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# The Impact of the FERST Foundation for Childhood Literacy on the Home Literacy Environment

## Abstract

This study examined if, among families whose children were enrolled in the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, there was a relationship between the home literacy environment, measured by a scale survey, and the length of time enrolled in the program. Participants were a stratified random sampling from the population of parents in the State of Georgia whose children were enrolled in the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy program. Using a pilot-tested original survey instrument, 2,100 survey packets were mailed to participants. Valid returned surveys totaled 1,082. Pearson correlation revealed a correlation of positive direction but of small strength in the home literacy environment scores. Therefore, this study suggests that a positive relationship does exist between the home literacy environment and the years of enrollment in the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy program.

## Keywords

Georgia, Ferst Foundation, Childhood literacy, American society, Home literacy environment

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## THE IMPACT OF THE FERST FOUNDATION FOR CHILDHOOD LITERACY ON THE HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract:** This study examined if, among families whose children were enrolled in the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, there was a relationship between the home literacy environment, measured by a scale survey, and the length of time enrolled in the program. Participants were a stratified random sampling from the population of parents in the State of Georgia whose children were enrolled in the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy program. Using a pilot-tested original survey instrument, 2,100 survey packets were mailed to participants. Valid returned surveys totaled 1,082. Pearson correlation revealed a correlation of positive direction but of small strength in the home literacy environment scores. Therefore, this study suggests that a positive relationship does exist between the home literacy environment and the years of enrollment in the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy program.

### Introduction

A fundamental goal of American society is to educate its children. This education begins at birth in the home with parents and/or caregivers as the first teachers. Research has shown that the literacy environment established in the home is directly related to future student academic success (Burgess, 2002). Homes that have an extensive selection of reading and writing materials available increase the likelihood of children learning to read at an early age. The preschool years are a critical time when young children acquire skills that will ultimately transition to later reading success (Justice & Kaderavek, 2004). Bennett, Weigel, and Martin (2002) indicated a positive relationship between parents' own literacy beliefs and subsequent activities that create an opportunity for young children to develop key literacy skills.

However, the magnitude of literacy problems many children face upon entering school and their lack of success with early reading skills indicate that many homes do not provide a literacy-rich environment in which the children can acquire emergent reading skills (Koger, 2005). Koger emphasized it is critical that parents be provided with literacy materials and taught ways to engage their children in activities that develop emergent literacy concepts. The Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy (FFCL) is one program trying to provide families with literacy materials needed to promote early literacy among preschool children.

In 1996, country music legend Dolly Parton commenced the Imagination Library (2007) program in her home town of Sevier County, Tennessee. She wanted to foster the love of reading among her county's preschool children and their families. To accomplish this, Dolly Parton started mailing free, hard-cover, age-appropriate books to every child under the age of 5 in her community through the Dollywood Foundation (Penguin Group [USA], 2007).

Mrs. Robin Ferst Howser was inspired by Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and contacted Parton for support in starting a program in Georgia. In 1999, Mrs. Howser established the Ferst Books Foundation. The foundation sent books obtained from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to children, birth to 5 years of age, in Howser's home town of Madison, Georgia. The program is currently titled the FFCL and continues to send books from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in conjunction with an enhancement from a second literacy support initiative, Leap Into Books (FFCL, 2004). The FFCL now serves over 46 counties in Georgia. Each county manages the program through a community action team. Each county handles the cost of the program through donations from various sources: school systems, local businesses, grants, and private donations. Materials are sent at no cost to the children enrolled, and enrollment is not based on any socioeconomic factors (Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, 2006).

The purpose of the study was to investigate if, among families whose children were enrolled in the FFCL, there was a relationship between the home literacy environment, measured by a scale survey, and the length of time enrolled in the program. The need for this research was found in two previous studies conducted on the FFCL. The *Literacy Outcomes and the Household Literacy Environment: An Evaluation of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library* (High/Scope Educational Research, 2003) explained that future studies concerning the Imagination Library program need to focus on an impact evaluation with a strong research design, including a baseline measure and use of a valid literacy measure. The *Family Connection Partnership Evaluation Results Report* (Troville, 2006) suggested that future studies on FFCL need to compare the effects of multiple-year participation.

