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## Family Literacy Bags: A Rural-Appalachian Approach For Parental Involvement And Education

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FAMILY LITERACY BAGS: A RURAL-APPALACHIAN APPROACH  
FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND EDUCATION

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Department of Educational Leadership

Indiana State University

Terre Haute, Indiana

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

---

by

Ashley Good Overton

August 2017

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Keywords: Appalachia, parental involvement, literacy bags, education, poverty

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this concurrent, mixed-methods study was to investigate the implementation of the non-presumptuous literacy bag program as a critical component of increasing parental involvement in rural Appalachia schools related to student literacy achievement. The program was designed to increase parental involvement in book readings and related activities. The intent of the program was to encourage parents to become actively involved in their children's literacy and to assist children to develop stronger literacy skills.

In an effort to better understand parental involvement in a rural Appalachian community, I conducted a pre-program, parental involvement questionnaire in order to gain a greater insight into their own perception of parental involvement. During the implementation of the Family Literacy Bag program, weekly surveys were collected in the form of quantitative data from parents and the teacher who participated in the research study. After the program was concluded, post-program interviews with parent participants occurred to gain a better understanding of their perceptions on how the Family Literacy Bags impacted their parental involvement at home.

Overarching themes emerged from the pre-program, parental involvement questionnaires and the post-program parent interviews. The themes included; (a) parental involvement is contingent on the parents' enjoyment about their schools and communities, (b) parents' involvement suggested that schools be conscientious of scheduling of events and time, and (c) parents provided ideas for schools to increase attendance at parental involvement events. Additional sub-themes included the following: school leaders need to be conscientious of event times in order to coordinate with surrounding schools to plan activities, schools need to offer

different event times so that working parents can attend, and schools could offer door prizes and food to help working families.

Analysis of the post-program data suggested three key themes. These themes included (a) enjoyment levels of the Family Literacy bags were contingent on activities, (b) reading strategies that were provided in the Family Literacy Bags assisted parents in their children's reading, and (c) parents felt comfortable using the Family Literacy Bag, but constricted due to the amount of time needed to complete. Subthemes included the following: weekly bags caused fatigue with parents and students, and since the Family Literacy bags were separate from curriculum, families did not see the bags as important. The weekly parent and teacher surveys provided support for the original research questions I presented.

Quantitative data collection occurred through weekly parent and weekly teacher surveys. The parent and teacher surveys sought to provide answers to the following research questions: Does a passive program such as a Literacy Bag Lending Library promote a connection between schools and home? Does an intrinsically motivated parental participation program provide parents self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school? Would a supplementary program including reading strategies intrinsically motivate parents to assist in children's reading education? Lastly, do school stakeholders see the literacy bag program as a worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement?

A descriptive analysis evidenced that the majority of respondents felt that the Family Literacy Bags provided a connection between home and school whereas students were encourage to participate in the reading activities with their parents. Family Literacy Bags intrinsically motivated parental participation due to the excitement that their children had for the Family Literacy Bags. The Family Literacy Bags provided parents with weekly reading skills

and guides to assist them while working with their children. The descriptive analysis evidenced that reading guides proved to be very helpful to parents. Teacher's thought the Family Literacy Bags were *somewhat effective* as a worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement. Parents suggested the literacy bags were an effective, worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement. Implications are also included in Chapter 5 giving school leaders ideas to increase involvement from parents and what contributes to their parental involvement in the home and at school, as well as implications for future research related to this study topic.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As the United States struggles to maintain its competitive edge in the world throughout the 21st century, myriad difficulties confronting rural-Appalachia schools continues to challenge the efforts of numerous state, federal, and district programs implemented to improve the quality of education that children receive (NeCamp, 2011). According to the National Council of Family Relations (1996), various programs are specifically designed to stimulate educational achievement in low-income regions of rural Appalachia, and schools are now pleading for increased parent-school collaboration as a method to improve educational success for children. Numerous policies to increase family involvement have been implemented by the states including federal programs such as Title I, Head Start, and inclusion services aiding children with special needs (Smith, 1998). Research supports claims that parental involvement increases student's success (Johnson, 1997; Mattingly, Prislín, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002; Smith, 1998), though not all parents are actively involved in their children's education for various reasons. Some parents are not confident in their own skills as they relate to aiding in their children's education; socioeconomic status (SES) is a factor, the gender and age of the children, ethnicity, children's academic abilities, and the educational levels of the parents are all reasons parents are not involved (Smith, 1998).

Parental involvement in schools, as well as a positive relationship to literacy programs, can positively impact academic outcomes for success in reading (Huang, 2013). Implementing a literacy bag lending library (LBLL) program as a necessary component of parental involvement

in rural Appalachia might serve the purpose of addressing the barriers between school and home by connecting educators and families. Parents could be actively involved in their children's education and assist them to develop stronger literacy skills. This study analyzed the non-presumptuous literacy bag program as a critical component of a parental involvement program.

### **Background and Statement of the Problem**

Thirty years of research on school improvement consistently found that parental involvement is a critical variable in the effectiveness of a child's success (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). Research studies have been conducted and all support a correlation between the amount of parental involvement a child has and the level of that same child's academic achievement (Jeynes, 2011). Teachers and students alike continue to become increasingly frustrated as various levels of accountability are placed upon school districts in the United States. Due to these new levels of accountability, it is with urgency that parents become involved in their children's education (Lewis & Henderson, 1997). As previously stated, lack of parental involvement is a prevalent problem in today's public schools (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). So the proverbial question remains, "Why is there a lack of parental involvement, and what can schools do to encourage successful parental involvement?"

Understanding the difficulties that educators face in today's schools is a daunting task, and the frustration is impacting the educational process. For successful learning to take place, teachers and schools need parents, and a partnership between children's parents and their educators is necessary (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007). With current research promoting parental involvement, schools must analyze their current parental involvement programs to determine if the needs of their families are being met (Mattingly et al., 2002).

According to Stewart, (1992), welcoming schools encourage educators to involve all families in many ways and the involvement of these communities is imperative for a school to be successful.

In 1997, Lewis and Henderson published an article entitled “Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform.” The conversations regarding advancing parent and family involvement convened around a shared sense that something had “gone seriously astray in the pursuit of public schools that educate all students to high standards” (Lewis & Henderson, 1997, p. 6). The Clinton administration politicized a new approach to promote family and school relations with the federal and state governments implementing ideas for schools to increase parent participation. The Clinton administration implemented the Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 which encouraged schools to promote healthy partnerships that can increase parental involvement and their participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (Washington, 1998). The importance of parental involvement has continually led as a driving force for student success (de Carvalho, 2001). Public schools began opening their doors even wider, and educators encouraged parents to participate actively in their children’s education.

Because parent activities were a new concept in the early 2000s, consistency was not always present, which left parental involvement programs ineffective. “Most schools conduct at least a few activities to involve families in their children’s education, but most do not have well-organized, goal-linked, and sustainable partnership programs” (Epstein & Salinas, 2004, p. 18). Consequently, schools began providing staff developments that led to the innovative thinking of school administrators and educators and the acknowledgement of the growing complexity of parental involvement. With the reauthorization of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, otherwise known as No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002), schools

receiving Title I grants required both parents and schools to write down procedures they believed to constitute the most effective partnership between the school and families. Although the following educational concerns stemmed from more than a decade ago, the closely connected problems are even more pertinent in educational reforms in the 21st century. Lewis and Henderson (1997) found three reoccurring problems with public schools.

1. Overall, gains in student achievement are meager and far too slow. Furthermore, the gap between our most and least advantage students, which had been narrowing, is beginning again to widen.
2. Schools serving the lowest income area, in general, have the fewest resources, the least qualified teachers, the lowest parent and community support—and the worst student achievement. In many of these schools the majority of students are scoring not just below average, but in the bottom quartile.
3. Despite persuasive research on the close connection between parental involvement and improved student achievement, very few school reform efforts are making serious attempts to include low-income families. (p. 6)

To address the gaps in knowledge of a school's parental involvement programs, Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) recommended six different approaches to analyze as a precursor to improving student achievement through parent and community involvement.

- providing parents with opportunities to be decision makers,
- regular communications with parents about school programs and their child's progress,
- communicating with parents about ways they can help their children be successful in school,

- training and supporting staff to work with families, and
- providing links to social service agencies to address family needs. (p. 102)

As noted by Kessler-Sklar and Baker, “These types of parental involvement have been advocated by policy makers, educators, and researchers as key for children’s school success” (p. 102). A quality parental involvement program establishes consistent yet effective ways to assist families by providing skills and support to extend their children’s learning at home.

The consistency of a parental involvement program is crucial for its utmost effectiveness. Decision making, communication, teacher training, community outreach, and acknowledgement of the social and health needs of families are the underlying principles for a quality parental involvement program. (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000, p. 103)

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this concurrent, mixed-methods study was to investigate the implementation of the non-presumptuous literacy bag program as a critical component of increasing parental involvement in rural Appalachia schools related to student literacy achievement. “The single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills eventually required for reading appears to be reading aloud to children regularly and interactively” (Richardson, Miller, Richardson, & Sacks, 2008, p. 3). Literacy bag programs could be an integral part of any rural Appalachian parent program that continually includes literacy strategies that engage parents in their children’s reading acquisitions.

The program is designed to increase parental involvement in book readings and related activities. Parental involvement can positively affect student’s academic outcomes for success in reading (Dumont, Trautwein, Nagy, & Nagengast, 2014). A deeper understanding of a home literacy bag program as a component of a parental involvement program in rural Appalachia may

reveal barriers between school and home and contribute new knowledge that minimizes these barriers. The intent of the program is to encourage parents to become actively involved in their children's literacy and assist children to develop stronger literacy skills. This non-presumptuous component of a parental involvement program will include literacy strategies that engage parents in their child's reading acquisitions.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Does a passive program such as a literacy bag lending library promote a connection between schools and home?
2. Does an intrinsically motivated parental participation program provide parents self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school?
3. Would a supplementary program including reading strategies intrinsically motivate parents to assist in children's reading education?
4. Do school stakeholders see the literacy bag program as a worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement?

### **Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that this study leads to a better understanding of various ways that educators and schools can encourage parents' involvement at home. The use of family literacy bags, as a component of the schools parental involvement program, can support the academic learning at home. Research by Dumont et al. (2014) argued that parental involvement in the home is the most controversial type of parental involvement; "It has been shown to both enhance and interfere with achievement" (p. 145). The quality of school home involvement that parents provide differs among families; ultimately, it is the quality of support instead of quantity. For



children, literacy development begins to evolve when children are young through the process of sharing and interacting with family members (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000). The literacy bag program examines the type of parental involvement that children receive and provides parents with a scaffolding learning approach for them to begin giving their children quality reading and literacy assistance at home.

According to (Zeece & Wallace, 2009), as the global society becomes increasingly dependent on technological advances, families must begin placing an unprecedented importance on literacy:

The U.S. Department of Education's Early Childhood Division in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement suggested that the priority of building an adequate foundation for later reading success was related to the development in early childhood of emergent literacy skills contained within five broad areas: value placed on literacy, parental expectations for their children's achievement; availability and instrumental use of reading materials; reading with children; and opportunities for verbal interaction, including shared book reading and conversations. (p. 3)

The use of take-home literacy bags emphasizes the need for early childhood literacy developments. The meaningful content provided in the bags aids families in implementing and evaluating literacy activities and optimizes a child's literary experiences. "Literacy development starts at birth and is highly correlated with school success" (Zeece & Wallace, 2009, p. 4).

