

**A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF SPECIFIC READING HOMEWORK
ON ACADEMIC READING ACHIEVEMENT
IN FIRST GRADE**

ELIZABETH STONE MOORE

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An Abstract
Presented to the
Faculty of the Graduate School
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Education Specialist

by
Elizabeth Stone Moore

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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was to determine the effects of specific reading homework on academic achievement in reading. Twenty-two first grade students participated in the study with eleven receiving specific reading homework and eleven receiving math homework for a total of ten weeks. The study was practical classroom action research using a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design. The Metropolitan Achievement Test Survey Battery was administered to all subjects and the results were analyzed using the independent t -test ($p < .05$). A secondary purpose was to determine if there was significance obtained within the groups when the pretest scores were compared with the posttest scores using a dependent t -test. For the group as a whole, statistical significance was found at the 0.05 level of confidence, and significance was also found when comparing the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group and the pretest and posttest scores of the control group.

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To the Graduate and Research Council:

I am submitting herewith a Field Study written by Elizabeth Stone Moore entitled "A Study of the Effects of Specific Reading Homework on Academic Reading Achievement in First Grade." I have examined the final copy of this paper for form and content, and I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Education Specialist, with a major in Administration and Supervision.

Robert A. Gore
Major Professor

We have read this Field Study
and recommend its acceptance.

Donald B. Lambert
Minor Professor
or
Second Committee Member

Walter F. Williams
Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Graduate
and Research Council:

William H. Eells
Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The current movement toward basic skills learning has placed increased pressure upon teachers to improve their teaching techniques. Academic requirements for elementary students have mounted, and to meet these demands, many teachers give homework in order to extend instructional time. This practice is especially true in the area of reading. Joyce Epstein states, "If the purpose is improved basic skills, the outcome should include a measure of the skills addressed to see if learning occurred" (8). The testing of basic skills has become a means of measuring students' achievement gains. The question is, does extending instructional time through assigning homework increase academic achievement scores in the area of reading of first grade children?

Studies in the area of homework have yielded mixed results. Many of the studies conducted used students above the fourth grade level. Few studies have been conducted on students in the first through third grade level. "The relationships at the elementary school level with homework time are important because they differ from relationships noted for secondary school students" (Epstein, 16). Charles Friesen summarized twenty-four research studies from 1923

to 1976 and found no conclusive evidence for homework or against homework. The studies ranged from those unfavorable concerning homework to those favorable for homework.

The desirable character traits instilled by homework were stated by Pendergrass in 1985. He stated homework "disciplines the mind, develops study habits, fosters self-discipline, encourages responsibility, requires time management, unleashes creativity, and so forth" (310).

Thirty-seven research reports were reviewed by Anne Henderson in 1981. The findings show the positive effects of parental involvement, homework, or early intervention programs on academic achievement. In Henderson's review, a dissertation study by Dorothy Rich was cited. The experimental study involved 218 first grade students in the area of reading. The students were given written recipe style activities to carry home and complete. A new recipe page was sent home every two weeks. After a total of sixteen weeks, the students were posttested and the experimental group showed statistically higher scores. Henderson's review of Rich's dissertation determined that parents can raise the academic achievement of their children through the use of learn-at-home techniques (56). The other studies reviewed showed the positive effects of different types of parental involvement on academic achievement of preschoolers through high school level students.

Preparation, practice, extension, and creativity are

various types of homework. Harvey Foyle and Gerald Bailey noted the following regarding homework:

No matter which homework purpose the teacher chooses, the homework assignments must be regularly assigned, clearly stated, regularly collected, promptly graded, and promptly returned in order to raise student achievement. (188)

Ronald Partin likewise concluded:

Homework, not busy work, can enhance academic achievement. The directions must be clearly stated, and the homework must hold at least minimal interest for students if it is to succeed. (119)

Based on the suggestions outlined by Foyle, Bailey, and Partin, homework could be a vehicle to improve a student's academic reading skills.

Statement of the Problem

The major problem of this study was to determine if specific reading homework would increase the academic reading achievement of first grade students. The back to basics movement has brought pressure upon parents, teachers and students to help the child achieve academically. Children are facing tests of their academic ability and are monitored to determine their success or failure in reading achievement.

One major area of instruction in first grade is the teaching of reading. Beginning reading is very important to the educational success of a student. Specific reading homework may provide a vehicle for academic gains beyond that which could be achieved during regular classroom instruction.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the reading achievement gains of those students receiving specific reading homework as compared to those students receiving no specific reading homework. Based on the primary purpose of this study, the following question was investigated:

Will there be a significant difference between academic reading achievement scores of those students receiving specific reading homework and those students receiving no specific reading homework?

A secondary purpose was to investigate the following two questions:

1. Will there be a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the experimental group when receiving specific reading homework?

2. Will there be a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the control group when receiving no specific reading homework?

Statement of the Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant differences in the academic reading achievement scores between a group of first grade students receiving specific reading homework and a group of first grade students not receiving specific reading homework.

2. There will be no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the experimental group when receiving specific reading homework.

3. There will be no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the control group when receiving no specific reading homework.

Significance of the Study

This study could have a significant effect on the educational decisions made by teachers at the first grade level concerning assigning homework. Should the study show a significant difference in the academic reading achievement scores between the experimental and the control groups, such findings would help establish a position in favor of assigning specific reading homework. If no significant difference was found, teachers may want to look for other options to increase the academic reading achievement scores of their students.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to first grade students from a single classroom with a predetermined population.

2. The study was conducted for a ten week period during the first semester of school.

3. Each child participating in the study was six years of age on or before September 30.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following

operational definitions were applied to these terms:

1. Homework: Written or oral assignments given to the student that are to be completed at home.
2. Preparation Homework: Homework given prior to the development of a specific skill.
3. Practice Homework: Homework given after the development of a specific skill and used to reinforce the skills taught.
4. Specific Reading Homework: Teacher prepared assignments that encompass oral story reading and practice of previously taught decoding or language skills. These assignments are practice activities that reinforce the skills taught in the reading lesson each day. The assignments were prepared daily and distributed as single sheet activities.
5. Classroom Reading Instruction: Each child received daily reading lessons following a directed reading lesson activity format.
6. Directed Reading Activity: "A reading activity carried on under the guidance of the teacher, including the reading of specific references, the solving of problems, and the answering of questions" (Good, 10).
7. Basal Reading: "Reading aimed at the systematic development of reading ability by means of a series of books or other materials especially suitable for each successive stage of reading development" (Good, 473).
8. Directed Math Lesson: A math activity that is carried on under the direction of the teacher, including

the completion of specific worksheet activities, use of manipulatives, and the solving of mathematical problems.

9. Reading Achievement: "Attainment in any of a number of reading skills, habits, and attitudes; usually estimated by performance on some criterion measure such as formal or informal reading tests" (Good, 7).

10. Academic Achievement: "Knowledge attained or skills developed in the school subject, usually designated by test scores" (Good, 7).

11. Heterogeneous Group: Groups of children grouped together with similar reading abilities and yet are dissimilar. They are grouped so the teacher has a mixture of high, middle, and low ability students in the classroom.

12. Ability Group: Groups of children grouped together that are about on the same skill level in either reading or math. The groups are then instructed based on the needs of the students in the group, and the level of academic maturity of the group.

13. CVC: Words that are decoded by recognizing the consonant vowel consonant pattern of a word.

14. CVCe: Words that are decoded by recognizing the consonant vowel consonant silent e pattern of a word.

15. CVVC: Words that are decoded by recognizing the consonant vowel vowel consonant pattern of a word.

16. CVCC: Words that are decoded by recognizing the consonant vowel consonant consonant pattern of a word.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

This chapter will present the literature relevant to homework, parent teaching, home study and its effects on reading achievement. A historical perspective will be presented relating some of the research findings and authoritative judgements concerning homework and academic achievement.