### Literature Review

Reading success as an adult depends in part on the learning and development that occur in infancy and early childhood (High, Lagasse, Becker, Ahlgren, & Gardner, 2000). Literacy development is a critical part of that infant and early childhood learning. Early literacy development and learning to read is truly a complex and mystifying process. According to Burgess (2002), that process depends on learning to decode individual words and having the knowledge of concepts and the world to comprehend the meaning of the text in which it is read. Studies show that understanding how print is used, as well as having knowledge of letters, affects children's reading ability in primary grades (Darling, 2005). As children progress through school, reading success or difficulties will affect their level of participation in other learning activities. Students who have learning difficulties in early primary grades lose self-esteem in the area of academics. The personal cost of low self-esteem is compounded in the frustrations of parents and teachers. The cost multiplies as students need to repeat grades to keep up with their class or, worse, drop out due to frustration and lack of progress. Students who drop out of school often have children who struggle with early literacy development. The learning gap is a repeated phenomenon that must be addressed immediately (Hausner, 2000).

Experts agree that parents play a crucial role in the development of emergent literacy, but many parents are unsure of how to help their children become ready to read. Often parents are not aware of what constitutes early literacy development (Michigan State University Extension, 2005). It is critical that parents learn the importance of

emergent literacy concepts and ways to engage their children in activities that develop these skills. Early intervention materials and programs are an appropriate and valuable way to improve literacy development in children.

Early intervention is the most cost-effective strategy for producing higher reading results in today's schools (Trovillo, 2006). An extremely early introduction to books and participation in literacy-related activities with parents are seen as important factors in the preparation of children for school-based formal instruction (Burgess, 2002). Parents engaging their children in storybook reading at least once each week has been found to correlate highly with early reading achievement (Paratore, 2005). Knowing how to best focus efforts targeting enhancement of home literacy environments may eventually help to create better interventions that will produce lasting changes in children's early literacy development (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2005).

Numerous programs have emerged to address the literacy problem in the United States. The overall goal of any early intervention family literacy program is to empower parents as supporters of their young children's literacy development (Fagan, 2001). A quality program focuses on all members of the family and the interaction between them, not just the mother and child relationship. The programs are applicable to all aspects of a child's life, provide parents with a sense of ownership, inform parents how to access and utilize materials and resources, and encourage sensitivity to children's characteristics and needs. Until recently, America's literacy problems have been addressed by early childhood initiatives for children who are considered at risk for future school failure. Although these programs have seen some success, there is a great need for programs that reach all children and their families regardless of income or ethnic background (Zygouris-Coe, 2001). With the growing body of research that documents the importance of reading at home to preschool children, programs with an emphasis on the home literacy environment need to be vigorously promoted.

### *Research Question*

Among families whose children are enrolled in the FFCL, is there a relationship between the home literacy environment, measured by a scale survey, and the length of time enrolled in the program?

### *Null Hypothesis*

Among families whose children are enrolled in the FFCL, there is no significant relationship between the home literacy environment, measured by a scale survey, and the length of time enrolled in the program.

### *Definition of Terms*

*Early intervention:* Early intervention is an intervention plan or program that takes place before first grade or compensatory school age (Hausner, 2000).

*Home literacy environment:* The home literacy environment is the combination of any and all literacy activities that take place in the home (Burgess, 2002).

*Parent(s)*: For this study, the term parent(s) is defined as any adult who has legal guardianship or primary care of the child. This means that the parent(s) can be mother, father, grandparent(s), aunt, uncle, or a nonfamily member.

## Methods

### *Population and Sample*

As of September 2007, there were 27,723 children enrolled in the FFCL program. The subjects for the study were a stratified random sample of families whose children were enrolled in the program from participating counties and sites. An equal number of subjects (420) were surveyed from each enrollment category, totaling 2,100. The subject groups were Group 1 (0 to 11 months enrolled in the program), Group 2 (12 to 23 months enrolled in the program), Group 3 (24 to 35 months enrolled in the program), Group 4 (36 to 47 months enrolled in the program), and Group 5 (48 to 59 months enrolled in the program). It is important to note that the subject groups were based on length of time enrolled in the program and not age of the subjects. For example; a 5-year-old child could be in Group 3 (24 to 35 months enrolled in the program).