Although school educators are working to increase parental involvement at home, educators must also provide parents with the fundamental skills to enhance the academic involvement of the students. With the implementation of literacy bags, the parents become

familiar with the important components within the bags. Each literacy bag is designed with a scaffolding-type approach for parents to learn how to assist their child by using a well-structured, autonomy supportive program that is consistent with school expectations. With the use of literacy bags, it is hoped that parents learn the fundamental skills that can assist their children in becoming life-long readers.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms listed below are words that are conceptually and operationally defined for a better understanding for the reader.

*Distressed county* is defined as the most economically depressed county; the worst 10% of the nation's counties (Appalachian Regional Commission [ARC], 2016).

*Literacy* refers to the ability to read and write (Literacy, n.d.).

*Literacy bags* are bags containing books, interactive activities, and parent guides that would extend the child's language and literacy development.

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001* is the educational reform initiative, signed into law by President George W. Bush, characterized by increased accountability, choice, and performance mandates (Vernez et al., 2009).

*Non-presumptuous* is an approach of implementation that has a good reason, done or made with permission.

*Parent* is defined as a guardian within the household that provides to the psychological and developmental needs of the child (Parent, n.d.).

*Parental involvement* is defined as the "participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities" (U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2004, p. 31). For the purposes of this study, parental

involvement includes several components of parent participation in education, from attending school functions to serving on school committees.

*Reading achievement* is an academic achievement as indicated by raw scores on the fall and spring administered Star Reading Comprehension subtest and the gain between the two measures.

*Rural Appalachia* is the Appalachian region that stretches from the southern tier of New York to northern Alabama. According to the 2010 census, the region was home to approximately 25 million people (<http://www.census.gov>). For the purpose of this study, rural Appalachia refers to a small portion of the Appalachian region, located in Cumberland Gap, Tennessee.

*Title I school* is a school with at least 40% of students enrolled in the free-and-reduced-priced lunch programs. Title-I schools receive supplemental funding to meet the needs of at-risk and low-income students (USDOE, 2004).

*Title 1 student* is an educationally deprived student who exhibits the need of special assistance to achieve at the expected grade level (Institute of Education Sciences [IES], 2017). This study focuses only on those particular students who are receiving assistance the schools Title 1 reading program. The selection process requires a reading level that is below their current grade level based on reading comprehension testing.

*Title 1 program* is a program in which public schools use federal and state funds to enhance the educational programs that serve educationally deprived students (IES, 2017). Title I schools are eligible to receive assistance if 40% of the children attending are from low-income families.

### **Delimitations**

This study included specific boundaries and any conclusions or implications from this study were delimited by the following factors:

- Families chosen for this study were selected from a population of one elementary school identified as impoverished.
- This study was limited to grade-specific students in one rural Appalachian county.
- The school chosen for this study received federal grant monies. The Title-I school reported poverty rates greater than 40%.
- Only students in the first grade were studied. First grade was delimited because it is a pivotal year for early literacy acquisition; developmentally-appropriate materials were available for literacy bags and ensured an appropriate reading level for impoverished parents.
- Because this study focused solely on rural children, the utilization of potential findings may be different than those found for families of children living in suburban or urban areas.
- Parents of the students were interviewed; students did not participate in any interviews or data collection.
- Study participants all qualified for a socio-economic status of *Free and Reduced Lunch Status*, since grant funding at the county level allowed all families to qualify for this status.

### **Overview of Methodology**

The literacy bags were distributed to a first grade teacher in one rural school in Claiborne County, Tennessee. A random selection generator was used to list the elementary schools in a

random order, thus selecting from a population of eight schools. From the randomly selected schools, administrators were contacted requesting participation in the study. Ultimately, one school served as the sample for the case study. To select the final school, I interviewed the teachers of the first grade classes in random order, and the first teacher who volunteered and provided a signed consent form was able to have her class participate in the study. I informed the teacher prior to the implementation of the literacy bag program of the collection procedures and provided the teacher with sample parent consent forms that were distributed to parents, signed, and returned prior to participation. The timeline of the program was four to six weeks, depending on when data saturation occurred. It was anticipated that at least 15 parents would participate.

The literacy bags were returned weekly to me, and the children who participated in the program received a new literacy bag via the teacher. Each bag contained three, high-quality first and second grade children's books of various genres, along with extension activities focused around a particular theme. Although some books were difficult for first grade children to read individually, parental guidance and assistance was an instrumental tool for reading success. All materials were provided in the literacy bag with the exception of common household items such as pencils and crayons. Each bag also contained a parent guidebook with information for reading the books, discussing, and completing the activities with children.

Parents participating in the program attended literacy night and had prior knowledge concerning the contents of the literacy bags. Prior to literacy night, the participating teacher attended a meeting with me. Data collection and analysis consisted of the following: pre-program questionnaire, weekly parent and teacher surveys, and post-program parent interviews.

To gain information regarding student achievement within the classroom, I was primarily dependent on the parents and educator perceptions so the results were limited to these two factors. The educator monitored students' dispositions via small group interaction; Sustained Silent Reading, progress monitoring, and teachers' perceptions were recorded via surveys. The pre-program parental involvement questionnaires were designed to produce information about the parental involvement with the school, weekly parent and teacher surveys provided information regarding parent's perceptions of the Family Literacy Bags and to complete the study, post-program parent interviews were conducted regarding their participation in the program.

### **Summary and Organization of the Study**

Parental involvement won unanimous approval from researchers in the field of education reform, with the majority of the focus on the educational disadvantage among low-income children to be vested in becoming true learning communities (Johnson, 1997). For public schools to remain at the highest levels of accountability, children need parents, educators, and community stakeholders simultaneously working together to achieve success (Ouellette & Wilkerson, 2008). All members of the professional learning communities have specific roles to play. Schools need wider, open-door policies; educators need exemplary communication techniques, and parents need to be present at home and preferably in the schools (Johnson, 1997). Without the appropriate balance of all, common ground cannot be reached resulting in a less-successful educational experiences for children (Zellman & Waterman, 1998).

As the 21st century schools are being criticized from every possible angle, it is time that all participants in the educational process work in unison to promote college and career readiness in children (DePlanty et al., 2007). Parents are entrusting educators with their most prized

possessions and schools are frustrated with high-stakes accountability (Catchings, 2009). Because the need for parental involvement in a students' education will always remain critical, school officials and administrators must adjust their perceptions of the 21st century family to achieve realistic expectations. Although the dynamics of the 21st century family may present challenges for schools and educators, it is hoped that with the use of a non-presumptuous literacy bag program that encourages and develops increased parental involvement, schools and community stakeholders can continue to work together toward successful parental involvement within the public schools.

The Family Literacy Bags might be a means to engage children and their families successfully in literacy activities, all the while assisting parents in understanding effective ways of sharing books with their children. Improving the futures of children growing up in the rural communities of Appalachia is imperative. Greater importance must be placed on academic success while continuing to stress the need for improvements of public education in these locations (Johnson, 1997). With an urgency to increase parental involvement, the non-intrusive Literacy Bag program could provide parents the necessary skills to increase their involvement throughout the homes in rural Appalachia. The use of family literacy bags as a component of a school's parental involvement program will encourage involvement in academic activities at home, and it is commonly believed that parental help and involvement with academic activities at home assist students' educational achievement. The actual design of the literacy bags is instrumental because the components of the literacy bags teach parents *how* to become involved in the academics of their children.

This study examined if there was an association between the Family Literacy Bag program and parental involvement in the home. Specifically, literacy bags seek to find the

connections between reading achievement and the following parental involvement variables: homework involvement, reading together, volunteering in the school, and supporting school activities. This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 has included an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, definition of terms, delimitations, and methodology overview. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature and study findings related to literacy initiatives, parental involvement, and education. Chapter 3 presents information about the qualitative case-study design, the data sources, and the quantitative methodology. Chapter 4 presents data analysis relative to the original research questions, including relevant themes. Chapter 5 is a summary of the findings, conclusions, implications of the findings, and suggestions for further research.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature examines research in three areas: (a) current research on the parental involvement impact on student education, the components of Title I- Part A of schools; (b) the socioeconomic distress of families living in rural Appalachia; and (c) previous studies pertaining to the effectiveness of literacy bags and parental involvement along with academic achievement. The literature review is organized to illustrate the progression of research inquiry as reflected in Figure 1; a visual representation that organizes the ontology, epistemology, purpose and theories directing my research. Figure 1 illustrates a rural Appalachian approach for parental involvement and education.

# Family Literacy Bags: A Rural-Appalachian Approach for Parent Involvement and Education

Developmental Impact of Parent Involvement Utilizing Literacy Bags in Rural Appalachia Schools

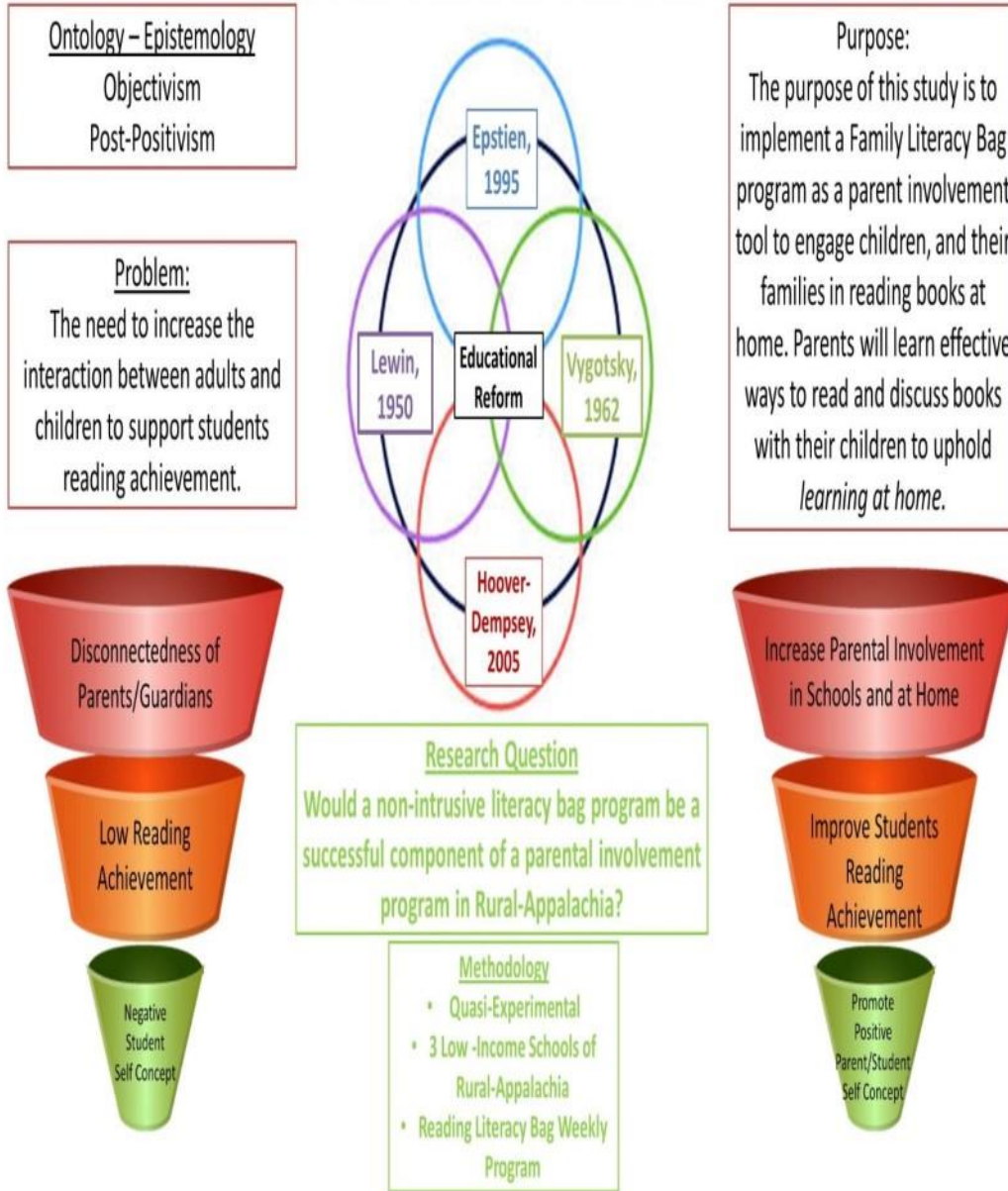


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

### Conceptual Model

The theoretical framework that directs my research rests upon well-known theorists Lev Vygotsky, Kurt Lewin, Joyce Epstein, and Kathy Hoover-Dempsey. These theorists provided sound doctrine in relation to social learning, change theory, parenting, and most importantly increasing parental involvement. The aforementioned theorists played a significant role in guiding my research because the change process for the schools in Appalachia was not an easy feat.