Homework has been a part of the American educational process since our country began. Children were educated in the Colonial days at home by the parents, and this involvement by the parents with the child's education has continued into the twentieth century. It was in the early 1900's that questions began to arise concerning the length and types of homework being given.

In 1946, William Anderson conducted an experimental research project using eighth grade students. The study was to determine the effect of homework on scholastic success. Based on the results, Anderson concluded that the scores proved advantageous to the home study group (143). Anderson stated the following:

1. Home study properly assigned and evaluated so far as it relates to the pupils in this experiment is an aid in improving scholarship.

2. Home study is equally valuable to pupils of average intelligence in English, social studies, and mathematics.

3. On the basis of this study, non-home study pupils are sporadic in their achievement.

4. The brighter pupils in the non-home study group as a whole did not gain as much proportionately as those in the home study group.

5. The average and dull pupils of the non-home study group were much less successful than those in the study group. (143)

A research review of 280 research studies, conducted in 1960 by Goldstein, discussed the pertinent research from 1928 to 1958. Goldstein's analysis and review of the studies revealed that seventeen actual experimental research reports were conducted on the homework problem. Of the seven experimental designs, there was doubt concerning their usefulness due to their designs (213). According to Goldstein, DiNapoli's opinion was that the findings indicated that homework creates an adverse effect on academic achievement (214-215). DiNapoli compared the results of compulsory homework with voluntary homework. In a further review of this study, Goldstein feels DiNapoli was unwarranted in his conclusion and the study actually supported the opposite conclusion (215).

As of 1960, Goldstein reported no research studies had been conducted in grades one through four concerning the value of homework; therefore, statements concerning justification of homework in these grades cannot be made (221-222). The lack of any research related to lower primary grades prior to this time indicated that either

homework was not given at this early age or research was not conducted. Goldstein reviewed seven empirical studies in grades five and six which showed the positive effect of homework on academic achievement (222). Homework had been under attack at the time of Goldstein's review and in Goldstein's opinion, it was time to reinstate required homework as a valued educational procedure in the elementary school. The author felt homework should be smoothly graduated, from a token daily assignment in first grade to two or three hours in high school (222). Goldstein felt the research findings supported the practice of giving homework.

Arnold and Shaw wrote an article with contrasting opinions concerning the assigning of homework. Arnold was adamantly opposed to homework, whereas Shaw favored the assigning of homework. According to Arnold, homework was an abomination and interfered with a student's home life (24). Arnold went on to discuss the lives of teachers and felt teachers were also against homework but would not admit it. Arnold felt homework should be voluntary and not mandatory. In contrast, Shaw eluded to the importance of homework. Shaw believed a student's hours after school can be properly managed so homework does not take more than what would be considered a reasonable amount of time (24).

Shockley presented a strong opinion concerning homework in his 1968 book "Using Homework as a Teaching

Tool." Shockley's views were significant concerning first graders and the amount and type of homework that should be assigned. According to Shockley, "in grades one through three, little or no daily homework should be assigned. The homework at these grade levels should be geared to a specific purpose" (31). The key to success of all homework assignments seems to be the teacher. Shockley studied the literature and developed a list to help guide the teacher in the proper procedures for assigning homework. The list of do's include:

Teach the skills needed by the student to complete homework assignments successfully. . . .

Keep homework standards as high as class standards. . . .

Give the student who turns in unsatisfactory work the opportunity to do it over. . . .

Work toward independence on the part of all students. . . .

Assign work which can be completed successfully within a reasonable time limit. . . .

Assign homework which is an outgrowth of the work completed in class. . . .

Remember that all children do not have the same interests and abilities, and that the same homework will not work equally well with all of them. . . .

Make a daily check to be sure that the homework has been completed. . . .

Put the accent on quality rather than quantity. . . .

Make homework assignments definite. . . .

Make assignments suitable in difficulty.
(51-53)

The list of don'ts include:

Use homework as punishment. . . .

Reward the gifted child with unreasonable amounts of work. . . .

Use one type of homework too often. . . .

Fail to return homework papers. . . .

Forget that other teachers assign homework, too. . . .

Make homework assignments ambiguous. . . .

Use homework on a hit or miss basis. (53-54)

A lengthy and comprehensive literature review concerning homework was conducted in 1968 by Ruth Strang. In her booklet "What Research Says to the Teacher: Guided Study and Homework," Strang noted only a limited and inadequate amount of research had been conducted dealing with directed study and homework (3). Strang reviewed the studies dealing with the psychology of learning and its application to effective study methods. Strang stated the following concerning reading:

In reading, effective learning takes place when instruction and practice are appropriate to the pupil's development; the books and other reading material are interesting and worthwhile to him; he feels a need to read; he engages in a progression of reading experiences appropriate to him; and he is neither allowed merely to mark time nor pushed faster than he can go. (6)

Learning how to learn is as important as just memorizing facts, according to Strang, and the assigning of homework is favored by parents and teachers as a means of extending learning (8). The variations in time spent on homework were discussed and the conclusion was that the

student influences the amount of time needed to complete assignments. What may be an adequate assignment for one student may be excessive for another.

The type of homework assigned to students also depends on the expected outcomes and the desired results from what the student is expected to study and learn. Strang is concerned about homework that requires low-energy output and warns teachers that such homework assignments could cause students to be dissatisfied with school (16). Some problems associated with homework according to Strang are: "(1) copying vs. sharing . . ., (2) homework and family relations, (3) health aspects . . ., (4) administrative faults . . ., and (5) lack of guidance" (17-19). Strang also suggested decisions about homework should be based on a student's home conditions, the amount and kind of homework given, how much time is allowed for studying at school, and whether the assignment is stimulating for the student (22). Based on Strang's appraisal of homework, the following was concluded:

Contrary to general opinion, the findings of the best research indicate that systematically assigned homework contributes to academic achievement to a variable degree for able learners; to some extent for the average; and to a more marked degree for the slow learner. (29)

Maertens conducted an experimental study in 1972 using fifth and sixth grade students to determine the effects of arithmetic homework on attitudes and achievement. The results of the study showed positive effects on both computation and problem solving skills when both homework

and parental involvement were used as a combined technique to improve achievement (124-125). Another finding from the study was that parents should provide feedback to their children.

A 1975 meta-analysis by Goodson examined parent involvement and early intervention programs for disadvantaged preschool children. The following was stated by Goodson:

Analysis of these data indicate that the progress consistently produced significant immediate gains in children's IQ scores, seemed to show long-term effects on children's IQs and their school performance, and seemed to alter in a positive direction the teaching behavior of parents. (1)

This analysis showed some of the positive effects parents can have by interacting and aiding in the education of their children.

Baenniger conducted a study in 1976 of the effects of parent management of students with homework problems. The study involved students from ages five to twelve and "parents were trained in a baseline₁-intervention₁-baseline₂-intervention₂ (BIBI) sequence of behavior management" (10). Using the BIBI sequence to monitor their children during homework, the parents were able to make sure the homework was completed. Baenniger concluded parents can directly help their children with homework without having to become teachers and the BIBI technique can be easily learned by parents. The parent simply monitors the child's study habits and pays attention to

correct working habits and ignores the non-working behaviors (12-13).

Charles Friesen, a leading contributor into the investigation of homework practices reviewed various descriptive studies in 1978. The studies reviewed were concerned with the parent's opinion as to whether homework should be assigned. At this time, parents were in favor of the assignment of homework. This was a shift in parent opinion from the previous review conducted in 1960 by Goldstein. Friesen concluded that parents had a variety of reasons for favoring homework. The parents felt that homework:

- (1) improved grades, (2) stimulated interest, (3) helped develop initiative, responsibility and self discipline, (4) provided opportunity for independent study, (5) drew the home and school closer, and (6) provided preparation for further study. (9)

Friesen also noted that "students do not favor homework, but felt that it did help them achieve better grades" (9).