### *Research Design*

This research was of a sample survey design. The survey, using correlation research, was conducted to analyze responses from parents whose children are enrolled in the FFCL program. Measured responses from these families provided a basis by which to determine any significant correlation between the home literacy environment and program usage. The population was the FFCL participants, the length in the program was the independent variable, and the home literacy environment was the dependent variable, operationalized by a scale survey. The survey was cross-sectional in nature. The FFCL was contacted about the possibility of a research study relating to the program. After numerous phone conversations and a face-to-face meeting with FFCL personnel, an agreement on type of scale of research methodology was reached. Permission from the FFCL was obtained, and access to their enrollment database and mailing addresses was granted.

### *Instrumentation*

Instrumentation used for this study was a scale-type survey (see Appendix) created by the researcher. In order to ensure validity, the survey was presented to a panel of four reading specialists and nine early childhood teachers. The panel was asked to complete the survey and answer follow-up questions. The panel was also asked to rate each question using a Likert scale as to the degree to which each question addressed the home literacy environment. To assess reliability of the survey, a pilot study was administered to a group of 100 FFCL participants, 20 from each enrollment group. Using Cronbach alpha and a summary item means, the home literacy environment questionnaire showed to be a reliable instrument for this research study.

### *Data Collection*

Surveys were color-coded according to how long a child had been enrolled in the program, which allowed the researcher to group subjects by their children's enrollment dates without risking confidentiality. All enrolled families were first separated into the five subgroups based on length of time enrolled in the program using the FFCL enrollment database. Then a random sample of 420 families was taken from each enrollment subgroup. Survey packets mailed to each selected family included the survey with a cover letter, addressed and postage-paid envelope in which to mail the survey back to the researcher, free children's book, and a postcard to mail back to the researcher for a chance to win a \$50 gift card. Responses from each question item were weighted from 0 to 4, giving a total of 80 possible points for each survey.

### *Data Analysis*

Parent responses from each question item were weighted from 0 to 4, giving a total of 80 possible points for each survey. All sample responses were grouped by the children's length of time in the FFCL program. The subject groups were Group 1 (0 to 11 months enrolled in the program), Group 2 (12 to 23 months enrolled in the program), Group 3 (24 to 35 months enrolled in the program), Group 4 (36 to 47 months enrolled in the program), and Group 5 (48 to 59 months enrolled in the program). The surveys consisted of 20 questions with 5 answer choices for each question. Survey totals could range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 80. Each subject who responded to the home literacy survey received a home literacy environment score based on a scale of 0 to 80. The home literacy environment scale used for the survey was adapted from the *Get Ready to Read Home Literacy Environment Checklist* (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2006).

Descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were used to analyze the data collected for this study. A test for normality of data (skewness and kurtosis) was performed to determine if the data collected came from a normal sample. A Pearson correlation was conducted to determine the direction and strength of the relationship. A one-way ANOVA was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the five groups. To understand the difference between the five groups, a chart illustrating trends in group means was constructed. An item analysis performed using SPSS 15.0 revealed further findings from the survey data. Survey participants' comments were recorded to supplement the additional findings.

## Results

### *Research Question Findings*

Overall, 1,086 families completed some portion of the survey and returned it to the researcher. Statistics of the study were collected using SPSS 15.0. The missing data were treated using listwise deletion, giving a valid sample size of  $n = 1,082$ . This study reflects the results from 1,082 valid surveys, which equals 51.52% of the total surveys mailed. Skewness test for normality of the data relative to the sample revealed that the data collected came from a normal sample. The table shows a low kurtosis, which means that the variance for this study was due to frequent modestly sized deviations.

Table 1 reveals how many valid surveys were analyzed per group. Valid survey return rate from Group 1 was 52.6%, Group 2 was 54.3%, and Group 3 was 49.8%. Group 4 had the lowest valid survey return rate at 43.1%. Group 5 had the highest valid survey return rate at 57.9%.