Vygotsky and Cole's (1978) work in developmental psychology provided me with their essential learning theory of development called, *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD). According to Vygotsky and Cole, the process in which children learn is based on two ranges, upper limit and lower limit, that is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problems solving and the level of potential development as determined thought problem solving under adult guidance" (p. 86). In this context, Vygotsky and Cole's research on ZPD, scaffolding, and play was an integral part on the ground floor in my research. Lewin's change process theory model provided me with a three-stage process, *unfreezing*, *freezing*, and *refreezing*. In 1974, Lewin developed this change model to implement change within a person's mindset, all of which I sought to do throughout the schools in rural Appalachia (Gershwin, 1994). Lewin had a holistic approach to understanding human behavior and how to implement useful change with parents and children (Gershwin, 1994). According to (Gershwin, 1994), "Lewin's theory of change sanctions that old habits must be unfrozen, to create a state that allows for experimentation with new behaviors" (p. 11). Epstein's parental involvement framework and Hoover-Dempsey's research on parental involvement in children's education provided the necessary knowledge that promoted the magnitude of the influences that

family engagement has on student learning (DePlanty et al., 2007). The model provides a systemic and sustainable approach for implementing a research-based non-intrusive component in a parental involvement program.

Parental involvement in literacy can positively impact students' academic outcomes for success in reading (Thomason, 2008). Implementing a home literacy bag program, as a component of a parental involvement program in rural Appalachia, will break down the barriers between school and home. Parents will be actively involved in their children's literacy achievement and encourage children to develop stronger literacy skills. This non-intrusive component of a parental involvement program will include literacy strategies that engage parent's in their children's reading acquisitions.

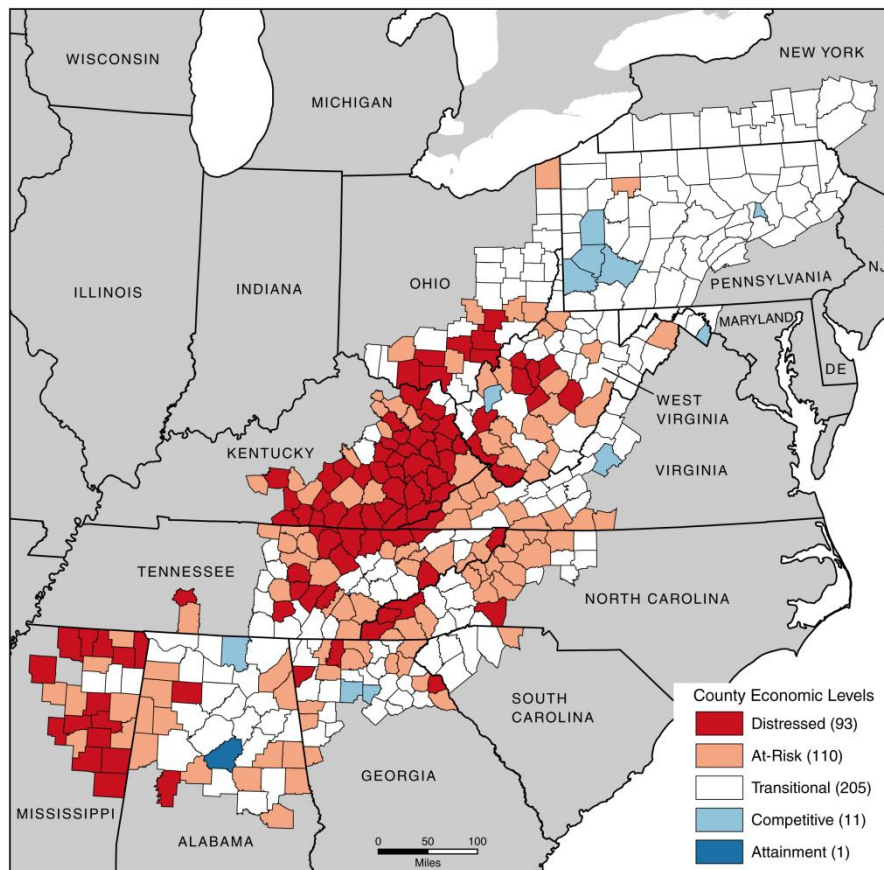
In the early stages of research, ontology and epistemology are the motivating theories behind my desire to conduct research. Whenever one asks oneself why or how something exists, one can attribute that to epistemology and ontology. The ontology that influenced my research was that of objectivism. As a doctoral student, I had a desire to gain as much knowledge as I could. Objectivism promotes independent thinking, moral structure, and philosophical structure, and one could say that I am a realist who is continually striving to become an expert in my field to make a difference for the parents and children in rural Appalachia. Researchers, who begin to seek out ways to change and improve things, discover epistemology. Gaining knowledge is the very thing that I long for and post-positivism supports my theory that becoming an expert is a life-long art. Gaining knowledge is something that I can continually strive toward in my life's work as a researcher.

### **Economic Distress in Rural Appalachia**

The *War on Poverty* is a statement that rhetorically and symbolically began with Appalachia. In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced in his State of the Union address that he would “launch a special effort in the chronically distressed areas of Appalachia” (L. Johnson, 1964, para 5). L. Johnson’s initiative was to assist the people of Appalachia that had been burdened by poverty. Payne (2008) suggested that parents who come from low-income situations are so overwhelmed with surviving daily life that they cannot devote time to their children’s schooling. Payne stated, “Even when time is available, the parent may not know how to support the child’s learning” (p. 51). Analyzing the efficacy of parental involvement in low SES locations gives motive for targeting low-income schools in Appalachia. The need for increased continuity between the home and school environments presents opportunities to reach more isolated families in rural Appalachia with the Literacy Bag program. Forging relationships with parents and providing services to assist stability inform parents that the schools care about and respects them.

The poverty and culture of rural Appalachia have been marginalized by the larger U.S. culture throughout the 20th century. There is considerable variability in income and poverty rates in Appalachia, with southern and rural areas suffering more economic distress. The ARC (2016), a development agency established by congress in 1965, provided the Appalachian communities with financial assistance to enhance their economic development. The ARC (2016) is composed of the 13 Appalachian states to provide financial guidance in local development to the districts. The ARC is able to assist communities with strategic planning and provide assistance to promote the economic development in Appalachian communities. In 2016 the ARC produced county-level maps of the Appalachian regions to display patterns in

socioeconomic data. Figure 2 displays the fiscal year classification of the region's counties into one of five economic levels: distressed, at-risk, transitional, competitive, and attainment. The Appalachian region includes all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states: Virginia, Alabama, South Carolina, Kentucky, Georgia, Maryland, New York, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee (ARC, 2016). Figure 2 illustrates 2016 statistics of Appalachia counties economic levels.



*Figure 2.* County economic levels.

The ARC uses an index-based county classification system to identify and monitor the economic status of Appalachian counties. This system compares each county's averages with the national averages for three economic indicators: three-year average unemployment rate, per capita market income, and poverty rate. Each county in the nation is ranked, and based on the

composite index value; counties with higher values indicate higher levels of distress. Based on a county's position in the national ranking, each Appalachian county is classified into one of five economic statuses.

- **Distressed:** Distressed counties are the most economically depressed counties. The counties in this rank are in the worst 10% of the nation's counties.
- **At-Risk:** At-risk counties are those at risk of becoming economically distressed. The counties in this rank are between the worst 10% and 25% of the nation's counties.
- **Transitional:** Transitional counties are those transitioning between strong and weak economies. The counties in this rank make up the largest economic status designation. Transitional counties rank between the worst 25% and the best 25% of the nation's counties.
- **Competitive:** Competitive counties are those that are able to compete in the national economy but are not in the highest 10% of the nation's counties. Counties ranking between the best 10% and 25% of the nation's counties are classified competitive.
- **Attainment:** Attainment counties are the economically strongest counties. Counties ranking in the best 10% of the nation's counties are classified attainment. (ARC, 2016, p. 1)

The area in which the study was conducted, Claiborne County, Tennessee, is termed distressed which ranks in the worst 10% of the nation's counties.

### **Parental involvement**

Parental involvement has become one of the most common features of educational reform (Mattingly et al., 2002). It is a regular topic of discussion in professional journals and the subject in scores of books for both professionals and parents (Johnson, 1997). Federal, state, and school

district-level policymakers continue to place an unprecedented importance on parental involvement in education (Ouellette & Wilkerson, 2008). Even in its prime, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001—otherwise known as No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2002)—promised to strengthen America’s educational system and raise the achievement levels of all students and recognize that parents are their children’s first and most important teachers. Although families and schools are inevitably related, the nature of the family-school relationship varies across individual children, families, schools, and communities (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987). Understanding the types of parental involvement that teachers, parents, and students believe affect academic achievement is undertaking a complicated task. Findings, however, strongly suggested that parental involvement is a valuable component of any student’s education no matter the approach (Johnson, 1997).

Parents who are involved in their children’s education in ways that create or reinforce experiences of education success offer verbal persuasion intended to develop attitudes, behaviors, and efforts consistent with school success, and create emotional arousal that underscored the personal importance of doing well in school are more likely to develop a strong, positive sense of efficacy for successfully achieving in school-related tasks than students whose parents are not involved. (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 315)

Families living below the poverty line, like most in rural Appalachia, want to help their children succeed, but they need support to do this (Johnson, 1997). Parental involvement among diverse SES’s differs among cultures, and the barriers between school and families are challenging to understand (DePlanty et al., 2007). Sheldon (2002) noted several reasons why parents are uninvolved in their children’s education. Suggestions of income, education level, and personal educational experiences composed a few of the related reasons for disconnect.



Sheldon also suggested that parents with access to more financial resources are more likely to be involved. The more financially stable a family is, the more time that parents have for their children and the more concern they have for their education (DePlanty et al., 2007).

Implementing parental involvement solutions to low-income schools in rural Appalachia is a focus-driven initiative to connect the barriers of sustenance, and assistance to parents and children. The need to reach out to families in Appalachia encompasses the underlying principle that when children and families are preoccupied with meeting basic needs, they are unable to direct their full attention to school and academic activities (NeCamp, 2011).

