The Impact of Workshops on the Quality and Quantity of Parent-Child Booksharing Skills

Althea Duren
Florida International University, USA

Abstract: A pilot study posits that conducting a number of literacy workshops with teenage mothers translated into a greater number of appropriate booksharing skills implemented while reading to the child. The results of one- and two-way ANOVAs and of a contingency table with crosstabs are included.

Rationale

Early reading and writing concepts, behaviors, and attitudes are seen as children's constructions that take place within the influences of a social environment that immerses them, to varying degrees, in a range of literacy activities (Bus, 2001; Edwards, 1994; Morrow, 2001; Neuman & Celano, 2001; Sulzby & Teale, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). In this context, storybook reading can have a powerful influence on the social development of the preschooler as the parent "envelopes the child and the book together into an emotionally satisfying literacy event" (Goodman, 1984, p. 105). As this study suggests, knowing appropriate strategies for sharing books with infants and toddlers could mean the difference between having a pleasant experience, for both the adult and child, that will be implemented on a daily basis or one that either or both would want to avoid.

In addition, there is considerable evidence that differences in the home literacy environments of preschoolers are related to subsequent achievement differences. A preschooler whose home provides fewer opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills pertaining to books and reading is at a somewhat higher risk for reading difficulties than a child whose home affords a richer literacy. In a multiyear study with all middle-class children, Scarborough, Dobrich, and Hager (1991) showed that preschoolers who became poor readers by second grade had less frequent early literacy-related experiences than those who became better readers. In another longitudinal study, Smith (1997) measured children's literacy knowledge at the time of entering preschool and found a strong positive relationship to their reading ability five years later.

Purpose

An experimental study involving three types of workshop formats for 36 teenaged mothers were conducted to determine the impact of training these parents to use specific booksharing skills while reading to their infant and/or toddler in relationship to the quality of booksharing sessions. The facilitator introduced relevant and appropriate techniques for the parents to use with their children. The following research questions were addressed: (a) can short-range goals such as conducting literacy workshops with teenage mothers help to increase the ability and frequency of these parents to share books with the children in a meaningful and purposeful way? and (b) will having more than one workshop (more training) translate into a greater number of acknowledgments by the parents that the appropriate skills are being implemented while reading to the child?

Method

The participants of this study were teenaged parents of several high schools within the Miami-Dade County Public School System. They were invited to participate in these activities by the counselor within each school who coordinates and is the contact person of the Teenage Parent Program (TAP) of the school that provides educational and supplementary services for those involved. There were a varied number of students at each school from which three groups of 12 students from three different schools participated in the research. The author was the primary presenter; however, a second presenter was used in some of the workshops.

Following the suggestions of Duffy and Roehler (as cited in Knapp & Shields, 1991), my facilitation of the workshop as the parents attempted to share the books with their children included "cognitive modeling of the covert processes involved in using the skills, followed by responsive elaboration–cues, reminders, the reemphasis of key ideas, additional modeling, and elaborated explanations designed to respond to the particular forms of difficulty the [parents] experienced" (p. 225). The first workshop consisted of the (a) presentation of recent and relevant data that validated the importance of reading to the infant and toddler, (b) determination of the storytelling skills of the teenage parents, (c) demonstration the behaviors of an effective booksharing session, (4) issuance of the checklist for completion by the parents, and (5) the distribution of books provided by Reading is Fundamental. The second workshop was comprised mostly of discussion about how the parents fared in their usage of their booksharing sessions along with suggestions by the facilitator(s) of ways to correct the problems encountered.

The mothers' ability to share books with their children was measured by a 14-item checklist (see Appendix) consisting of 12 students from three different schools. Group 1 (n = 12) was provided the first workshop and then given the checklist to complete. Group 2 (n = 12) was provided two workshops and then given the checklist to complete. Group 3 (n = 12) was given the checklist to complete but was not provided the workshops.

Results

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the numbers of workshops provided and the number of "always" answers on the checklist, controlling for the number of workshops provided. The independent variable, the number of workshops, included three levels: no workshop, one workshop, and two workshops. The dependent variable was the number of "always" answers on the checklist. The ANOVA was significant, F (2, 33) = 4.81, p = .015. The strength of the relationship between the number of workshops provided and the number of "always"
answers on the checklists, as assessed by 0^2 was strong, with the number of workshops accounting for 23% of the variance of the dependent variable.

Follow up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the means. The test of homogeneity of variance was nonsignificant, p = .793, indicating that the sample variances ranging from 1.98 to 2.01 are similar. However, there may have been a lack of power associated with the test due to a small sample size; consequently, the result of the homogeneity test may not confirm that there are no differences in the population variances. Thus, the prudent choice was to ignore the Tukey and R-E-G-W Q tests (post hoc procedures that assumes equal variances) and to use the Dunnett's *C* test (which does not assume equal variances) to control for Type I error across the multiple pairwise comparisons. The reports of these tests, as well as the means and standard deviations for the three workshop groups, are reported in Table 1 below. There were significant differences in the means between the groups provided one workshop and

two workshops, but no significant differences between the no workshop and the two workshop groups. The group with two workshops showed a greater increase in the means of the scores in comparison to the one workshop group.

The results of the one-way ANOVA supported the hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the number of workshops provided and the number of “always” answers on the checklist.