Table 1

### *Valid Surveys Collected Per Group*

Group	<i>N</i>
1 year enrolled	221
2 years enrolled	228
3 years enrolled	209
4 years enrolled	181
5 years enrolled	243

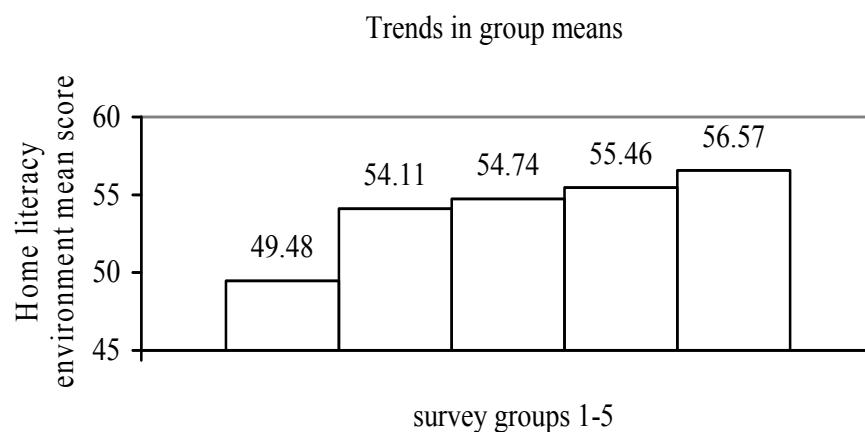
The study revealed a correlation of positive direction but of small strength in the home literacy environment scores as indicated with a Pearson correlation of .227, thus rejecting the null hypothesis. The results of the Pearson correlation did display the presence of a positive linear relationship between the length of participation in the program and the home literacy score. However, the evidence of low strength in the linear relationship suggested that more investigation of the relationship between the groups would be helpful.

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the five groups. All groups were tested at once, not split. The *F* significant at the alpha level (*p* value) of .000 fell well below the required .05 alpha level. One can conclude that the differences found between the groups were significant, and



there was less than a 1 in 100 chance that the differences found were the result of sampling error, thus strengthening the findings of the study. However, even though the ANOVA revealed that at least one of the group means was significantly different from at least one other group mean, it did not reveal which groups were different and which were not.

Figure 1 illustrates the trends in group means of the home literacy environment score. Each group illustrated a slight increase in the home literacy environment score the longer the child was in the FFCL program. The largest mean score increase (4.63) was between Groups 1 and 2. Between Group 1 and Group 5 there was a 7.09 home literacy environment mean score increase.



*Figure 1.* Trends in group means.

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### *Additional Findings*

An item analysis was also conducted that revealed additional findings for this study. Each group's mean score for each survey item was analyzed. Table 2 was produced to compare question item mean scores across the five groups.

Table 2

*Item Analysis*

Item #	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
20	2.36	2.16	2.13	2.14	2.15
19	2.85	3.30	3.50	3.50	3.63
18	2.74	2.74	2.88	2.67	2.87
17	3.36	3.38	3.44	3.50	3.48
16	3.05	3.40	3.62	3.63	3.62
15	1.80	1.98	2.01	1.99	2.00
14	2.45	2.38	2.41	2.64	2.50
13	2.15	2.39	2.43	2.57	2.67
12	1.76	1.89	2.01	1.99	2.07
11	3.08	3.29	3.23	3.19	3.27
10	2.63	3.60	3.48	3.38	3.55
9	2.70	3.17	3.26	3.30	3.36
8	1.72	2.60	2.67	2.94	2.89
7	0.71	0.73	0.83	0.87	0.95
6	3.17	3.47	3.37	3.47	3.44
5	1.95	1.91	1.98	2.18	2.25
4	3.00	2.97	2.86	2.85	2.87
3	2.97	3.11	3.05	3.10	3.17
2	1.95	2.34	2.32	2.31	2.52
1	3.09	3.32	3.26	3.27	3.32

Questions 1 through 9 reflected adult involvement in the educational process. The involvement consisted of reading to the children, drawing, storytelling, participating in favorite activities, and the adults helping manage the literacy schedule of the children. Evidence of adult involvement was shown by the increase in scores in Questions 1 through 9, with the exception of Question 4, for those who had been in the literacy program longer. The mean score for Questions 4 (How often do you or another adult in the house sing or say nursery rhymes to/with your child?) actually decreased 0.13 points from Group 1 to Group 5. Question 2 (After reading to your child, do you participate in one or more of the following activities: drawing, singing, storytelling, acting it out?) had a low mean score from all groups, yet did show a 0.57 point gain from Group 1 to Group 5. Question 7 had the lowest mean for each group, which indicated that the average FFCL-participating family that returned a survey never went to the library with their children. This may be related to the parents' own reading behaviors as it requires parents to take the children to the library.