According to the National Council on Family Relations (1996), an upward trend and problematic divide among parents and school connectedness is the education level of the parents. Stevenson and Baker (1987) reported a positive correlation between the mother's education and the degree of parental involvement in school activities. As a result, parents with less educational backgrounds tend to shift their interests away from school simply because they feel inadequate when helping their children with homework (DePlanty et al., 2007). The inadequacy that parents feel must not deter them away from their children's school, and the Family Literacy Bags may inspire parental involvement and support parents and their feelings of competence. Dever (2001) stated that with the implementation of the Family Literacy Bags, parents learn ways to extend reading with activities and use questions to engage their children in discussions about the books. In an interview concerning literacy bags one parent noted, "The Family Literacy Bag gave me ideas for different activities to do with my children, and ideas for tying those activities into lesson or themes in stories, and I am learning more about my child" (as cited in Huang, 2003, p. 23).

Although well-trained teachers can provide effective instruction, parents are their children's first and most important teachers (Thomason, 2008). For students to succeed in school, parents must participate actively in the academic lives of their children (Huang, 2013). Bronfenbrenner (1986) concluded that parental involvement was critical to the success of educational programs for children.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1986), "Successful educational outcomes are, in part, a function of effective relationship among the contexts that shape children's lives, particularly between their experiences at home and school" (p. 723). Unfortunately, some attribute the lower parental involvement of Appalachia to the countless barriers that keep parents away from their children's schools. Although schools provide opportunities for children's growth, families and schools must work together to provide the social, cultural, and emotional supports that students need (DePlanty et al., 2007).

Researchers Epstein (1995) and Sheldon (2002) found that a parent child discussion about schools helps improve academic achievement and reduce problematic behavior. One can conclude that parental involvement is a valuable component of any student's education. Given this information in literature, it can also be concluded that schools must continue to improve parental involvement programs to provide opportunities for children to interact with significant adults and other adolescents at home while they are young to set a precedent in the home. Encouraging parents to become involved early on in a child's education is a crucial (DePlanty et al., 2007). The implementation of a research-based program in the primary grades could ultimately affect a child's academic behavior and parental outlook toward education.

## **Title-I Schools**

One of the most popular education reforms designed to increase parental involvement in schools throughout the nation is the Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The Federal Department of Education provides schools with a framework in which families, educators, and community stakeholders can work together to improve teaching and learning (USDOE, 2004). Massive compensatory efforts are being implemented in an attempt to close the achievement gap between the academically and behaviorally at-risk students. The growing numbers of at-risk students have placed increased pressures on policy makers and educators to construct and implement a plan of action(s) to improve the educational success of all children. Parent school collaboration appears promising as research literature has repeatedly identified family and home variables as one of the most critical factors in school achievement (Smith, 1998). School districts nationwide have begun to re-examine their parental involvement policies and programs to demonstrate innovative initiatives for the sake of obtaining federal education funds. The intention of uniting the partnerships between school and home and increasing the levels of communication between parents and educators is to be acquired. The aforementioned goal of bridging the divide between parents and schools is now a crucial component in the purpose and direction of Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Title I, Part A (USDOE, 2004) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with a high percentage of children from low-income families. According to the USDOE (2004), a school is eligible to become a Title I school when the poverty level—typically determined by free and reduced lunch counts, Aid for Dependent Children, census, or Medicaid—is at or above 40%.

The purpose behind Title I is to ensure that all children regardless of SES can meet challenging state academic standards and are given an equal opportunity for a quality education. The USDOE Section 1001, Statement of Purpose for the Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (USDOE, 2004) is to ensure that all children have fair and equal, and significant opportunities to obtain a high-quality education, and reach the proficiency level on state assessments.

The purpose of Title I can be accomplished when schools are implementing the following:

- Ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum and instruction materials are aligned with state standards.
- Meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation's highest-poverty schools; closing the achievement gap between high and low-performing children . . . between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers.
- Holding schools accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students.
- Distributing and targeting resources sufficiently to make a difference to local educational agencies.
- Improving and strengthening accountability, teaching, and learning by using state assessments systems.
- Providing greater decision making authority and flexibility to schools and teachers.
- Providing children an enriched and accelerated educational program, promoting school wide reform and ensuring the access of children to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content.

- Significantly elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff with substantial opportunities for professional development.
- Coordinating services under all parts of this title.
- Affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children. (USDOE, 2004, para. 5)

Schools that are receiving Title-I funds are being held more accountable by the state to provide the necessary services that are set forth by Title I (USDOE, 2004). School improvement efforts are being examined and redefined. Thus, the implementation of a quality parental involvement program is important for schools so they are able to allocate their funds effectively. Incorporating the Literacy Bag Program in a school's parental involvement program is a critical way for schools to increase parental involvement with students at home and ensure the Title I funds are being appropriately allocated to support and promote the schools' parental involvement.

### **Income Achievement Gap**

Now more than ever schools are being held to higher accountability for their students' achievement. Administrators, teachers, and students have immensurable pressures to perform to high standards set forth by federal mandates. As schools work diligently to provide students with equal opportunities for success, one inequality is still proving itself difficult to overcome: the income achievement gap.

For years schools have been faced with an unprecedented pressure to close the achievement gaps between students of race, income, and demographics. Many of the public schools are faced with the income achievement gaps between poor and middle-class White and Black children. Rothstein (2004) noted the unprecedented importance on achievement gap of students. "On

average, the achievement of low-income students is below the average achievement of middle-class students” (Rothstein, 2004, para. 1). Although he emphasized a great concern between the achievements of black and white students, he also suggested that parents of different social classes tend to raise children differently thus supporting his claim on the income gap (Rothstein, 2004).

Unfortunately, the income achievement gap begins at home, prior to a child’s stepping foot in a school building. Considering these circumstances, it is somewhat difficult for schools to overcome this challenge. However, becoming well versed on how to respond to the income achievement gap allows school leaders and teachers to take a proactive approach to this desperate situation.

Throughout the past 50 years, several trends have existed that helps one to understand why the income gap is growing. Reardon (2013) believed that income inequality and upward social mobility have played a crucial role in widening the income achievement gap.

In 1970, a family with school-age children at the 90th percentile of the family income distribution earned 5 times as much as a family at the 10th percentile; today, the high-income family earns 11 times more than the low-income family. This rapid growth income inequality mean that high-income families now have far more resources, relative to low-income families, to invest in their children’s development and schooling. (Reardon, 2013, para.13)

Because of the rising income inequality, social mobility has also become more difficult for today’s families than it was 50 years ago. The declining economic growth has placed an unfortunate burden on families. Reardon (2013) noted that in the 1950s and 1960s, children in the United States were much more economically secure, and children had a better chance of

living in secure environments (e.g., raised by two parents, both with an educational background), whereas children from today's low-income families are more likely to have grown up in different situations (e.g., single-parent home, lower education).

Although some acknowledge the impact of social differences, many are finding the impacts hard to accept as a responsibility and instead are now looking at the schools as the guilty party (Rothstein, 2004). Society plays an instrumental role in closing the achievement gap between the social classes of students.

If a society with such differences wants all children, irrespective of social class, to have the same chance to achieve academic goals, it should find ways to help lower-class children enter school having the same familiarity with books as middle-class children have. This requires rethinking the institutional settings in which we provide early childhood care, beginning in infancy. (Rothstein, 2004, para. 8)

A study published by Reardon in 2011 was conducted to determine if the income gap has widened within the last few years. The study compared academic achievement and family income. The findings were striking and supported the notion that the income achievement gap had "grown significantly in the last three decades" (Reardon, 2013, para. 5). He further stated, "Although both remain high, economic inequality now exceeds racial inequality in education outcomes" (Reardon, 2013, para. 7). Students' academic achievement is typically measured by standardized test scores; however, the income achievement gap does not limit itself to the percentage of passing on state-mandated testing. A trend in college-completion rates for students between socioeconomic incomes has shown a widening gap.

The college-completion rate among children from high-income families has grown sharply in the last decades, whereas the completion rate for students from low-income

families has barely moved. Moreover, high-income students make up an increasing share of the enrollment at the most selective colleges and universities even when compared with low-income students with similar test scores and academic records.

(Reardon, 2013, para. 8)

What can schools do to assist in closing the achievement gap? For years U. S. schools have been thought of as the great equalizer, “the social institution best suited to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to learn, develop, and thrive” (Reardon 2013, para. 21). However, to think that schools can solve such inequalities as the widening income gaps is unrealistic.

Although it is unrealistic for schools to solve the income gap inequality, they do have a unique opportunity to respond to it by taking a proactive approach to investing in their students’ academic development. Reardon (2013) suggested three specific areas for school districts to focus on to devote increased efforts in reducing the income achievement gap.

First, school districts could focus their resources to the early primary grades including kindergarten and preschool. The reading level of students when they enter kindergarten is different between social classes. Furthermore, young children of educated parents are read to on a more consistent basis and a greater emphasis is placed on the importance of reading when the children become older (Reardon, 2013).

A five year-old who enters school recognizing some words and who has turned the pages of many stories will be easier to teach than one who has rarely held a book. The second child can be taught, but with equally high expectations and effective teaching, the first will be more likely to pass an age-appropriate reading test than the second. So the achievement gap begins. (Rothstein, 2006, para. 7)



The earlier a school begins intervention, the better the chance of reducing the gaps and eliminating them in the long run.

The second strategy schools need to provide students is more time in school. Growing evidence is showing that students that spend more time in school (i.e. extending the school day or instituting year-round schooling) could deem beneficial for students who are from lower socioeconomic classes. Gladwell (2008) also supported extending the schooling period to close the achievement gaps between students. “Schools work. The only problem with school for the kids who aren’t achieving, is that there isn’t enough of it” (Gladwell, 2008, p. 259). If children were exposed to year-round schooling, the poor children and wealthy children would be doing reading and math at nearly the same level (Gladwell, 2008). “For its poorest students, America doesn’t have a school problem. It has a summer vacation problem” (Gladwell, 2008, p. 260).

The third strategy that school districts can do to ensure they are meeting the needs of students, to ensure equal access in education, is to obtain and retain high-quality teachers (Reardon, 2013). Teachers who provide stimulating curriculum and teaching practices and schools that also provide adequate school resources—computers, and bountiful libraries—are essential to academic success. School districts must work diligently to provide the aforementioned resources to students who have difficulty obtaining them at home.

The United States has grown more residentially segregated by incomes over the last four decades (Reardon, 2013), meaning that the public schools across America have become, in many places, segregated by income as well. With a growing economic segregation between schools of the student’s income, there are significant differences between the culture and climate of the schools in lower socioeconomic and high socioeconomic communities (Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2008). The consequences for these students are frightening. If the nation does not find

ways to reduce the expanding inequality in education, Reardon (2013) stated, “We are in danger of bequeathing our children a society in which the American Dream, the promise that one can rise, through education and hard work, to any position in society, is no longer a reality” (para. 27).

### **Literacy in Education**

Providing diverse families and parents from rural Appalachia with a variety of reading resources and strategies to promote literacy at home would be beneficial for educators, parents, and most importantly children. The home environment has a direct influence on children’s early literacy development, including the availability of reading and writing materials; the modeling of literate behaviors by adults, siblings, and others; and the verbal interactions between children and adults (Richardson, Miller, Richardson, & Sacks, 2008). Hoover-Dempsey’s (1987) study noted,

Families and schools are inevitably related as they respond to the legal mandate that children be educated. The nature of family-school relationships varies across individual children, families, school, and communities as participants seek to implement the most satisfactory educational program within the confines of community expectations. (p. 417)

A Literacy Bag Lending Library is one way to enhance early literacy development at home, and foster home-school connections (Zeece & Wallace, 2009). The primary objective of the Literacy Bag Lending Library is to engage parents and children in reading, discussing, and doing activities where intrinsic motivation is being met (Dever, 2001). Through a Literacy Bag Lending Library, teachers can make available explicit knowledge on the reading process; and teachers can collaborate on ways to nurture reading and writing in young children (Brock &

Dodd, 1994). Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this research project was to determine if a Literacy Bag Lending Library program would intrinsically motivate parental participation in a rural Appalachian school.