Garner in a 1978 research of fifth, eighth, and tenth grade students found that a student's opportunity to learn affected achievement and homework provided for more educational opportunity. According to Garner, a student can achieve more exposure to instructional materials through the use of homework and increase total learning time (2). The study noted the amount of class time in addition to the amount of homework a particular teacher gave and these two groups of times were the students' opportunity to learn. The totals were statistically applied to each group

of students and results calculated. Garner's study indicated higher ability students were receiving more total exposure to learning activities than average students, and lower ability students received even less exposure to learning activities than the average students (11). The data from the study showed that the academic success of the students may be affected by having less time spent on classroom instruction and homework. The higher ability students could have more academic success due to greater time being spent on classroom instruction and homework.

An experimental longitudinal research study conducted by Siders involved second and third grade students and the effects of homework on reading achievement. The main focus of the study was the effectiveness of parental involvement and outside activities provided by the parent on academic achievement of the students. Monthly calendars were given to parents with activities suggested for each day and the parents made sure the child completed the activities on each monthly calendar. The results from the study showed there were no significant differences in the frequency of home reading activities, the variety of home activities, and the academic achievement gains between the experimental and control groups. However, the data revealed that some children expressed a more positive attitude toward reading, and the frequency in home reading activities did not correlate with students' attitudes toward reading (17).

The research related to homework and academic

achievement was again reviewed by Charles Friesen in 1979. The research reviewed focused on whether students that received homework performed academically better than students that did not receive homework, and the results were inconclusive in that it could not be determined whether homework increased academic achievement (14-15). Friesen determined that the decision whether to assign homework should be left up to the teacher.

In 1979, Lee and Pruitt cited the "back to basics" movement as a reason for a renewed interest in homework (31). Homework was favored by these authors as a strategy for increasing test scores and the following four techniques for using homework were described:

1. Practice--The most common and simple type of assignment, this is given to help students master specific skills. Practice exercises should be limited to material presented in class.

2. Preparation--Preparation assignments are given to prepare students to gain maximum benefit from subsequent lessons.

3. Extension--Extension assignments are given to determine if the student can transfer a new skill or concept to a new situation.

4. Creative--Creative assignments require students to integrate many skills and concepts in the process of producing a response. . . .
(32)

Dick conducted an experimental research study in 1980 on the effects of two different homework approaches among subjects enrolled in Algebra I. The treatments were different in that one group received required homework and the other group received homework only upon request. Dick

concluded that in order to master the content of Algebra I, homework was necessary (31). The achievement of students was higher using the required homework approach on the more difficult sections of Algebra, but the teacher could use the homework upon request approach for the easier sections of Algebra. It was suggested that if a teacher uses these approaches for the assignment of homework the students would need to be instructed in their use.

Duff and Adams stated in 1981 that many teachers did not acknowledge the importance of parents in a child's education and only saw a parent's role as that of making sure the child came to school and behaved (207). The teaching of reading was perceived by parents and students to be the major responsibility of the teacher. According to Duff and Adams, the example set by the parent concerning reading affects the child's attitude toward reading before the child enters school (209). Therefore, parents need to be knowledgeable concerning the impact that parents can have on the attitudes of children concerning reading. Also, teachers need to recognize that children enter school with a variety of environmental backgrounds that affect children's attitudes toward reading. In the opinion of Duff and Adams, parents and teachers share joint and equal responsibility for providing students with meaningful learning experiences so that the students can be productive and achieve academically (209).

In 1981, Henderson conducted an extensive review

of thirty-seven research reports from 1966 to 1980 involving parent participation and student achievement. According to Henderson, a student's achievement will improve with any type of parent involvement (1). The study reviewed a wide variety of programs from early intervention programs to parent participation in parent teacher organizations. The research reviewed longitudinal as well as short term studies, minority group achievement, students of differing IQs, and studies in various geographical areas of the country. According to Henderson, a study was conducted in 1976 by Dorothy Rich which involved reading achievement and first grade students. The summary stated: "Parents who use simple learning-at-home techniques to tutor their children can help raise their children's achievement in reading" (Henderson, 56). After reviewing all of the thirty-seven research reviews, Henderson concluded that parent participation provided positive results for improving academic achievement. The important factor appears to be the parents' interest in the student's work and ability to achieve. Henderson's paper was appropriately called "Parent Participation-Student Achievement: The Evidence Grows."

Iverson, Brownlee, and Walberg conducted a study in 1981 of the effects of teacher-parent contacts on reading achievement. The researchers believed that reading achievement could be increased by coordinating the classroom and home environments through the use of a

supplementary reading program (394). The program was one that used increased and ongoing communication with parents to report student progress. Teachers did not wait until there was a problem or crisis to communicate with parents (394). The children in the program were from grades one to eight and were reading a year or more below grade level. The researchers concluded that the younger the student the greater the academic gains with increased teacher parent contacts (396).

A synthesis of the research between 1965 and 1979 was conducted by Knorr. The author's findings from this group of research studies added support in favor of homework and suggested there is a positive relationship between the kind of homework assignment given and achievement (31). On the other hand, some of the studies Knorr reviewed showed negative or mixed results concerning homework. According to Knorr, each local school district should decide upon a policy concerning homework, determine if and why the community values homework, and then outline clear practices for assigning homework (46).

LaConte prepared an educational pamphlet in 1981 called "Homework as a Learning Experience: What Research Says to the Teacher." LaConte's educational information listed the types of homework, usefulness of homework, and future of homework. LaConte stated:

As we enter the last two decades of the twentieth century, the process of education seems certain to undergo dramatic changes. The impact of new technology and demographic

alterations in the nation's social structure will in all probability reshape learning methods in the United States. Perhaps no single aspect of U. S. education will change as much as rapidly as the process of studying at home. (5)

LaConte further stated that cable television, home computers, and other such technological advances will alter the course of homework; the author did not feel research tells us enough about the usefulness of homework. LaConte is opposed to homework for young children, and feels homework could be counterproductive. The author was interested in the implications of homework for future practices.

In 1982, Moles presented a "Synthesis of Recent Research on Parent Participation in Children's Education." The conclusion was that teachers need to reexamine their thinking about parent participation in the student's educational process. "In a 1981 NEA poll over 10 percent of teachers in all grade levels stated that more home-school interaction would be desirable" (44). According to Moles, effective parent involvement should be well planned, comprehensive, and ongoing in order to be effective in furthering a child's educational progress (44). Moles noted that "parent school contacts and home learning activities are two ways in which a parent could participate in their child's education" (44). According to Moles:

Children become home learners through at least four kinds of educational processes: home instruction, enrichment activities, contacts to supervise homework or provide incentive for

good work, and modeling of educational pursuits by family members. (45)

Moles also discussed the barriers that existed between parents and teachers. These barriers represented ways in which teachers and parents could thwart communication. The barriers identified for parents were "competing demands of work and family life, come from different cultural backgrounds, and feel mistrust and anxiety when dealing with school staff" (45). The barriers identified for teachers were "competing demands at school and home, lack training for dealing with parents, and may have difficulty relating to culturally different families" (45). It was recommended that teachers should be conscious of these barriers and try to develop more parent participation in the educational process. One way to overcome the barriers between the teacher and the parent is by involving parents in reading instruction at an early age. According to Moles, parent involvement declined from first grade to fifth grade as formal learning increased and the child was capable of independent reading. Moles also noted that some programs were aimed at helping parents contribute time and effort to their child's education.