Questions 10 and 11 indicated the children's interest in reading. In these questions, as the children were involved in the reading program, they showed a greater interest in reading after the initial group period in the program, but additional increases were not noted after the second period.

Questions 12 through 14 indicated the adults' example for the children. In Questions 12 and 13, the adults became more interested in reading themselves the longer the children were in the reading program. Question 14 responses indicated the adults did not notably change the behavior of reading for pleasure during the children's participation in the program.

Question 15 revealed that the adults did not greatly increase the reading time to the children the longer the children were in the program. It also indicated that FFCL parents read to their children only 20 minutes or less a day.

Question 16 indicated that there is a response in the children's interest when adults read to the children. The score increased from an initial low and was highest after being in the program for 24 to 35 months. Question 17 revealed that the adults seem to have about the same enjoyment when reading to their children regardless of how long they had been in the program.

Question 18 revealed that adults changed the number of books they had in the home for reading pleasure as the children remained in the program. Question 19 revealed that as the children remained in the program, the adults accumulated more picture books for their children. It demonstrated an increase of 0.78 from Group 1 to Group 5.

Question 20 revealed that there was a slight increase in the time spent watching television after the first year in the program. However, after that, no additional change appeared to have occurred.

Several questions stood out when analyzing the table. Questions 1, 13, 18, and 19 indicated a contrast between parents' own reading behaviors and the literacy behaviors in which they engaged with their children. Most families had a lack of adult-level reading material in the home, including books, newspapers, and magazines. Adults also reported that their children did not often see them reading for pleasure.

## Discussion

### *Interpretation of the Findings*

The study found a small but statistically significant increase in the home literacy score from Group 1 to Group 5. This study suggests that a positive relationship exists between the home literacy environment and the years of enrollment in the FFCL program. The finding is quite significant considering that FFCL is such a simple and fairly inexpensive literacy program.

The aim of this study was to investigate the total home literacy score; however, additional findings were discovered while completing statistical analysis of the data collected. A striking finding in this study was the contrast between parents' own reading behaviors and the literacy behaviors in which they engaged with their children. Parents reported on average reading to their children almost daily; yet, most families had a lack of adult-level reading material in the home, including books, newspapers, and magazines. Adults also reported that their children did not often see them reading for pleasure. Parents or other caregivers are the most influential people in the education of their children. Literacy begins at home. Children's literacy attitudes are shaped by parents' and caregivers' literacy attitudes (Zygouris-Coe, 2001). Therefore, if children do not see parents engaged in literary activities, they will not view literacy as an important part of life. Although reading aloud to children is an important aspect of the home literacy environment, early intervention programs need to address and should include ways to improve the parents' own literacy habits.

The study found that few parents took their children to the library. The study did note a slight increase in families visiting the library as the years of enrollment increased. This may indicate that the longer the children were enrolled in the FFCL the more likely the parents believed that taking their children to the library would help their children's literacy development. This lack of library usage among families participating in the FFCL would be important to examine further.

Furthermore, the study found that the longer children were enrolled in the FFCL program, the more books were available for children's use in the home. Materials in the home are crucial to the literacy development of children. The availability of literacy-related materials at home affects the frequency of quality literacy interactions to which children are exposed. The frequency of parent-child book sharing also increased as the length of time in the program increased. However, the study found that longer enrollment times in the program did not increase the minutes per day of read-aloud time parents engaged in with their children after the second enrollment group.

### *Relationship of the Current Study to Previous Research*

The Weitzman, Roy, Walls, and Tomlin (2004) study on the Reach Out and Read program concluded that a modest book intervention program can have a significant impact on a child's home literacy environment. The results of this study indicated that the FFCL program did have a positive influence on the home literacy environment, which was consistent with the Reach Out and Read study.