### **Literacy Bag Effectiveness**

Engaging children in literacy activities at home is one way for families to increase their educational involvement; however, the quality of literacy resources and activities undoubtedly are intertwined in developing children's literacy and language abilities (Richardson et al., 2008). Research studies prove that when children have even modest literacy-promoting acquisitions at home, it can significantly enhance a young child's early literacy environment by increasing the frequency of parent-child book activities (Zeece & Wallace, 2009). Developing a take-home literacy bag is a way to provide literacy-promoting activities that may be shared between families to provide support for emergent literacy. Take-home literacy bags that provide suggestions for content, implementation, and evaluations enriches the home literacy setting to encourage parental participation in their children's education (Thomason, 2008). If given the appropriate tools, parents are able take part in their children's literacy development by using strategies and activities to promote reading success. *Learning at Home* is one of the six types of parental involvement in school that is advocated by (Epstein, 1995). Literacy bags encourage parents to assist their children and become more confident in their own learning as adults despite their educational backgrounds. Literacy bags include books that provide positive parent—child interaction to meet the needs of both adults and children to enhance conversations between parent and child. Literacy bags expose parents and children to a variety of genres in children's literature and ensure a diverse library in the home. Zeece and Wallace (2009) noted that the effectiveness of literacy bags depends on the components of the home-based enrichments.

According to the Zeece and Wallace, for bags to be influential for parents and children, the bags must contain books that encourage the same theme or skill along with developmentally appropriate activities that can include, but are not limited to, phonics and math games, interactive mini-books, a game or activity related to the skills that are being introduced, a writing journal that allows for developmentally appropriate writing or drawing, and a parent letter suggesting ideas for use and care of the literacy bag books and materials. Literacy is much more inclusive than the ability to read; instead, literacy has become a vital skill in the 21st century as the global society in which one lives becomes increasingly dependent on rapid technological advances (Huang, 2013). The purpose of the family literacy bags is to engage parents in learning at home by providing different activities focused on literacy. The program is designed to increase parental involvement in book reading and related activities with parents or other family members. Parental involvement in literacy can positively affect student's academic outcomes for success in reading (Richardson et al., 2008). Implementing a home literacy bag program, as a component of a parental involvement program in rural Appalachia, will break down the barriers between school and home. Parents will be actively involved in their children's literacy by assisting children to develop stronger literacy skills. This non-intrusive component of a parental involvement program will include literacy strategies that engage parents in their children's reading acquisitions.

### **Literacy Bag Components**

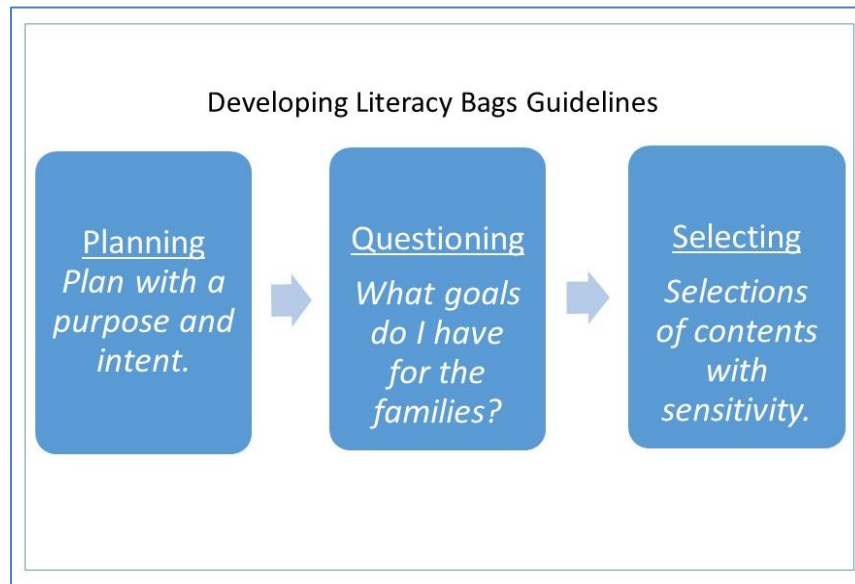
Most could contend that parents ultimately want their children to be successful readers; unfortunately, some parents are not confident in how to provide information or use teacher strategies and activities to promote reading success with their children (Smith, 1998). Literacy Bags can provide parents a two-way communication between them and their children. Dever

(2001) emphasized the use of family literacy bags for early childhood development. In her article, *Family Literacy Bags: A Vehicle for Parental involvement and Education*, Marilyn Adams noted that “the single most important activity for building knowledge and skills eventually required for reading appears to be reading aloud to children regularly and interactively” (as cited in Dever, 2001, p. 18). Family literacy bags promote *read alouds*—allowing parents to read orally to their children on a consistent basis from books that are above their independent reading level, but not listening level, along with providing parents and children activities to complete together. Each bag contains printed materials that include a parent letter identifying important objectives for maximizing the literacy bags. The primary literacy bag objectives include, but are not limited to, establishing a daily reading time, sitting with the child so that she or he can listen and interact with the parents, allowing the child to select which books to read and activities to complete, and continuing to re-read books even when they become very familiar with the text (Richardson et al., 2008).

Developing and sharing literacy bags is one way to promote literacy sharing activities that families can use to provide support for emergent literacy. The selection process of activities, manipulatives, and stories are included to provide meaningful experiences for young learners. As Figure 3 illustrates, when planning literacy bags, Zeece and Wallace (2009) provided guidelines to consider for developing literacy bags that were instrumental in the organization and implementation of the literacy bag program in rural Appalachia:

- *Plan with purpose.* Make the development and use of the bags intentional in planning and execution.
- *Questions to ask.* Why am I creating the bags? What goals do I have for children and/or families who will be using this resource?

- *Select with sensitivity.* Look at this project from the perspective of both the children and the parents when creating the bags. (p. 2)



*Figure 3.* Literacy Bag planning guidelines. Adapted from, “Books and Good Stuff: A Strategy for Building School to Home Literacy Connections, by P. D. Zeece, 2009, *Early Childhood Educational Journal*, 11, Copyright 2009 by Springer Science and Business Media, LLC.

### Summary

This chapter contained a review of the literature addressing the economic distress in rural Appalachia, current research on the parental involvement impact on student’s education, the components of Title I schools and the needs of addressing the income achievement gap between students who are impoverished, and those with different socioeconomic statuses. This chapter also discussed the effectiveness of literacy bags and the correlation between academic achievement and parental involvement. The developmental stages of planning a Family Literacy Bag program to promote literacy was also presented in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to investigate the implementation of the non-presumptuous literacy bag program as a critical component to increase parental involvement in rural Appalachian schools related to student literacy achievement. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to best address the research questions. Literacy bag programs could be an integral part of any rural Appalachian parent program, continually including literacy strategies that engage parents in their children's reading acquisitions, but must be better understood. Adams (1990) noted, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills eventually required for reading appears to be reading aloud to children regularly and interactively" (p. 124).

The program was designed to increase parental involvement in book readings and related activities. Parental involvement can positively affect students' academic outcomes for success in reading (Dumont et al., 2014). A deeper understanding of a home literacy bag program as a component of a parental involvement program in rural Appalachia may reveal barriers between school and home and contribute new knowledge that minimizes these barriers. The intent of the program was to encourage parents to become actively involved in their children's literacy and to assist children to develop stronger literacy skills. This non-presumptuous component of a parental involvement program included literacy strategies that engage parents in their children's reading acquisitions.

For this study, data were collected from a public elementary school in Tennessee serving students in Grades K-4. The study was limited to a single teacher who was the direct source of activities within a given classroom. This teacher was a first grade teacher who covered the following subjects: English/language arts, science, math, and social studies. Additional study participants included parents of the students in the first grade classroom. Families that participated in the study were from lower- and middle-class SES. Both men and women participated in this study. The proper implementation of the Literacy Bag program may increase parental participation—particularly at home—in their children’s education.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

The peoples of Appalachia hold a special place in my heart. As a native of southern Appalachia, it is my utmost desire to help the people living within those mountains. This study was guided from the theoretical perspective of social constructivism. In this study, I sought to interact with the people living in Appalachia whose lives have been impacted by the poverty and the unfortunate realities that are presented to those peoples. I sought to learn more about how parents accepted their Appalachian realities by observations and communication. What motivates the parents within Appalachia? How do the children learn the desire to succeed? The complex social connections are grounded in social constructivism. Social constructivism allowed me to use my previous background as an Appalachian resident to shape my interpretation of the situations that individuals within my study are faced with.

### **Personal Statement and Researcher Bias**

Tucked away at the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains where Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee meet is an area called Cumberland Gap. Located in the northern part of Tennessee, Claiborne County is bounded by Bell County, Kentucky and on the northeast Lee County,



Virginia. Although Cumberland Gap is well-known and famous for the Wilderness Road and Daniel Boone, the people living within the hills of Appalachia have faced many hardships and economic trials. I have seen firsthand the poverty epidemic that continues to touch the people in my home, and this has made me passionate about helping the parents and students that enter the doors of any elementary school.

Born and raised in a small, rural town in the Cumberland Gap area of Tennessee, a big part of my heritage belongs to the hills of Appalachia. The people of Appalachia, myself included, have faced many trials and hardships, and my experiences have given me the desire and ambition to help the students and families succeed. The schools I attended as a young girl continue to contain the profound poverty that I experienced more than 20 years ago.

I began my teaching career in the same rural district that I once attended. For five years, I taught fifth grade at Livesay Middle School. In 2012, I found my way to Angola, Indiana, where I currently teach third grade. Throughout the last four years, even away from my home, I still see the effects that limited—or no—parental involvement has on children’s literacy achievement. I found my passion in serving children whose literacy achievement is limited due to SES, limited print resources at home, lack of intrinsic motivation, or limited parental involvement. My goal as a researcher stands upon the preceding factors that seem to plague the students of rural Appalachia.

The parents of students who participated in this study were very familiar to me because like them, I was raised in poverty. Although the demographics of the elementary school may have changed slightly in recent years, the percentage of students receiving free-and-reduced-priced lunch has dropped to 66%; however, it is still higher than the state average of 55%. This study sought to find how schools and teachers can help the parents and children in

Appalachia along with assisting and encouraging parents to play an active role in their children's education. Answering the research questions posed in this study, and then being able to share the study findings and implications with interested persons, drives me in my work and in pursuit of this study. Understanding my passion for the people of Appalachia cannot be overstated; however, my passion also means that I had to be aware of the risk of bias in my research. I worked diligently with my research committee chair to recognize such bias and overcome any bias in my analysis of the data and developments of findings and implications of the research.

### **Mixed Methods as Form of Inquiry**

This study utilized a concurrent mixed-methods study design by seeking deeper understanding of the identified best practices that were supported by a literature review for increasing family involvement at home by using literacy bags. Literacy bags may provide parents literacy-promoting interventions that can significantly enhance young children's early literacy environment. I hope to give meaning and increased understanding to the parents and students of the rural Appalachian region. I selected this method of inquiry based on the specific action of increasing parental involvement at home through increasing the frequency of parent—child book-sharing activities. Survey data were used to determine if there were significant relationships acquired through the use of literacy bags and increased parental involvement. I used the answers and information collected from parent participant questionnaires and surveys to provide valuable information for those who serve the children and parents in Appalachia.