In 1983, Epstein did an extensive survey concerning the relationship between homework, academic achievement, and the behavior of elementary students. The survey included about 3700 first, third, and fifth grade teachers and principals in 600 schools (10). Teachers who strongly believed in parent involvement were identified and

surveyed as to their opinions concerning homework, achievement, and behavior. This review revealed various patterns related to homework, academic achievement, and student behaviors. The following conclusions were drawn from the patterns that emerged:

Low achievement is associated with more time spent doing homework, more minutes of parent help, and more frequent requests from teachers for parent involvement in learning activities at home. Parents report spending more time helping children who teachers consider discipline and homework problems. Children who like to talk about school and homework with their parents tend to be the students who are good students, homework stars, and well-behaved in class. (20)

Foyle and Bailey conducted an experimental research study in 1985 using the homework types cited in Lee and Pruitt's 1979 work. Foyle and Bailey compared high school students in three ways: (1) homework versus no homework, (2) students receiving practice homework versus students receiving preparation homework, and (3) academic achievement of the girls versus the boys. The researchers defined practice homework as factual responses to terms and questions that covered material already presented in class during the class period, and preparation homework as factual responses to terms and questions that would be covered in future class presentations (4). The researchers found the group that received homework scored significantly higher than the no homework group, and the students receiving practice homework versus preparation homework showed no significant differences. There were no

significant differences between the academic achievement scores between the girls and the boys.

Lesgold in 1985 stated a lack of practice in reading may contribute to students becoming poor readers and more practice in reading would probably increase word recognition efficiency as well as other reading skills (112). Homework assignments in reading could be a means for providing the additional practice needed in reading. McKinney agreed with Lesgold in a 1985 research review and concluded that students could be better readers if: "(1) teachers improved reading instruction, (2) parents spent more time reading with their children, and (3) textbooks were improved" (1).

Pendergrass did a research review in 1985 and focused on the following four areas: (1) arguments for considerable homework, (2) arguments for minimal homework, (3) some research findings related to homework, and (4) homework's place in the discussion of a basic education (310). Pendergrass stated that homework teaches study habits, self discipline, responsibility, time management, encouraged creativity, and was a means of expanding learning opportunity (310). Time limitations and using homework to extend classroom instruction were cited as reasons for giving homework. The author contrasted maximum homework assignments with minimal homework assignments and felt too much homework can be harmful and cause students to have sloppy work habits or copy others' work.

Having too much homework can limit a child's choices of extracurricular activities and interfere with the development of a well-rounded child (311). Five of the studies reviewed showed no significant difference between the students receiving homework and the students not receiving homework. According to Pendergrass, "homework does have a role in the schooling of today's youth; however, this role is much smaller than what is being espoused by many people" (314).

Silvern wrote a research review in 1985 concerning parent involvement and reading achievement. Parents viewed the teacher's most important educational objective was to teach the student to read (44). The review identified parent practices that promoted reading and reviewed some available parent involvement studies. Silvern concluded, if parents read to the child for eight to ten minutes a day and talked about the story, the child tended to become a better reader. Also cited were the positive effects of having reading materials available in the home, and modeling of reading by the parents. Implications for the teacher included providing parents with worthwhile reading materials, getting parents actively involved, and assisting parents in reading techniques that could be used at home.

In 1986, Anderson, Mead, and Sullivan compared data gathered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. "NAEP is an ongoing national survey of the

knowledge, skills, understandings, and attitudes of young Americans in major learning areas usually taught in school" (2). Anderson, et al. reviewed the data concerning reading achievement and homework for fourth, eighth, and eleventh grade students. The researchers concluded:

Students who received homework assignments and did them tended to read at higher proficiency levels than students who did not have assigned homework or who did not do their assigned homework. (7)

R. C. Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding conducted a 1986 research study comparing fifth grade students in a village school and fifth grade students in a small city school, and examined the out-of-school activities and reading achievement. The students completed forms showing how they spent their out-of-school time for twenty-six weeks. The researchers concluded that the activity of reading books out-of-school proved to have the strongest association with reading proficiency. By the time a child reaches fifth grade, the time spent reading books is an indication of that child's status as a reader (21). Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding noted:

Among the things teachers do to promote reading are assuring access to interesting books at a suitable level of difficulty, using incentives to increase motivation for reading, reading aloud to children, and providing time for reading during the school day. (22)

These are practices that a good teacher considers worth doing and need to be encouraged to do in the classroom.

Shadle conducted a study in 1985 of the effects of a school sponsored parent-pupil home reading program on

reading comprehension achievement, reading attitudes, and reading habits in grades three through five with a relatively even boy/girl ratio. Students received monthly contracts and monthly calendars for keeping up with their home reading. The students read fifteen minutes a day for five out of seven days and the following was concluded by Shadle:

The school sponsored home reading program was effective in positively altering reading comprehension scores, student attitude toward reading, student reading habits and parent's reading habits. (93)

In 1986, Doty prepared a practicum report on the involvement habits of parents with first grade students attending Chapter I reading class in public schools. The report involved some children of migrant workers and diverse backgrounds. Doty used charts, notes to parents, signatures on homework, conferences, and a questionnaire to draw the conclusions. The report was a compilation of data concerning whether the parents signed homework, came to conferences, and filled out the questionnaire (35). According to the report, the parents did participate, however, no evidence could be related to school success or failure based upon this report.

Foyle and Harvey wrote an article in 1986 stating the purpose of homework. The authors felt homework should be directly related to the teacher's plans and the content of the course being studied (188). The types of homework were reviewed and the authors noted, when comparing

practice homework with preparation homework, homework can raise academic achievement (188).

A review of research was conducted by Miller in 1986 which included thirty-five studies, and the results indicated a positive correlation between parent involvement, parent/teacher interaction, and a child's achievement (1). The conclusion indicated that parents wanted to be involved in the educational activities conducted for their child. A summary of the studies showed several techniques teachers can use for improving reading. These techniques were: (1) to increase parent/teacher contacts, (2) to involve parents in the classroom, and (3) to educate parents on how to guide children in reading (33).

Partin's 1986 article concerning homework suggested thirty-one fun type homework assignments that required imagination and yielded a high interest level. The author felt homework was a means to an end and the value of homework can be determined by whether or not it furthers other educational objectives (118). Homework should not be busy work but should enhance academic achievement. The teacher should give creative assignments and permit students to complete assignments that allow for the use of their imaginations.

Yap did a correlational study in 1987 which compared how much the parents were involved with the child's reading activities at home. Subjects participating in the study attended Chapter I reading classes. Parents were

provided with simple goals and a log to keep track of activities as they were completed. The results relating to student achievement were interesting. At both the experimental and comparison schools, the reading achievement gains were substantially higher than the national Chapter I reading averages. Consistent with the national trend, the student in the lower grades showed higher gains (5).

Homework has also been found to contribute to the academic achievement in other areas of learning, such as mathematics. Mucha researched the attitudinal and achievement effects of mathematical homework games on second grade students and their parents in 1987. A game format was used to involve parents in their child's homework activities. Attitudinal surveys, skills tests, and a parent/student survey were used to collect the data. Positive gains were shown in attitude and achievement levels, as well as increased parental involvement (28).

Summary

The purpose of the literature review was to present information concerning the effects of homework upon academic achievement. A historical perspective was followed when presenting the literature. Since the assigning of homework has been a popular and unpopular educational practice at various points in educational history, it should be noted that the current literature tends to show more support for the practice of assigning homework to students.

The literature reviewed showed that very little research had been conducted involving students in the primary grades prior to the 1970's. Beginning with the middle of that decade, there was an increase in the research and articles found in the literature concerning homework and the effects of homework upon academic achievement. A 1975 review by Goodson examined parent involvement and early intervention. At this time, there appeared to be an increased interest in early childhood programs and parental involvement in the child's academic achievement at an earlier age. This trend has continued, and today students may face greater educational demands at an earlier age.

As indicated by the twenty-nine articles reviewed between 1978 and 1988, more research has been conducted to determine if there is a positive correlation between homework and academic achievement. In the literature reviewed, nineteen of the authors found a positive correlation between homework and academic achievement. The research appears to indicate that the involvement parents have during homework activities with the child tends to increase achievement.