Numerous studies have found that parents, given knowledge and resources, can create supportive home literacy environments (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Debaryshe, Binder, & Buell, 2000; Reese & Cox, 1999; Zygoris-Coe, 2001). Homes that have an extensive selection of reading and writing materials available to children promote their learning to read at an early age. The preschool years are a critical time when young children acquire skills that will ultimately transition to later reading success (Justice & Kaderavek, 2004). In this study, parents indicated that the longer the children were in the FFCL program the more picture books were in the home for the children to use. This finding is important in relation to the High/Scope Educational Research (2003) report that concluded that for 34% of study group households the Imagination Library program is a primary source of children's books.

This study found that the reading behavior of the parents was lower than that in which they engaged with their children. This is consistent with Weitzman et al. (2004) who also found that parent reading behavior and materials were lower than the literacy behaviors in which they engaged with their children. This is also important in light of Baker et al. (1996) who found that parents' perspectives on literacy related to the experiences they made available to their children at home and to the way children responded to literacy experiences at school.

The item analysis of this study indicated that parents did not regularly engage their children in narrative skill activities. Narrative skill is being able to describe things and events. A person with narrative skills is able to tell a story with a developed beginning, middle, and ending. Narrative skills can be improved by having children tell sequentially what they have just done. According to Dickinson, McCabe, and Sprague (2003), the development of narrative ability is one of the lesser known oral language skills relevant to literacy.

It is interesting to note that the time spent viewing television increased slightly instead of decreased with program enrollment. Most families indicated that their children watched television between 1 and 3 hours per day. This viewing time is consistent with other studies related to television viewing. Mendoza, Zimmerman, and Christakis (2007) found that 60% of preschool children in the United States watch television 2 or more hours per day. Jordan, Hersey, McDivitt, and Heitzler (2006) found that most children reported spending 3 hours per day watching television.

The High/Scope Educational Research (2003) study also reported that a large percentage of the surveyed families almost never visited a bookstore (35.3%) or library (46.3%). This research found a low library use among FFCL survey participants.

The main finding of this study is consistent with previous research and supports the idea that efforts aimed at improving young children's home literacy environment would benefit from implementing a book distribution intervention program.

### *Limitations of the Study*

Considering the scope of this research, it is helpful to understand various limitations of the study. The findings of the study must be interpreted with caution in light of four areas of limitation.

One limitation to the study was the possible inaccurate information given by parents or caregivers. The survey allowed only the perceptions and perspectives of the

home literacy environment as given by the parents. Parent responses to the questionnaires may have been affected by difficulty recalling the frequency of behaviors and times of occurrences. Parents may have also reported what they thought the researcher or the FFCL wished to hear. In this, there exists potential bias; what the parents actually reported and what actually occurred in real life may not have matched.

Another limitation was the lack of family background information the FFCL had on its participants. The FFCL did not collect information on the socioeconomic status of the families. Therefore, there was no way to know if there was an equivalent distribution in socioeconomic variables among groups studied. Parents were also not required to give a phone number in order to sign up for the program. Therefore, there could not be a follow-up phone survey to determine reason for nonresponse to the mail surveys.

The third limitation was the absence of a baseline score. There was no baseline home literacy environment score for families that use the FFCL program through a pretest before the families started receiving the program materials.

The fourth limitation was the survey response rate. Some parents did not mail the survey back to the researcher. The researcher offered incentives for parents to complete the survey; however, the researcher could not guarantee a particular number of completed surveys.

### *Implications*

These conclusions are not intended to imply that the act of enrolling a child in the FFCL program will achieve a thriving home literacy environment; however, the findings of this study suggest that a positive relationship exists between the home literacy environment and the years of enrollment in the FFCL program. There are several suggestions for educators and policymakers based on this study.

Fairly inexpensive book programs have the potential to elicit reading behavior changes in families with young children. The results of this study suggest a simple book distribution makes a difference in the home literacy environment.

Families with young children need books in their homes. For young children and parents to view reading as an enjoyable activity, they must have books in the home that are age-appropriate and interesting. Since few families report utilizing the public library, additional resources are necessary to help families create a library in their homes so they may engage in shared reading experiences.

Library awareness and what libraries offer needs to be promoted to families with young children. According to Darling (2005), children who are read to, told stories, and visit the local library may start school better prepared to learn. Housing literacy programs through the local library can be a useful strategy to build closer connections between families, neighborhoods, and the educational experience.