The literacy bags were distributed to a first grade teacher in one rural elementary school in Claiborne County, Tennessee. The purpose of the family literacy bag concept was to engage parents in learning at home, by providing different activities focused on literacy. The program was designed to increase parental involvement in book reading and related activities with parents

or other family members. Parental involvement in literacy can positively affect students' academic outcomes for success in reading (Thomason, 2008). The implantation of a home literacy bag program as a component of a parental involvement program in rural Appalachia will connect the barriers between school and home. Parents were actively involved in their children's literacy skills. This non-intrusive component of a parental involvement program included literacy strategies that engaged parent's in their children's reading acquisitions.

A random selection generator was used to identify a population of schools, which gave approximately eight school sites the opportunity to participate in the study. The participating children took home literacy bags from school every Monday, and families had one week to finish the reading activities. Bags were returned weekly and, when returned, new literacy bags were distributed. Books of varying levels of difficulty, genres, and authors were provided to account for the various reading levels of the children. Each bag contained three high-quality children's books of differing reading levels and genres, extensions activities focused around a particular theme, a CD or audiotape, and a parent's guidebook (i.e., similar to lesson plans). All materials were provided in the literacy bag with the exception of common household items such as pencils and crayons. Each bag contained a parent guidebook with information and guides for reading and discussing the books with children. Literacy bags were strategically designed to incorporate activities that promoted reading fluency, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. All teaching materials for the parents were also included in each bag. The guidebooks for parents provided detailed plans for each group activity along with higher-order questions for their children. Parents who attended literacy night had knowledge concerning the contents of the literacy bags. Teachers who participated in the study had attended a meeting prior to the implementation of the Family Literacy Bag program as well. Data collection and analysis

consisted of the following: pre- program parental involvement questionnaire, parent and teacher weekly surveys, and post-program parent interview. The program duration for this study lasted approximately four to six weeks depending on data saturation.

### **Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Does a passive program such as a Literacy Bag Lending Library promote a connection between schools and home?
2. Does an intrinsically motivated parental participation program provide parents self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school?
3. Would a supplementary program including reading strategies intrinsically motivate parents to assist in children's reading education?
4. Do school stakeholders see the literacy bag program as a worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement?

### **Description of the Populations and Sample**

Using a mixed-methods study approach allowed me to focus on the relationship among literacy bags and parental involvement, and it was my hope to identify a sample school and the parents within one classroom setting who could benefit from helping their children with literacy acquisition at home that could contribute to this study. After approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), one school site was selected from eight Title-I elementary schools located in a rural area of Claiborne County, Tennessee, that served as the study population. It was my hope to identify a school within the Claiborne County, Tennessee, district that would serve as volunteer study participants, those whose lives were touched by poverty along with the economic struggles presented to the Appalachian peoples and which would contribute to this study.

During the academic school year, I worked alongside the classroom teacher to become prepared and was present during the annual Family Literacy Night. This was an opportunity to see the parents of the students that were enrolled in the class. I had the literacy bag materials on display along with parent consent forms and my contact information. Once participation was agreed to, I then engaged with the classroom parents in a discussion/dialogue interview format, guided by their questions to understand their perception(s) of parental involvement with their children and their children's teacher and school.

The sole intention of the initial discussion/dialogue method of interview was to set the tone and begin discussing the use of the program, all the while putting the participants at ease so they felt comfortable sharing. All participants were informed that their involvement in the case-study was voluntary and consent forms were read to participants to ensure they fully understood the nature of their participation. Participant consent forms were collected before the program was implemented. If participants withdrew themselves from the study, information gained was not documented. The parent interviews/discussions occurred one time prior to the implementation of the literacy bag program, and at the conclusion of the four to six week program.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Using the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) website ([www.tn.gov/education](http://www.tn.gov/education)), all elementary schools in the Claiborne County, Tennessee, area were identified. The identification of the population included eight Title I elementary schools located in a rural area of Claiborne County, Tennessee. From this population, schools were randomly ranked using the random integer generators ([www.random.org](http://www.random.org)), and one school served as the sample. After approval from IRB, contact was made via telephone to the school's administrator requesting his or her participation in the study. A transcript (Appendix A) guided the conversation. The

school principal who volunteered his or her school to participate first was the elementary school that participated in the study.

Once approval from the school administrator was granted, I randomly ranked the first grade teachers using the random integer generator. From the randomly selected teacher population, contact was made via telephone to the teachers requesting their participation in the study. A transcript (Appendix B) guided the conversation. If those contacted opted to not participate, I contacted the next educator identified by the random generator. The classroom educator that volunteered to participate first was the classroom educator that partook in the study, served as the study sample, and was required to sign the consent form (Appendix C) in order to participate in the study. I informed the teacher prior to the implementation of the Literacy Bag Program of the collection procedures and provided her with the introductory letter with sample parent consent forms (Appendix D) that were distributed to participating parents. Parents initially were invited to a school-wide Family Literacy Night, where parents were encouraged to visit and to meet with their children's teacher. Once parents were in the classroom they had the option of visiting the literacy bag table with information about the literacy bag program (Appendix E). All students' parents in the participating class had the opportunity to participate in the program, and the parent sample included all those who volunteered to participate. All parents in this study had children enrolled in a Title I, high-poverty, rural school in Cumberland Gap, Tennessee. I used the question protocol (Appendix F) to begin conversations with the parents, whose children were in the first grade, regarding their understanding of parental involvement. I provided parents who volunteered a parent consent form to sign to participate in the program (Appendix D).

Regarding the literacy bags, they were returned weekly by the students, and then I gave the students new literacy bags. I hoped that students who were given new bags each Monday would return the bags back on Fridays. If a student did not return a bag on Friday, then the student was given the opportunity to receive another bag on the following Monday if the bag was returned. The use of literacy bags throughout the weekend was not encouraged, as this was to support and inspire family activities outside of school and remove the potential pressures of keeping up with the bags throughout the weekend. Each bag contained three high-quality developmentally appropriate children's books of varying genres, along with extension activities focused around a particular theme. Because some books were difficult for first grade children to read individually, parental guidance and assistance were instrumental tools for reading success.

All materials were provided in the literacy bag with the exception of common household items such as pencils and crayons. Each bag contained a parent guidebook with information and guides for reading and discussing the books with children. Parents participating in the program had knowledge concerning the contents of the literacy bags. The participating teacher also attended a meeting with me prior to the implementation of the literacy bag program. Data collection consisted of a pre-program parental involvement questionnaire (Appendix I), parent weekly evaluation survey (Appendix J), teacher's quantitative survey (Appendix K), post-program parent interview protocol (Appendix L), and any teacher's anecdotes. Ongoing collaboration occurred with the educator, and I collected teacher surveys weekly. I interviewed parents through a discussion/dialogue format at the end of the literacy bag program to gain their perceptions of how beneficial the literacy bags were in terms of increasing parental involvement at home. The taped interviews were informal. I engaged with parents in discussion/dialogue format guided by a question protocol (Appendix L) to understand their perceptions and insights

they formed by participating in the family literacy bag program. The intention of the discussion/dialogue method of interview was to put the participants at ease so they felt comfortable sharing their personal viewpoints of the literacy bag program.

Parents were encouraged prior to the implementation of the program to use weekly parental guidance in the form of lesson plans (Appendix M) to assist them with the objectives and skills for the week. The weekly parent survey questions centered on the importance of parental involvement in their children's education at home. Additionally, questions also focused on the overall enjoyment or lack thereof with the Family Literacy Bags. Weekly teacher survey questions centered on the students' dispositions in the classroom, along with parent communication or the lack thereof during the duration of this program. The educator monitored students' dispositions via small group interaction, Sustained Silent Reading, progress monitoring, and teachers' perceptions were recorded via surveys and interviews. I shared the post-program parent questions ahead of time with the teacher so that the parents had access to them ahead of time if so desired. The question protocol is found in Appendix L. Interviews at the school site were organized by the teacher and principal.

### **Establishing Validity and Reliability**

In order to produce a credible study, validity and reliability must be considered. In preparation for on-site interviews, I conducted mock interviews in a focus-group setting with fellow colleagues whose children were currently in elementary school within my current school district. No colleagues participating in mock interviews took part in the research study. The mock interviews consisted of five Angola, Indiana, elementary school teachers. Of the group, there were four female participants and one male participant. Their years of teaching experience ranged from six to 15 years. Colleagues had experience at the elementary-, middle-, and high-



school levels. Eight percent were women, and 20% were men. The question protocols used for the mock interviews were the actual interview questions for the study. The focus group participants were also asked to consider the question protocol in terms of whether it was clear and aligned with the purposes of the study. Feedback from colleagues helped determine the content validity of the question protocol. The feedback was received on March 15, 2016. Their feedback was based on the following questions:

1. Are the questions clear and easily understood?
2. Is the interview setting sufficient for allowing discussion?
3. Are there any ideas to improve the questioning process?

As a result of the feedback, revisions were made. The revisions included,

1. Changing question #2 to say providing opportunities for your child to see parents valuing literacy instead of family.

### **Data Storage and Confidentiality**

All participant data were kept confidential through coded data and pseudonyms that were randomly assigned to each parent participant. Participants were informed that their responses would be kept confidential, and the data was stored in a locked cabinet in my home office only accessed by me. The coded data will be kept for the necessary three-year period, at which time all data will be destroyed. Participants were notified that all identifying information along with any identifying responses were removed to protect the confidentiality of the participants. All information gathered would only be disclosed with the permission of the individual participant or as necessary according to law.

### **Risks and Benefits to Participants**

The participants in this study were notified of the potential risks and benefits. Participating parents and teachers were read and given informed consents prior to the start of the Literacy Bag Program. All participants were notified that there was no direct benefit for participation in this study and the risks were minimal. During the interviews participants could choose not to answer questions that might make them feel uncomfortable or embarrassed.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 presented the mixed-method research design, data collections procedures, research questions, sample populations, and my personal statement and bias. Information about the different components of this mixed-methods study, such as research questions, my role as the researcher, methodology, data collection and procedures, data storage and confidentiality, reliability, and validity were also included. A mixed-methods study design was selected to test the hypotheses that were already constructed before the data were collected. Documentation of consent forms, interview forms, and surveys may be found in appendices.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Placing an increased emphasis on parental involvement in schools to enhance the academic acquisitions of students is a timely topic. With research supporting claims that increased parental involvement promotes student success, schools are working to enhance their parental involvement programs. Research has documented that parental involvement can increase achievement; it is the components of the quality parental involvement program that has schools scratching their heads (Rothstein, 2014). What does a quality parental involvement program consist of? Previous studies, backed by a vast amount of reviewed literature, have tried to determine what makes a quality parental involvement program (Sheldon, 2002). The previous research was helpful in identifying ways to include parents in their children's learning at home.

This concurrent mixed methods study examined the use of a non-presumptuous literacy bag program as a critical component of increasing parental involvement in a rural Appalachian school. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis of both quantitative and qualitative phases within the study. The data analysis chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, the chapter deals with a description of the study sample. The second section of the chapter contains qualitative data analysis of the parental involvement questionnaires which were conducted prior to the implementation of the literacy bag program. An examination of the common themes and trends are also detailed. The third portion of the chapter deals with the qualitative analysis, post-program interviews that were conducted at the conclusion of the literacy bay program, and the final portion includes the quantitative examination of the surveys

that were distributed weekly throughout the duration of the program to parents and to the classroom teacher who participated in this study.