Some of the literature reviewed disagrees with the concept that homework improves academic achievement. A 1981 article by LaConte indicated that homework should not be given to young children and that assigning homework to young children is counterproductive. Epstein's 1983

survey also indicated that low achievement is associated with more time spent doing homework. Doty reported in 1986 that no evidence could be related to school success based upon increased involvement of parents and the academic achievement of the first grade students involved in the study.

Since the variable of homework does not clearly and concisely show positive effects upon academic achievement, the present study was designed to help fill the gap in the literature. The conclusions from this study could provide further evidence to assist a teacher when making decisions concerning the assigning of homework.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of specific reading homework on academic reading achievement. The empirical part of the study involved the students' completion of forty specific reading homework assignments over a ten week period. The study focused on the variable of academic reading achievement gains of those students receiving specific reading homework. Three questions were investigated:

1. Will there be a significant difference between academic reading achievement scores of those students receiving specific reading homework and those students receiving no specific reading homework?
2. Will there be a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the experimental group when receiving specific reading homework?
3. Will there be a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the control group when receiving no specific reading homework?

In order to answer the questions instigated by the

purpose of the study, several procedures were used. These procedures are described in this chapter under the following topics: (1) null hypotheses, (2) description of subjects, (3) research design and procedures, and (4) description of measures employed.

Null Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant differences in the academic reading achievement scores between a group of first grade students receiving specific reading homework and a group of first grade students not receiving specific reading homework.

2. There will be no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the experimental group when receiving specific reading homework.

3. There will be no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the control group when receiving no specific reading homework.

Description of the Subjects

The participants of this study included ten girls, twelve boys, and one teacher. The subjects for the study were divided into two groups, an experimental and a control group. The experimental group consisted of eleven students and the control group consisted of eleven students. All participants were members of a large public elementary school located in the Middle Tennessee area.

Grade levels taught in the school included kindergarten through third grade, with each class functioning as a self-contained unit. The subjects consisted of students from suburban and rural portions of a county of approximately ninety thousand. The subjects were of a white ethnic composition and represented a mixture of various socioeconomic backgrounds.

The teaching experience represented by the participating teacher was twenty years. Level of education obtained by the teacher included both bachelor and master degrees in elementary education and curriculum and instruction and an additional forty-five hours beyond the master's degree level.

Research Design and Procedures

Design

The study conducted was a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design. For the purpose of this study, the students were randomly selected to participate in the experimental group which was called Group One and consisted of eleven members, and the control group which was called Group Two and consisted of eleven members. In order to equate the activities received by the students within the classroom, each student received some type of homework. The control group received math activities and the experimental group received specific reading homework at their ability level. All of the students participating in this study had attended kindergarten and were functioning

on or above grade level according to the pretest scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test Survey Battery Primer, Form JS.

The Metropolitan Achievement Test Survey Battery Primer, Form JS was used as a pretest and Form KS of the same test was used as a posttest. The test has a high content validity based upon the objectives taught in the school. According to "The Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook" a reliability of .80 or above was reported (699). The pretest and posttest scores were used to determine if the independent variable, assigning specific reading homework, affected the dependent variable, academic achievement in reading.

Procedures

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate school officials, which included: (1) the superintendent of schools, (2) the local school board officials, (3) the supervisor of instruction, and (4) the principal of the participating school. A meeting was held the first day of school for two purposes: (1) to explain the study to the parents of the students that were enrolled in this particular first grade class, and (2) to obtain written permission from the parents allowing the student to participate. A discussion was held informing the parents of their rights and responsibilities concerning the study. The parents were informed that the study would concern the effects of homework on academic achievement

and each child would receive academic assignments to complete at home. Parents were asked to sign and return the homework activities sent home each Monday through Thursday.

Specific reading homework was defined as a teacher prepared assignment that encompasses oral story reading or practice of previously taught reading skills. These assignments were enrichment activities that reinforced the skills taught in the directed reading lesson each day. The single sheet homework activities were assigned to the students every Monday through Thursday with no homework assigned on Friday or special holidays.

The homework assignments were initiated following the administering of the pretest instrument. Homework was then assigned for a period of ten weeks with a total of forty assignments completed by the student, signed by the parent, and returned to school. Students failing to return the homework assignments were allowed another day in which to return the activity. Students who lost assignments were given another copy of the homework and allowed another day in which to return the activity. Students who were absent were allowed to complete make-up assignments upon returning to school. A check list was used each day to help manage late or overdue assignments.

After the homework assignments were collected, the teacher checked the assignment for accuracy and helped the student with any incorrect answers. While the normal

procedure should be to return homework papers promptly to the student, for the purpose of this study, the papers were maintained in the teacher's files. Grades were not assigned to homework activity pages and the students' only obligation was to complete the assignment to the best of their ability. Each week, assignments were given in oral story reading and decoding skills that had been introduced by the teacher during the directed reading lesson. The Ginn 720 reading series was the basal reading series used to teach reading. Two different types of homework assignments were used which included oral story reading and various decoding skills.

The stories for the oral story reading homework assignments were duplicate copies of the stories read during the directed reading lesson. The story was then sent home as one form of homework activity and the parents were directed to listen to the student read the story orally. After the student read the story orally, the parent signed the homework page indicating that the assignment had been read orally. The student could practice reading the story as often as desired. Some students practiced reading the story assigned more than one time. Oral practice was a means of allowing the parent to become directly involved with the child's education, as well as a means of allowing the child to gain experience in oral reading and confidence in the reading process.

The activities assigned for development of decoding

skills included: (1) practice drawing objects that represented the sound made by the initial consonant letters, (2) saying sight words, (3) developing word lists using graphemic bases, (4) categorizing lists of words, (5) writing names properly, (6) changing nouns from singular to plural form, (7) writing simple sentences using sight words within the sentence, (8) writing opposites, (9) matching rhyming words, and (10) using word patterns to determine the vowel sound when decoding words. Samples of the types of activities used as homework activities for decoding skills follow. Figure 3.1 shows a homework activity using initial consonant sounds which required the student to illustrate the sound of the letter in the box.

Name _____ Homework _____

Parent sign _____

Draw an object that begins with the beginning sound of each letter in the boxes below:

| | |
|----|----|
| Bb | Ll |
| Rr | Hh |

Figure 3.1

Decoding Homework for Initial
Consonant Sounds

Figure 3.2 illustrates sight word practice which involved the student saying a list of sight words and then reading the words in sentences. The words had been previously introduced and discussed during the directed reading lesson.

| Word List | Practice reading this: |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| Bill | Bill rides. |
| Lad | Lad runs and Jill hides. |
| runs | Bill rides and Jill hides. |
| hides | Jill runs. |
| Jill | Jill rides and Bill runs. |
| and | Bill and Jill hide. |
| go | Bill and Jill go. |
| rides | Bill rides and Lad runs. |

Figure 3.2

Sight Word and Sentence
Oral Reading Practice

Complete sight words lists were sent to parents at the beginning of each reading book. Only those students in the experimental group were given lists to take home. Parents were given instructions to review the lists of words as often as desired and until the student knew the words on the list.

Sight word practice pages as shown in Figure 3.2 were sent after the words had been introduced and read in context. The student was familiar with the words and then read sentences containing previously introduced words. The reading of words in context was used to improve retention of the vocabulary taught in the daily lesson.

Figure 3.3 is an example of writing word lists using graphemic bases. The teacher introduced the graphemic base during classroom instruction and then assigned homework using graphemic bases. The student supplied the initial consonant letter needed to form a word and then read the lists of words formulated orally to their parent.

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>_</u> pen | <u>_</u> Ted | <u>_</u> Jill | <u>_</u> ride |
| <u>_</u> Ben | <u>_</u> bed | <u>_</u> Bill | <u>_</u> hide |
| <u>_</u> Ken | <u>_</u> fed | <u>_</u> will | <u>_</u> tide |
| <u>_</u> hen | <u>_</u> red | <u>_</u> dill | <u>_</u> side |

Figure 3.3

Writing Word Lists Using Graphemic Bases

Authorities believe students improve their knowledge of certain sight words by developing the ability to recognize words based upon their similarities. The basal series used called these similarities in word parts graphemic bases (Ginn, 1963). Students practiced the skill

of forming words which contained graphemic bases.