Parent training programs need to focus on the power of role modeling reading behaviors. While most parents understand that reading aloud with children is an important part of the home literacy environment, parents' own reading habits do not express positive attitudes about literacy. Literacy skills such as reading novels, newspapers, and recipes and writing schedules, letters, and journals are everyday activities that children need to see modeled by adults.

Parent education on how to establish a prosperous home literacy environment requires additional information to reduce parent and children television viewing time. Tips on monitoring television viewing time need to be made available to parents.

### *Suggestions for Additional Research*

While this study adds to the existing literature about the relationship between the home literacy environment and years of enrollment in the FFCL program, the literature is still incomplete. There are many questions left unanswered. Suggestions for additional research related to home literacy environment practices were developed based on the discussion of the data collected from this study.

1. A longitudinal study concerning the impact of the FFCL on the home literacy environment would be beneficial. A time series design that followed children's families before entering the program until the end of the program would provide meaningful insight into long-term changes in the home literacy environment. This study would obtain a baseline home literacy score for families before receiving program material. The study would also capture a home literacy environment score at the end of each year of enrollment and at the conclusion of the program. Following the subjects after school entry would also provide useful data.
2. A replication of the study with a much larger sample size might provide further insight into program effectiveness on the home literacy environment.
3. A study examining the relationship between multiple-year enrollment and emergent literacy development skills in young children would be beneficial.
4. A qualitative study examining the FFCL and its impact on the home literacy environment would give insight on participants' perceptions concerning the program.
5. A study is needed to explore the inconsistency between parents' reading behaviors for themselves and the behaviors that the same parents practice regarding their children's reading behavior.

Among families whose children were enrolled in the FFCL, this study explored the relationship between the home literacy environment, measured by a scale survey, and the length of time enrolled in the program. The main finding of this study was that there was a positive linear relationship between the length of participation in the program and the home literacy scores, thus rejecting the null hypothesis. The study found a small but statistically significant increase in the home literacy score from Group 1 to Group 5. This study suggests that a positive relationship exists between the home literacy environment and the years of enrollment in the FFCL program. The finding is quite significant considering that FFCL is such a simple and fairly inexpensive literacy program at \$35 per child per year.

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Appendix: Home Literacy Environment Questionnaire

Place an X in the box that best answers the questions:	Never	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Almost daily	Daily
1. How often do you or another family member read a picture book with your child?					
2. After reading to your child, do you participate in one or more of the following activities: drawing, singing, story retelling, acting it out?					
3. How often do you or another adult in the house sing or say the alphabet to/with your child?					
4. How often do you or another adult in the house sing or say nursery rhymes to/with your child?					
5. How often do you tell your child stories without using books?					
6. How often do you and your child spend time together doing favorite activities?					
7. How often do you go to the library with your child?					
8. How often do you help your child draw pictures and/or color?					
9. How often does your child watch educational programs on TV or DVD?					
10. How often does your child look at books by himself or herself?					
11. How often does your child play with educational games or toys?					
12. How often do you receive or buy newspapers and/or magazines?					
13. How often does your child see you or another adult in the house reading books for pleasure?					
14. How often does your child see you or another adult in the house reading magazines or the newspaper?					

Circle what best answers the questions:				
15. How many minutes did you or another family member read to your child yesterday?				
0	1-10	11-20	21-40	41+
16. When your child is read to, how much does he/she enjoy it?				
not at all	a little	moderately	very much	loves it
17. When you read to your child, how much do you enjoy it?				
Not at all	a little	moderately	very much	love it
18. How many books do you have in the house that you or another adult read for pleasure?				
0	1-10	11-25	26-50	51+
19. Approximately how many picture books do you have in your home for your child's use?				
0	1-10	11-25	26-50	51+
20. How much time per day does your child watch TV?				
more than 5 hours	from 3 up to 5 hours	from 1 up to 3 hours	less than one hour	none

Birthday of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ (mm/dd/yyyy)

Thank you for participating in this survey. **Please return the survey in the envelope provided.** Keep the book as a thank you. Also, send in the enclosed postcard for a chance to win a \$50 gift card