### **Description of the Claiborne County Community**

Claiborne County lies in the north east portion of East Tennessee, and borders the states of Kentucky and Virginia; Claiborne County is famously known for The Cumberland Gap, a historic narrow pass through used as a passageway through the lower central Appalachians. Used by Native Americans, the Cumberland Gap was brought to attention in 1750 by Thomas Walker, explorer, and Daniel Boone, frontiersman. These two individuals made the Cumberland Gap accessible to pioneers who use it to journey to the western frontier of Kentucky and Tennessee (Federal Highway Administration, 2016). The journey through the gap was treacherous, during the summer and fall of 1784, more than 100 travelers were killed on the Kentucky side of the gap. By 1796 it was known as the Wilderness Road having seen as many as 200,000 travelers, including Abraham Lincoln's parents and grandparents (Federal Highway Administration, 2016).

According to the Tennessee Genealogy and History Website (2017), Claiborne County, Tennessee was established on October 29, 1801. Nestled in the Appalachian Mountains it was named for Virginian tidewater aristocrat Will Charles Coleman Claiborne, one of the first judges of the Superior Court and one of the first representatives in U. S. Congress from Tennessee. The county was created from neighboring countries Grainger and Hawkins and extended into the southern boundary to Anderson County. In the 1820's Claiborne County manufacturing establishments included: blacksmith, forger, hatter shop, tanyard, shoe and boot maker, powder mill, gunsmith, saddler shop, and two whiskey distilleries.

The Civil War held the Gap both on the North and South side, both sides were cleared of trees and the terrain was manageable. Shortly after, the terrain was cleared railroads came, but they bypassed the Gap until after the Civil War. The arrival of the automobile rekindled interest in using the Gap and in 1908, the U.S. government built a *macadamized* road connecting Middlesboro, Kentucky to Cumberland Gap, Tennessee, and called it the Government Pike (Federal Highway Administration, 2016). In the 1940's, The Cumberland Gap National Historic Park was established in order to protect and control the 20,000 acres of mountainous terrain. The tourism was booming and electricity was installed in order to provide accommodations for overnight lodging. In the 1990's, the Cumberland Gap Tunnel, 4,600 feet long, was built under the mountain to replace the Gap road. The \$280 million project provided residents access to surrounding states such as Kentucky and Virginia.

The residents in Claiborne County have seen changes throughout the years within their communities. Community Data from Census.gov reports that the population estimate in Claiborne County is 21,757 with a -1.4% change April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016. The race and Hispanic origin within Claiborne County is predominately white at 96.6%. The characteristics of the population in Claiborne County included 1,746 veterans (U. S. Census Bureau, 2016). The economic situation in Claiborne County is meager, the U. S. Census Bureau reports that the median gross rent from 2011-2015 is \$519.00 with a median household income in 2015, \$34,899 with the Census reporting that the percentage of person living in poverty in Claiborne County at 21.6%. Furthermore, 12.3% of residents are without health insurance, and 16.1% report having a disability. In 2014, 410 total employer establishments reported, mostly consisting of factories.

One city, three towns and 54 unincorporated communities reside in Claiborne County. Thirteen public schools, one private school, and two higher education institution are also housed within the city limits.

The Claiborne County Public School District is making strides with district and school accountability. The Tennessee Department of Education reports annually the district and school's accountability progress. This accountability protocol was designed through the state's waiver from No Child Left Behind, and the Tennessee Department of Education names districts as: Exemplary, Intermediate, In Need of Improvement, and In Need of Subgroup Improvement. Furthermore, the state provides a school improvement designation the different schools throughout the state as: Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools. The Tennessee Department of Education looks to the districts to increase achievement levels for all students and reduce achievement gaps that exist between certain groups. Tennessee doesn't expect all districts to meet the same benchmarks year after year, since the districts are starting from different places the districts that show the most growth are rewarded (Tennessee Department of Education, 2016). In order to provide the public with an understanding of the accountability system the Tennessee Department of Education created its own accountability system and provides the residents information regarding the classifications of the districts across the state of Tennessee.

- Exemplary District: Meets the majority of their achievement goals, closing the achievement gap based on pre-set goals, ensures every subgroup (i. e. students with disabilities, racial minorities, English learners and students from lower SES background) moves forward in its target areas.
- Intermediate District: Meets the majority of their achievement or gap targets (not both), ensures every subgroup increases in half or more of its target areas.

- In Need of Improvement: Districts that fail to reach the majority of their targets for both achievement and gap closure.
- In Need of Subgroup Improvement: Districts labeled In Need of Subgroup Improvement will focus their efforts on ensuring all groups of students show improvement in the following year (Tennessee Department of Education, 2016, paras. 1—4)

For the 2015 reporting accountability year, the Claiborne County school district fell into the, In Need of Subgroup Improvement category. While Claiborne County may have successfully attained their goals in Achievement, Gap Closure, or even both, they experienced a decline among a particular subgroup. The reporting data showed that the Claiborne County district needs to focus on students with disabilities (Tennessee Department of Education, 2016).

Claiborne County's school accountability reporting for 2015 provided community members with a better understanding of the school accountability designation system. Each of the 13 public schools in Claiborne County fell into one of the following categories:

- Reward School: Top 5% of schools in the state for performance, as measured by overall student's achievement levels and the top 5% for year-over-year progress as measure by school wide value added data. These 10% of schools receive recognition for their success under the accountability system.
- Priority Schools: The lowest performing 5% of schools in Tennessee in terms of academic achievement. Priority schools demonstrating growth in achievement such that, based on a one-year success rate, are no longer in the lowest performing 12% of school are labeled Priority Exit and are no longer considered Priority schools. Schools demonstrating growth in academic achievement and are no longer in the lowest-performing 10% of schools but remain in the lowest performing 15% of schools are

labeled Priority Improving. Priority Improving schools are still considered Priority Schools but may exit in a subsequent year if they continue to demonstrate growth.

- Focus Schools: Schools labeled as focus schools are the 10% of schools in the state with the largest achievement gaps between groups of students, such as racial and ethnic groups, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities and English language learners. Schools are designated as Focus Schools based on one of the three characteristics.

1. Gap Pathway: The school has one of the largest gaps in the State for the indicated subgroup.
2. Subgroup Pathway: The school has a composite proficiency rate below 10 percent for the indicated subgroup.
3. Graduation Rate Pathway: The school has a graduation rate below 60 percent.

Focus schools may also have an additional term such as Exit or Improving if they demonstrate progress in the area(s) for which they are identified as Focus

1. Gap Exit and Improving: These focus schools have been identified for large subgroups gaps demonstrating a 25 percent reduction in the percentage of students scoring below basic in the subgroups for which they are identified as Focus are labeled Focus Exit.
2. Subgroup Exit and Improving: Focus schools that have been identified for subgroup performance demonstrating a proficiency rate exceeding 15 percent (but not exceeding 20 percent) for the subgroups for which they are identified are labeled Focus Improving- Gap Closure.



3. Graduations Rate Exit and Improving: Focus schools identifies for graduation rate exceeding 75 percent are labeled Focus Exit. School identified for graduation rate demonstrating a graduation rate exceeding 70 percent (but not exceeding 75 percent) are labeled Focus Improving- Graduation Rate.

(Tennessee Department of Education, 2016, paras. 1—4)

For the 2015 year the Tennessee Department of Education labeled all 13 of Claiborne County schools and included: One Reward School, one Focus Exit School, and 11 One Year Success Schools. The school that participated in this study was labeled a Priority School: One Year Success with a 46.6% success rate.

The school that participated in this research study included first grade students who attended a Title-I public school located in the rural district of Claiborne County, Tennessee. This school was the first one randomly selected to participate, agreed to participate, and followed the procedures outlined in Chapter 3. The students in the participating school ranged from six to eight years of age and all were enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. Students were of Caucasian, and mixed races. The percentage of students who received free and reduced lunch had dropped to 66%; however, it was still higher than the state average of 55%. It was noted that the county in which the elementary school selected for this study was located was termed *distressed*, which is defined as the most economically depressed county labeled as the worst 10% of the nation's counties. This allowed for the school to apply for a grant that provided all students with a free or reduced lunch. Additional school data reporting for the 2014-2015 academic school year includes the school having a 58% economically disadvantage student percentage. However, the school prides themselves with a 93.5% attendance rate and a 3.6% suspension/expulsion rate with a discipline count of 17 and 16 of which are white males. The

school reports a 98.6% promotion rate. The student ethnicity for the 2015-2016 academic school year reflects 450 White students and 13 Black or African Americans with a total enrollment of 469. The school reports 92 students having disabilities which equates to 19.6% of the student body. In terms of academics, since the school serves students Kindergarten to 4<sup>th</sup> grade, only one grade in the school participates in the state mandated assessment, otherwise known as the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program. The Tennessee Department of Education reports the value-added growth for the school.

Prior to the research study, I had an introductory meeting with participating teacher of the first grade class. The meeting occurred during her planning period and lasted approximately thirty minutes. The participating teacher was very helpful and excited to have her class participate in the research study. She was currently enrolled in the local college working on her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. She applauded me on the research topic and design as she was currently working on her Master's thesis that dealt with curriculum design. The teacher was 46 years old and had been teaching for 13 years. She informed me that she got a late start in her teaching career due to her other career, being a mother to her two children. She had always wanted to have children and be a stay-at-home mother, once her two girls were almost into middle school, she decided to enroll in the post- baccalaureate program at the college to get her degree in Elementary Education her bachelor's degree was in business.

Prior to the implementation of the Literacy Bag Program, I attended the Back-To-School Literacy Night, an annual event held at the beginning of the school year. I held an introductory meeting at the annual back-to-school event where parents met their children's teacher. The meeting took place prior to the start of the academic school year. Back-To-School night provided the parents an opportunity to meet their child's teacher, see their classroom, bring

school supplies to drop off, obtain paperwork from the school, and to meet other parents between the hours of 5:00 p. m. and 7:00 p.m. This event allowed me the opportunity to hold an informal introductory meeting with the teacher and parents who were willing to participate in the study. I decided to set up the literacy bag information in the back of the classroom, not to interfere with the layout of the classroom in order to keep the traffic of parents flowing. Chairs were provided for parents to sit in the back of the room at which parents could sit and feel comfortable during the meeting. Parents seemed curious about the Literacy Bags that were on display. Since the community is small and the teacher was well-known, parents seemed curious as to who I was and what role I was going to play in their children's education. The teacher gave a brief introduction about me and my research and then quietly found a seat at the front of the classroom to direct parents who attended late to Back-To-School Night. I began the meeting with a brief introduction about myself, where I am from, my goals as a professional, my goals as a researcher, and my goals for this study. I provided parents a description of the study, what the parents were expected to do, and the written consent forms to participate in the study. Parents were able to view three of the literacy bags that would be used during the study, and I described the components of the literacy bags and how the parents would be expected to utilize the bags. There were 17 parents in attendance at the meeting, 15 parents that were in attendance willingly participated in the study and two parents chose not to participate in the study. The two parents who chose not to participate in the study stayed for the duration of the meeting, but did not choose to sign consent forms. The introductory meeting lasted 20 minutes. I gave parents an opportunity to discuss any questions about the program, and to confirm understanding I also read the parent consent forms to parents. Parents did not have any questions about the consent forms and did not hesitate in signing the forms if they were willing to participate in the study. Once