Students were instructed in how to develop lists similar to those taught during the reading lesson and were taught to use a letter or letters that would produce a meaningful word. The student then practiced reading the word list. These lists were checked by the teacher and discussed with the student. Each reading level involved development of a variety of word lists using different graphemic bases.

Figure 3.4 illustrates categorizing lists of words. The student read the list words and wrote the words under the proper category. A lesson in categorizing had been previously taught prior to assigning the homework activity.

Read the list words. Write each word under the correct category.

| | | | |
|--------|--------|------|---------|
| mother | Ben | sink | country |
| shoe | school | boy | ball |
| city | socks | girl | Dallas |

Person

1. mother

2. Ben

3. boy

4. girl

Place

1. country

2. school

3. city

4. Dallas

Thing

1. sink

2. shoe

3. ball

4. socks

Figure 3.4

Categorizing Lists of Words

Figure 3.5 illustrates the activity which required the students to write proper names using capital letters. The teacher introduced the skill and then assigned a list of nouns to be written correctly. The skill was taught in the directed reading lesson before requiring the student to complete this activity as a homework assignment.

Exact names need to begin with upper case letters. Write these names correctly:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. ebonee_____ | 2. stephen_____ |
| 3. marie_____ | 4. johnny_____ |
| 5. nathan_____ | 6. keli_____ |
-

Figure 3.5

Writing Proper Names

Changing singular nouns to plural nouns as illustrated in Figure 3.6 was another type of activity included in the required decoding homework assignments.

Add an s to make these words mean more than one.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. duck = <u>ducks</u> | 2. turtle = <u>turtles</u> |
| 3. fan = <u>fans</u> | 4. wagon = <u>wagons</u> |
-

Figure 3.6

Changing Singular Nouns To Plural Nouns

Figure 3.7 illustrates the assignment that required the student to write simple sentences. The student was given a list of words and asked to write simple sentences that included each word within a sentence. On the day the assignment was returned, the student was allowed to read the sentences to the class.

Write a sentence with each word:

- | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. kid | 2. did | 3. sip | 4. win |
| 5. hid | 6. lip | 7. rip | 8. pin |

1. The baby goat is called a kid.

2. I did my homework.

3. I can have a sip of milk.

4. We like to win our soccer games.

5. A fox hid in the weeds.

6. I cut my lip.

7. Do not rip your papers.

8. The pin is in the pants.

Figure 3.7

Writing Simple Sentences
Using Basic Vocabulary

The student was allowed to ask for help in spelling difficult words. The use of a variety of words within the student's own language made for another access to vocabulary development as a technique for improving reading skills.

Recognizing opposites was a skill introduced at the first grade level and one that becomes more highly developed as the child's reading skills mature. The skill was taught during the directed reading lesson prior to the homework activity being assigned. It is thought that through the recognition of opposites, the student will develop a broader vocabulary which functions as a basis for learning the meaning of new words. The student read sentences that contained an underlined word and then completed the sentence with the opposite of the underlined word as Figure 3.8 illustrates.

Read the sentences. Use the word bank and write the opposite of each underlined word on the line.

- | | |
|--------|--|
| go | 1. Red means <u>stop</u> . Green means <u>go</u> . |
| went | 2. I did my <u>work</u> . I can <u>play</u> now. |
| found | 3. My bag is <u>old</u> . I would like a <u>new</u> one. |
| cold | 4. My towel is <u>wet</u> . I need a <u>dry</u> one. |
| play | 5. The oven is <u>hot</u> . Ice is <u>cold</u> . |
| new | 6. I <u>lost</u> my book. I <u>found</u> it at home. |
| little | 7. Dan <u>came</u> to see me. He <u>went</u> home. |
| dry | 8. A giant is <u>big</u> . A midget is <u>little</u> . |
-

Figure 3.8
Recognizing and Writing
Opposites

Figure 3.9 illustrates the activity that required the student to recognize rhyming words. The skill was taught during the directed reading lesson prior to assigning this type of activity as homework. This skill correlates with the skill of developing words using graphemic bases. During the directed reading lesson, recognizing rhyming words and their similarity with graphemic bases was stressed. In the activity, the student must recognize the part of the word that rhymes, then color the boxes of the words that rhyme. The student then read the words in the colored boxes orally and listened for the rhyming sounds.

Read the words, then color the boxes of the words that rhyme red.

| | | | | |
|-----|-------|-----|-----|------|
| man | hides | tan | pan | runs |
| fed | can | wed | him | fan |

Figure 3.9
Recognizing Words that Rhyme

After the students had reviewed the consonant sounds taught, they were then introduced to vowel sounds and given instruction in developing word patterns as pictured in Figure 3.10. The student learned the following five patterns: (1) CVC, (2) CVCe, (3) CVVC, (4) CV, and (5) CVCC. Homework assignments were given that required the student to write the word under the proper pattern. After writing the word, the student then said the word to the parent and the student was to listen to the vowel sound made during oral reading of the word lists.

Words with a CVC pattern have a short vowel sound. Words with a CVCe pattern have a long vowel sound. Write the words under the correct pattern, then say the words.

| | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|------|-------------|------|-----|
| like | get | bed | hide | him | yet |
| red | dad | pipe | bite | dime | bit |
| <u>CVC</u> | | | <u>CVCe</u> | | |
| 1. <u>get</u> | 1. <u>like</u> | | | | |
| 2. <u>bed</u> | 2. <u>ride</u> | | | | |
| 3. <u>him</u> | 3. <u>pipe</u> | | | | |
| 4. <u>vet</u> | 4. <u>hide</u> | | | | |
| 5. <u>dad</u> | 5. <u>bite</u> | | | | |
| 6. <u>bit</u> | 6. <u>dime</u> | | | | |

Figure 3.10

Using Word Pattern to
Recognize Vowel
Sounds

Description of Measures Employed

The Metropolitan Achievement Test Survey Battery Primer, Form JS was used as a pretest for both the experimental and the control groups. Form KS of the same test was used as a posttest for both the experimental and control groups. The test has a high content validity based upon the objectives taught in the school. The technical manual that accompanies the tests gives a content validity breakdown of each objective tested (Prescott, 72). A team of expert teachers matched the school objectives to the test objectives and agreed the test was valid and appropriate for the students being tested. Gay stated this is a proper procedure for determining content validity (129). According to "The Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook" a reliability of .80 or above was reported for each objective (699). The pretest and posttest scores were used to determine if the independent variable, assigning specific reading homework, affected the dependent variable, academic achievement in reading.

The pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group were compared to determine if there was a significant difference in the scores obtained. The same comparison was calculated using the scores for the control group. As with the first hypotheses, the Metropolitan Achievement Test Survey Battery Primer, Forms JS and KS tests were used to determine if there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores.

Administering the pretest was conducted after the students had been in school for two weeks and had become accustomed to the routine of test taking. The posttest was administered after the ten week homework period was over. The test was a group test and administered to the entire group during a four day period. Adult monitors were used to monitor the classroom during the testing period. The tests were scored using hand scoring techniques by both the teacher and the adult teacher aide. Scoring the test twice was a procedure used to insure there were no errors in the scores obtained. Both the teacher and the adult teacher aide checked the raw scores and data recorded. The raw scores were obtained by subtracting the total incorrect responses on the test from the thirty-seven total possible correct responses. Copies of the results of the pretest and posttest were sent to the parent.

