).

As Allington (2001) and Smith (2004) simply stated, reading more leads to reading better. Reading accuracy, which is essential to reading achievement, actually emerges from reading fluency, which is, in turn, the result of frequent reading. Consequently, reading frequently, preferably every day, is a direct path to reading accuracy.

Educators do agree that home literacy is important; however, we must do more than simply tell the parents that they need to work with their children at home because the home environment can be highly complex. A school's parental assistance should go beyond the usual newsletters sent home or isolated comments in parent-teacher meetings. Parents need to be equipped with working knowledge and useful tools to help their children so that such practice can be sustained (Delpit, 1988). Despite the positive impact discussed, it must be acknowledged that working with parents who had issues with job situations, childcare, and transportation was extremely challenging. They were constrained by life situations regardless of how much they wanted to attend the event at school. Knowing that children's literacy development starts at home and that parents influence this development, teachers can begin to address the two-fold challenge of home literacy instead of being critical of the parents. First, they must communicate to the parents just how important their involvement is. Like Brittany's father, parents may not see why they need to take part in their children's reading. Second, schools and teachers must find ways to

make parental involvement possible and doable for parents. An afterschool program like Project HPHC is an example of how schools and educators can create opportunities to assist parents in helping their children develop stronger literacy.

Another notable observation is that one of the participating children, Ventura, was stressed by having to read in Spanish and cried during the session. This turn of events highlights the difficult nature of working with bilingual students in educational settings. In designing the project, we were more concerned with accommodating the parents who did not read in English, thus, the adoption of English and Spanish books. We did not anticipate the use of Spanish books causing stress on participating children. One of the broader issues related to this episode is that many bilingual children are not biliterate because bilingual parents may not realize that reading in native languages can support English literacy as well (Krashen, 1999, 2016; Pérez & Rinaldi, 2006). Living in a monolingual English-speaking country, they may believe that their children do not need to read in their mother tongue (Moll et al., 1990). Not promoting biliteracy for bilingual children at home can seem like wasting a precious resource that could be used to increase their academic achievement in the long run. Bilingual children have better metalinguistic skills than monolingual children, and learning multiple languages has a positive effect on children's cognitive development (Duursma et al., 2007). Family-based literacy programs that utilize bilingual books with shared reading dialogue can invite a child's comments, predictions, and questions about a story (Wessels, 2014). It is therefore critical that schools make conscious efforts to communicate to bilingual parents that reading development in a native language helps improve reading in English.

Before closing, the discussion of the study limitations is due. One limitation of this study is that it was designed for participation from those in attendance. Perfect attendance was achieved at the first session but was not maintained afterward (an average of five families attended each session). Because of this circumstance, the interpretations of the study findings are fairly limited to the study's context. In addition, the Discovery Education Assessment, which measures post-reading competencies, was not administered again upon completion of the study because it is only given annually at the beginning of the school year. It is highly unlikely, however, that the participating children's standardized reading test scores would have improved due to their participation in the program, for standardized test instruments are known to be insensitive to small yet positive performance gains made by students who began as below-grade performers (Catts, Petscher, Schatschneider, Bridges, & Mendoza, 2009). A larger, more extended study would be necessary to document changes in student performance. However, the findings from this project are clearly

encouraging in the respect that strategies for parent coaching may provide a positive impact on the growth of children's literacy.

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