Table 1
Differences among Groups on the Number of “Always” Answers on the Checklist

Workshop Group	*M*	SD	One Workshop	Two Workshops
One Workshop	4.08	1.98		
Two Workshops	6.50	1.93	*	
No Workshop	4.75	2.01	NS	NS

A 3 x 3 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of age and the three workshop conditions (method). The means and standard deviations for the number of "always" answers on the checklist as a function of the three factors are presented in Table 2 below. The ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between age and method, $F(8, 27) = .481$, $p = .749$, partial $ç^2 = .067$, no significant main effect for age, $F(8, 27) < .001$, $p = 1.000$, partial $ç^2 < .001$, but a significant main effect for method, $F(8, 27) = 4.003$, $p = .029$, partial $ç^2 = .230$. The significant method main effect confirmed that the number of workshops provided influenced the numbers of "always" answers indicated on the checklists by the mothers, which was the primary purpose of the study. The follow-up analyses to the main effect of method examined this issue. Follow-up tests yielded consisted of all pairwise comparisons among the three workshop conditions. The Tukey HSD and Dunnett C procedure was used to control for Type I error across the pairwise comparisons. The results of this analysis indicate that the group provided the two workshops had more "always" answers on the checklists than the groups provided one workshop or no workshop. There was no significant difference between the no workshop (control) group and the one workshop group. Overall, the 3 x 3 ANOVA indicates superiority for the two workshops method. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Numbers of “Always” Answers on the Checklist

Age	Method	Mean	SD
Ages 15-16	1 Workshop	4.75	1.71
	2 Workshops	6.75	2.75
	NoWorkshop	3.75	1.50
Age 17	1Workshop	3.67	2.08
	2Workshops	6.33	2.52
	No Workshop	5.29	2.29
Age 18	1 Workshop	3.80	2.39
	2 Workshops	6.40	1.14
	No Workshop	5.00	N/A

A two-way contingency table was conducted to evaluate if the participant's response to the item "I read to my child once a day" was increased based on the number of workshops the person has attended. The two variables were number of workshops with three levels (one workshop, two workshops, and no workshops) and the variable, "I read to my child once a day," from the checklist. These two variables were found to be significantly related, Pearson χ^2 (2, N = 36) = 6.71, p = .046, Cramér's V = .046. The proportion of checks for "I read to my child once a day" according to the number of workshops attended (one, two, or none) were .42, .67, and .17, respectively.

Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference among those proportions. Table 3 shows the results of these analyses. The Holm's sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the .05 across all three comparisons. The only pairwise difference that was significant was between the variable, "I read to my child once a day" and the two workshops group. The probability of checking off "I read to my child once a day" was about 4 (3.9) times more likely for the student that attended two workshops than the student who did not attend at all.

Table 3
Results for the Pairwise Comparisons Using the Holm's Sequential Bonferroni Method

Comparison	Pearson chi square	*p*-value	Required *p*-value for significance	Significance	Cramier's V
2 vs. no workshop	6.17	.013	.0167	*	.51
1 vs. no workshop	1.82	.178	.025	NS	.28
1 vs. two workshops	1.51	.219	.50	NS	.25

**p*-value (required *p*-value for significance)

Discussion

Although the study yielded a favorable outcome, several extraneous variables may have influenced the results of the testing: (a) the students were sent to the workshop based on their availability during school hours and at the discretion of the teacher and/or counselor (not all were included); (b) the participants were a mixture of students from different high schools drawn from the collective pool of students rather than from one school population; (c) the workshop settings were unequal in quality of instruction, i.e., there was one facilitator in some workshops and two in others and/or a video used in some workshops and not in others (due to technical difficulties); (d) some students may not have understood the meaning of the concepts discussed in the workshops or the question(s) asked on the checklist, i.e., Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students; (e) related to No. 4, there was an unequal representation of ethnicity; (f) a larger randomized sample size may have yielded different results; and (g) the parents checked off what they thought they did while reading to their child instead of being observed by the author.

Implications

These cognitively stimulating activities were provided as a basis to help the parents to more easily assimilate the booksharing techniques into the parent-to-child booksharing sessions. As a result, many of the parents felt more confident and were more apt to read to their child(ren) as indicated by the results of the pilot study. In addition, the structure of the workshops allowed

for the parents to discuss concerns about the booksharing sessions (the mood and energy level of the child, the timing of the reading session, the best way to sit with the child, etc.).

Conclusion

Although research indicates that young mothers often display and are comfortable with less-than-ideal parenting practices (Whitman, Borkowski, Keogh, Weed, 2001), this study found that the quality and quantity of the book-sharing sessions between these teenage parents and their children yielded favorable results with adequate training. However, further investigation is needed in the area of how to keep the parent interested in reading to the child on a daily and long-term basis since as discussed previously reading to toddlers (preschoolers) appropriately and consistently during their formative years increases the possibility of their performing successfully in the first few years of formal schooling.

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Appendix

Parent/Child Reading Survey used as a pre- and post-test measure

Parent/Child Reading Survey	**Always**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
1. I choose books my child can understand.			
2. I sit in a position to allow my child to see the book.			
3. I point to the pictures.			
4. I point to the words.			
5. I use expression in my voice.			
6. I make motions and/or sounds to match with the story.			
7. I ask "W" questions about the book I'm reading.			
8. I relate the stories in the books to real life events.			
9. I praise my child when he/she answer questions.			
10. I stop reading when my child loses interest.			
11. I read to my child at least once a day.			
12. I get books for my child from the library.			
13. I get books for my child from a bookstore.			
14. I enjoy reading to my child.			