The test was designed to render raw scores, scaled scores, stanines, percentile ranks, grade equivalents, and instructional reading level. For the purpose of this study, only raw scores were used in the statistical calculations. A t-test for independent samples was applied to the first hypothesis to determine if there was statistical significance at the 0.05 level of confidence. A t-test for dependent samples was applied to the second and third hypothesis to determine if there was statistical significance at the 0.05 level of confidence.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter contains a summary of the data and tests of the hypotheses related to the study, summarized and analyzed according to the procedures outlined in Chapter 3. The data analysis consisted of a statistical testing of the null hypotheses. Appropriate datum was extracted and shown in tables indicating the results for each test. A summary of the results for each hypothesis completes this chapter.

Summary of the Data

The data consisted of the pretest and posttest scores for each student. The students were administered the Metropolitan Achievement Test Survey Battery, Primer Forms JS and KS. The pretest was conducted following the first two weeks of school, during which time the students were given practice in test taking skills. Scores were determined through use of hand scoring materials, each test being scored twice to insure accuracy of scores. After the ten week homework period, the posttest was administered.

The data is summarized in Table 4.1 for the experimental group. The data consists of pretest and posttest raw scores for eleven first grade students with six boys and five girls included in the sample. In the

summary as shown in Table 4.1, each student in the experimental group is assigned a number and identified by the number assigned. Raw scores were computed on both the pretest and posttest with a total of thirty-seven correct answers possible. Raw score was obtained by subtracting the total number of incorrect responses from thirty-seven. Scores ranged from seventeen to thirty-three on the pretest and twenty-three to thirty-seven on the posttest.

Table 4.1
Experimental Group
Pretest-Posttest
Raw Scores

| Student | Pretest Raw Score | Posttest Raw Score |
|---------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 37 | 35 |
| 2 | 34 | 37 |
| 3 | 28 | 36 |
| 4 | 22 | 30 |
| 5 | 22 | 29 |
| 6 | 17 | 23 |
| 7 | 23 | 34 |
| 8 | 24 | 29 |
| 9 | 25 | 34 |
| 10 | 22 | 30 |
| 11 | 33 | 37 |

Table 4.2 summarizes data for the control group which consisted of eleven students with six boys and five girls included in the sample. Data for the control group uses a number to identify the student, and raw scores are shown for both pretest and posttest. The raw score was obtained on both pretest and posttest by subtracting the total number of incorrect responses from thirty-seven. The range of the pretest scores was twenty-one and the range of the posttest scores was twenty-three.

Table 4.2
Pretest-Posttest
Control Group
Raw Scores

| Student | Pretest Raw Score | Posttest Raw Score |
|---------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 27 | 26 |
| 2 | 26 | 32 |
| 3 | 37 | 37 |
| 4 | 28 | 34 |
| 5 | 18 | 14 |
| 6 | 21 | 25 |
| 7 | 19 | 28 |
| 8 | 18 | 27 |
| 9 | 25 | 31 |
| 10 | 23 | 32 |
| 11 | 16 | 23 |

Analysis of Data

Null Hypothesis One

H_0 : There will be no significant difference in the academic reading achievement scores between a group of first grade students receiving specific reading homework and a group of first grade students not receiving specific reading homework. The t-test for independent samples was applied to determine if the mean scores on the posttest of the experimental group were significantly different than the mean scores on the posttest of the control group at the 0.05 level of confidence. Table 4.3 shows a comparison of the scores. A t value of 2.28 was computed and a t value equal to or greater than 2.08 would have been necessary to obtain significance at the 0.05 level of confidence ($p > 2.08$).

Table 4.3

Mean Posttest Score Differences Between
Experimental and Control Groups:
t-Tests for Significance
of Differences

| Group | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation | <u>t</u> value |
|--------------|-------|----------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Experimental | 32.18 | 17.95 | 4.24 | 2.28 |
| Control | 28.09 | 39.29 | 6.27 | |

$|t| > \text{critical } t, p > 0.05, H_0 \text{ rejected.}$

Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected and the conclusion was that there was a significant difference in

the academic reading achievement scores between a group of first grade students receiving specific reading homework and a group of first grade students not receiving specific reading homework.

Null Hypothesis Two

H_0 : There will be no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the experimental group when receiving specific reading homework. The t-test for dependent samples was applied to the pretest and posttest raw scores of the eleven members of the experimental group to determine if the two scores were significantly different at the 0.05 level of confidence. Table 4.4 shows a comparison of the two scores. A t value of 5.72 was computed and a t value equal to or greater than 2.23 would have been necessary to obtain significance at the 0.05 level of confidence ($p > 2.23$).

Table 4.4

Pretest Versus Posttest Scores of Experimental Group:
t-Tests for Significance of Differences

| Score | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation | t value |
|----------|------|----------|-----------------------|---------|
| Pretest | 26.1 | 38.1 | 6.2 | 5.72 |
| Posttest | 32.2 | 18.9 | 4.4 | |

$|t| > \text{critical } t, p > 0.05, H_0 \text{ rejected.}$

Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected and the

conclusion was that there was a significant difference in the academic achievement gains in reading of the students in the experimental group. The hypothesis could have been rejected at the 0.001 level of confidence with a critical t of 4.587.

Null Hypothesis Three

H_0 : There will be no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the control group when receiving no specific reading homework. The t -test for dependent samples was applied to the pretest and posttest raw scores of the eleven members of the control group to determine if the two scores were significantly different at the 0.05 level of confidence. Table 4.5 shows a comparison of the two scores. A t value of 3.47 was computed and a t value equal to or greater than 2.23 would have been necessary to obtain significance at the 0.05 level of confidence ($p > 2.23$).

Table 4.5

Pretest Versus Posttest Scores of Control Group:
 t -Tests for Significance of Differences

| Score | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation | t value |
|----------|------|----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Pretest | 23.5 | 36.7 | 6.1 | 3.47 |
| Posttest | 28.1 | 39.3 | 6.3 | |

$|t| > \text{critical } t, p > 0.05, H_0 \text{ rejected.}$

Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected and the conclusion was that there was a significant difference in the academic achievement gains in reading of the students in the control group. The hypothesis could have been rejected at the 0.01 level of confidence with a critical t of 3.169.

Summary of Results

The statistical comparison of the experimental and control groups yielded data that rejected the null hypothesis. Specific reading homework did make a significant difference in academic reading achievement when scores were compared between the groups. A 2.28 t value was calculated and it would have been necessary to have a t value of 2.08 for significance at the 0.05 level of confidence.

The statistical comparison of the pretest and posttest scores for the experimental group yielded data that rejected the null hypothesis. The students showed significant gains in academic reading achievement. A 5.72 t value was calculated and it would have been necessary to have a t value of 2.23 for significance at the 0.05 level of confidence. The hypothesis could have been rejected at the 0.001 level of confidence with a critical t of 4.587.

The statistical comparison of the pretest and posttest scores for the control group yielded data that rejected the null hypothesis. The students showed significant gains in academic reading achievement. A 3.47

\underline{t} value was calculated and it would have been necessary to have a \underline{t} value of 2.23 for significance at the 0.05 level of confidence. The hypothesis could have been rejected at the 0.01 level of confidence with a critical \underline{t} of 3.169.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate the reading achievement gains of those students receiving specific reading homework as compared to those students not receiving specific reading homework. For this purpose, the variables of academic achievement in reading and specific reading homework were involved. The study focused on three research questions:

1. Will there be a significant difference between the academic reading achievement scores of those students receiving specific reading homework and those students not receiving specific reading homework?

2. Will there be a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the experimental group when receiving specific reading homework?

3. Will there be a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores on a measure of reading of the control group when receiving no specific reading homework?

A review of the literature was employed in order to

better investigate these three questions. In particular, it was noted that there was a positive correlation between homework and academic achievement. The literature described a number of studies offering evidence that homework does indeed have an impact on the academic performance of those students receiving homework. However, there were some studies that contradicted the theory that homework has a positive impact on academic achievement and there should be further research conducted involving homework and academic achievement. Accordingly, the present study was designed to help add to the literature concerning the effects of homework upon academic achievement.

The empirical part of the study involved a sample of twenty-two first grade students with a total of twelve boys and ten girls. The sample population was from a large public elementary school in the Middle Tennessee area. The students were performing on or above grade level and were grouped for their directed reading lesson. Homework assignments were given for a total of forty days and encompassed a ten week period. The students were given a pretest and a posttest and the results were compared to determine academic gains in reading.

The data were analyzed at the 0.05 level of confidence using the t-test for independent and dependent samples. For the group as a whole, significance was found when the scores for the posttest of the experimental group were compared to the scores of the control group using an

independent t-test. The mean difference between the pretest scores and posttest scores were significant for the experimental and the control group using a dependent t-test. Therefore, the students in the experimental and control group showed significant gains in academic achievement in reading. For the experimental group, significance could have been calculated at the 0.001 level of confidence. The control group could have obtained significance at the 0.01 level of confidence.

Conclusions

The conclusions of the study were based on two sources: the review of the literature and the empirical research. The review of the literature showed a lack of research concerning the effects of homework and academic achievement in the lower primary grade levels. Much of the research reviewed in the literature was conducted using students at the middle school level or above. The studies reviewed involving reading showed little correlation to this particular study due to their design. Parental involvement along with quality homework, that was not just busy work, was said to have positive effects on the student's academic achievement. However, the findings from the studies reviewed did not clearly indicate this conclusion.

The investigation into the effect of specific reading homework on academic achievement in reading was conducted

to help fill the gap in the literature. There were three major conclusions:

1. Specific reading homework did make a significant difference in the academic reading achievement scores between a group of first grade students receiving specific reading homework and a group of first grade students not receiving specific reading homework.

2. There was a significant difference in the academic achievement gains in reading of the students in the experimental group when the pretest scores in reading were compared with the posttest scores in reading.

3. There was a significant difference in the academic achievement gains in reading of the students in the control group when the pretest scores in reading were compared with the posttest scores in reading.

This study proposed to provide information concerning the effects of assigned homework on academic reading achievement. Since the research hypotheses were rejected, this investigation confirms that the treatment variable, specific reading homework, does make a difference in the degree of student learning as measured by a standardized test. The implications are that teacher prepared homework which correlates to classroom reading instruction can have positive effects on the learning of the students.

Both the experimental and the control groups showed a significant difference in the reading achievement scores when the pretest scores were compared with the posttest

scores. However, the degree of achievement was greater for the experimental group than the control group. This statement is based upon the fact that the hypothesis for the experimental group could have been rejected at the 0.001 level of confidence. Based upon these findings, assigning homework appears to be an effective teaching method. Another benefit of this type of teaching methodology is the close cooperation between the teacher and parents, as well as the parents' involvement with their child's academic achievement.

The findings from this study are consistent with other research. A study by Maertens showed the positive effects when both homework and parental involvement were used as a combined technique to improve achievement. Iverson, Brownlee, and Walberg concluded that younger students had greater academic gains with increased teacher-parent contacts. Also, a study by Foyle and Bailey found the group that received homework scored significantly higher than the group not receiving homework.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made as a result of the study:

1. It is recommended that the present research design be duplicated with other more diverse populations. The duplication of this particular research using a variety of ability groups from various populations could render differing results.

2. It is recommended that, in replicating the present research design with other samples, fewer types of activities be used for specific reading homework assignments. The types of activities could be decreased to include only oral reading activities.

3. It is recommended that a greater emphasis in future studies be placed on individual student differences and the role these differences play in influencing the amount of achievement gained.

4. It is recommended that the effects of homework be explored on a broader basis including more students in the samples studied. A larger sample could have yielded more significant results.

5. It is recommended that the implications of the present study be made available to and used by teacher institutions.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Superintendent's Permission Form

CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY
SCHOOL SYSTEM

P.O. Box 867 • 501 Franklin St. • Clarksville, Tennessee 37041-0867 • Phone 615-648-5600

Johnny Miller
Director of Schools

August 22, 1988

Mrs. Elizabeth S. Moore
1617 Deerfield Drive
Clarksville, TN 37043

Dear Becky:

This letter is in reference to your request to conduct a study with your first grade class involving the effects of reading homework on academic achievement. This is extremely commendable on your part to conduct a meaningful study that hopefully will not only help you and your students but other boys and girls in our school system.

Permission is granted for you to conduct this study.

Sincerely,


Johnny Miller

JM:ah

APPENDIX B

Checklist for Research Involving Human Subjects

AUSTIN PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY

CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

(Must Be Typewritten)

TITLE The Effects of Specific Reading Homework on Academic
Achievement Among First Grade Students

FUNDING SOURCE Tennessee Higher Education Commission and
Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Elizabeth S. Moore DEPT. Education

SPONSOR (if student research) Dr. Dolores Gore

1. Give a brief description or outline of your research procedures as they relate to the use of human subjects. This should include a description of the subjects themselves, instructions given to them, activities in which they engage, special incentives, and tests and questionnaires. If new or non-standard tests or questionnaires are used, copies should be attached to this form. Make notation if the subjects are minors or "vulnerable" (i.e. children, prisoners, mentally or physically infirm, etc.).

- A. Subjects: First grade students attending St. Bethlehem Elementary School in Clarksville, Tennessee.
- B. Procedures: Subjects will receive specific reading homework assignments.
- C. Vulnerability: Prior to any research being conducted, consent forms will be attained from the parents of the subjects involved. No subject will be allowed to participate without this consent.

2. Does this research entail possible risk to physic, legal, physical, or social harm to the subjects? Please explain. What steps have been taken to minimize these risks? What provisions have been made to insure that appropriate facilities and professional attention necessary for the health and safety of the subjects are available and will be utilized?

No educational or physical harm will result from participation in this study.

CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

3. The potential benefits of this activity to the subjects and to mankind in general outweigh any possible risks. This opinion is justified by the following reasons:

N/A

4. Will legally effective, informed consent be obtained from all subjects or their legally authorized representative?

Yes.

5. Will the confidentiality/anonymity of all subjects be maintained? How is this accomplished? (If not, has a formal release been obtained? Attach.) (a) If data will be stored by electronic media, what steps will be taken to assure confidentiality/anonymity? (b) If data will be stored by non-electric media, what steps will be taken to assure confidentiality/anonymity?

No names will be used. All information will remain anonymous.

6. Do the data to be collected relate to illegal activities? If yes, explain.

No.

7. Are all subjects protected from the future potentially harmful use of the data collected in this investigation? How is this accomplished?

Yes. Anonymous information.

I have read the Austin Peay State University policies and Procedures on Human Research and agree to abide by them. I also agree to report to the Human Research Review Committee any significant and relevant changes in procedures and instruments as they relate to subjects.

Elizabeth S. Moore
(signature)

July 14, 1988
(date)

Student research directed by faculty should be co-signed by faculty supervisor.

Robert Gore
(faculty signature)

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Statement

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

The purpose of this Study is to investigate the effects of homework on academic achievement. All responses will be confidential. At no time will persons involved be identified nor will anyone other than the investigators have access to the data. No potential hazards may occur from participation in this research. Preliminary experiences with homework appear to be of a positive nature. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants are free to terminate involvement at any time without any penalty.

A copy of the research findings will be available at the school for your examination.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Elizabeth S. Moore
Elizabeth S. Moore

Dr. Dolores A. Gore
Dr. Dolores A. Gore, Faculty Advisor

I agree to allow my child to participate in the present study being conducted under the joint supervision of the Department of Education at Austin Peay State University and a faculty member of St. Bethlehem Elementary School. I have been informed, either orally or in writing or both, about the risks which may be involved. The investigator has offered to answer any further inquiries as I may have regarding the procedures. I understand that I am free not to participate in this study if I desire. I have also been told of any benefits that may result from my participation.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

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