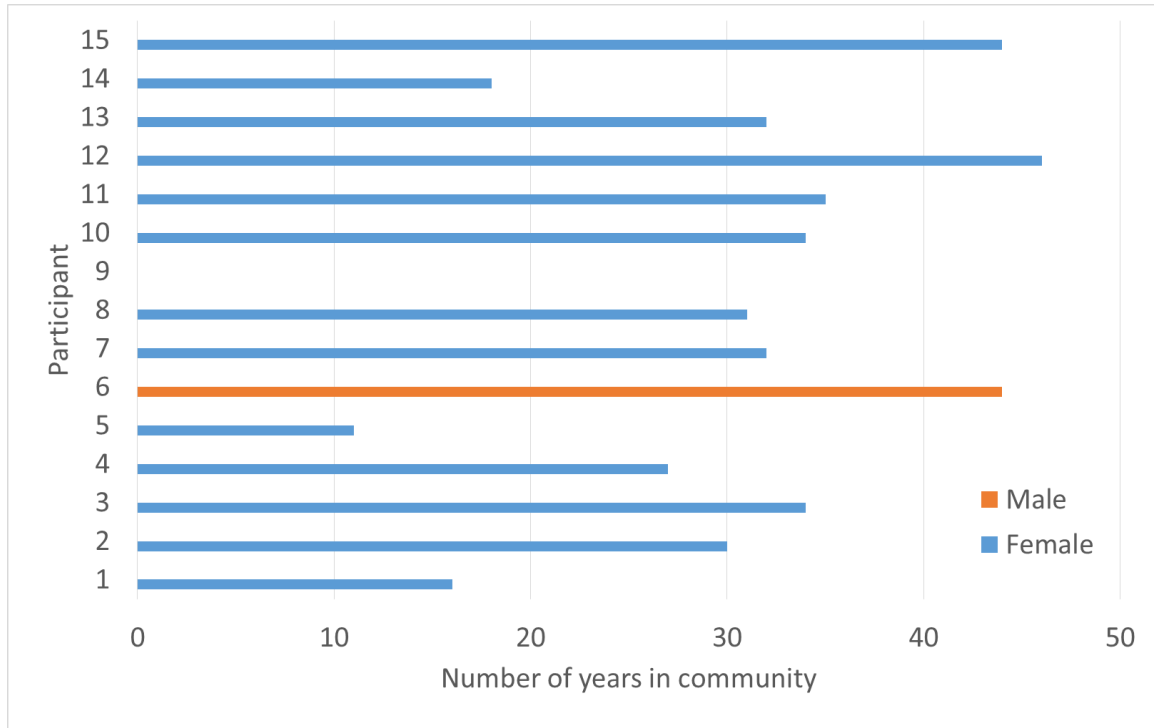
the consent forms were collected, the meeting then progressed into discussing the Parental involvement aspect of the study. I began to describe to the parents the questionnaire and reasoning behind wanting to know their own perceptions of parental involvement.

The parental involvement questionnaires were given to parents after consent forms were collected, I reminded parents to not share their real names at the start of the meeting or during the meeting in order to make sure their answers would be kept anonymous. Instead, the parents were invited to select a pseudonym, or I could assign one, for data collection purposes. I gave example of different types of pseudonyms that parents could use, to make sure all parents understood what a pseudonym was. All parent participants chose their own pseudonym, and the parent participants were also aware that their pseudonym would be located on the surveys and any other materials related to the study throughout the duration of the study. Parents of the students enrolled in the class that chose to participate in the study were all given the parental involvement interview questionnaire after consent forms were collected and the parental involvement portion of the meeting began (Appendix F). Each consent form was given to parents with a clipboard attached in order for parents to write down any responses comfortably. To make sure that parents understood the questions being asked, I read aloud the parental involvement questions and provided parents an appropriate amount of time to record their answers on the questionnaire. Time was also allotted after each question to provide explanations to any parent questions that were asked between the readings of each question. Parents seemed comfortable during this process and no questions were asked during the reading of the Parental involvement Questionnaire. It was comforting to see that parents were willing to provide their answers to the questions and did not seem to feel inferior to me as the researcher or to the parental involvement questionnaire that was provided to them.

The use of the parental involvement questions allowed me as a researcher to become familiar with their perceptions the parents' own parental involvement perceptions, while making parents comfortable during the interview session with ease to answer questions. Questions sought to find out how long participants lived within the community, to determine what parents enjoyed most about the community, if parents were involved in parental involvement activities provided by the school, typically what prevented parents from attending parental involvement activities at the school, and what can the school do to make it possible for you to attend parental involvement activities at school? Once the questions were read the parents begin discussing and writing down answers on their parental involvement questionnaire sheet. One parent, (Candace), did ask about question number 1, "How long have you lived in this community" she had lived within Claiborne County her entire life, but not within the community at which the school is located, and just moved to the community within the last month. I suggested she write 0 years on the questionnaire. She agreed that was the most appropriate answers as she previously commuted to the school and now she is within the town limits. The parental involvement questionnaire asked parents, "What do you enjoy most about this community" this question sparked most conversation as parents were proud to be a part of a community that was so small. (Allison) was the one of the first parents to state that she, ". . . likes the small town, knowing your neighbors, and near my family." This was a common response among the participants and they all agreed with other parents about the closeness of the community. Parents also began discussing that many fundraising events that the school and community hosted for particular members in the community that needed financial assistance in the past. The school's latest fundraising event involved a student that attended the school with a mother battling breast cancer. Silent auctions, t-shirt sales, penny drive, food drive, and raffle tickets

were are few ways that parents expressed ways the school rallied together to raise money for the family. This event sparked conversation as to how the parents within the school and community come together for the common good of other individuals. Fundraisers for parents with cancer, families whose houses have burned, or students that are living in the homeless shelter are other ways that the school and community pride themselves in assist others within this small, tightknit community.

The third question on the questionnaire asked parents, “Do you participate in parental involvement activities provided by the school?” This question also had most if not all parents in agreement as well. Most parents felt as if they did participate in parental involvement activities provided by the school and seemed open about discussing specific reasons why they are unable to attend particular events. If parents did not answer yes to the parental involvement question, “Do you participate in parents involvement activities provided by the school” parents responded with the following answers, “When I can,” “sometimes,” and “some” were the only other responses besides, “yes” I do participate in school events. Even though 12 parents answered yes to question number three, question four allowed parent to provide additional insight and reasoning behind why parents are unable to attend school events throughout the academic year. Question four asked, “What prevents you from attending parental involvement activities at school? Candace who hadn’t lived within the community until the last months stated that she, “lived to far away to attend all of them.” (Debbie) mentioned that it was, “sometimes hard to find a babysitter for my youngest son. ” It seemed that parents were concerned with scheduling conflicts, job, and family constraints. The gender and the participants’ years of living within the community varied among the parent groups. Figure 4 reflects the gender of the participants along with the years of living within the community.



*Figure 4.* Summarization of Group Participants' Gender and Years within the Community

### **Introductory Qualitative Themes Identified by Parent Participants**

The introductory meeting provided a unique perspective on what the parents' perspective were regarding their parental involvement within the school, and their children's academic education. Parents were asked questions concerning how long they had lived within the community and their participation in parental involvement activities that the school provided to them along with other parent participation questions. Parental involvement activities included, but were not limited to, Meet the Teacher Night, parent teacher organization meetings, student music programs, book fairs, and family night. In reviewing the transcripts, notes, and questionnaires, comments were generated next to relevant points of data often referred to as open coding (Merriam, 2009). With the use of open coding, I was able to combine the codes into fewer, more comprehensive categories which allowed the arrangement of those categories to

form comprehensible data. From this coding exercise, trends emerged which become the cornerstones for the analysis development. Analysis of the data suggested three key themes. Member checking was utilized and themes were shared with participants to ensure group data analysis was an accurate interpretation. Four participants responded to my email and affirmed the themes. Based on respondent feedback, no changes were made. The themes included; (a) parental involvement is contingent on the parents enjoyment about their school and community, (b) parental involvement suggested that schools be conscientious of scheduling of events and time, and (c) parents provided ideas for schools to increase attendance at parental involvement events. The introductory theme of parental involvement was contingent on the parents' enjoyment about their school and community included the subthemes of:

1. A small community looks out for each other and their children.
2. The community comes together to help out.
3. Everyone knows each other with the willingness to assist if needed, and
4. Residents enjoy the small town, rural setting, and friendly people.

The introductory theme of what prevents parents from attending parental involvement activities at school included the subthemes of:

1. The distances between school and home detours parents from attending dependent on time of scheduled event.
2. Work schedules prevent parents from attending when the school only offers events at certain times, and
3. Schools events across the district are held on same night, same time, and separate locations.



The introductory theme of what can the school provide in order to increase the attendance at parental involvement activities included the subthemes of:

1. Become conscientious of event times in order to coordinate with surrounding schools to plan activities.
2. Offer different times so that working parents can attend.
3. Offer door prizes and food to help with working families.

Table 1 provides a summary of the primary themes and corresponding subthemes.

Table 1

*Summary of Introductory Themes and Subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
Parental involvement is contingent on the parents' enjoyment about their school and community	Small community looks out for each other Community comes together to help out Willingness to assist if needed Small town, rural setting, and friendly people
Parent's involvement suggested that schools be conscientious of scheduling of events and time	Distance between school and home detours parents from attending dependent on time of event Work schedules prevents parents from attend with event are only offered at certain times Events on the same night, same time, separate locations
Parents provided suggestions for the school in order to increase attendance at parental involvement events	Conscientious of event times in order to coordinate with surrounding schools to plan activities Offer different times so that working parents can attend Offer door prizes and food

## **Introductory Theme 1: Parental involvement is Contingent on Enjoyment about School and Community**

The parents seemed to go in two directions when determining if they were involved and happy with their school's parental involvement programs. The factor that was listed multiple times dealt with the small communities in which parents believed made them more involved and satisfied with their children's school. Parents documented that small communities and a sense of safety were supports that were valuable to them as parents. The discussion between parents during the meeting regarding their perceptions of a small community, also confirmed this assumption.

### **Subtheme 1. 1: Parents value living in a small community**

Allison, who had lived within the community for 16 years explained, "I like the small town, knowing your neighbors, and I am near family." (Erica) mentioned that the, "closeness of others and their positive attitudes" made the community more enjoyable. Parents listed being close to family played a significant part in their enjoyment. (Georgia) had lived in the community for 32 years, and she stated, "My family and friends are a part of this community which I like." (Lisa) also agreed by adding, "I enjoy being close to family most." (Stacy) placed her enjoyment upon the small town feel, "I enjoy that it is a small town." The feelings from most parents were that a small town feel placed a high value on their enjoyment within the community.

### **Subtheme 1. 2: Parents placed value on how the community shows empathy to others.**

Multiple parents mentioned that members of the community assisted those in need, and this contributed to their enjoyment of living within the community. For instance, (Becky) whose have lived within the community for 30 years stated that she enjoyed, "the way

we all know each other and get along.” (Haley), who had lived within the community for 31 years, described her enjoyment based upon, “the willingness of others to pitch in and help those in need.” Pam who has resided in the community 32 years also agreed with Haley, “If anyone is ever in need, our community is good to come together and help out.” (Sara) contributed by adding, “Everyone in the community knows each other, and people help each other out. (Nicki) who is a longtime resident of 46 years also agreed that she enjoyed the, “small town and community.”

### **Subtheme 1. 3: Parents place their values on rural settings and small town.**

According to parents, the small town setting provided safety as well. Stacy had lived within the community for 18 years and described that her enjoyment was based on the fact that, “We live in a small town, and there isn’t really a lot to do in our area and that’s okay. ” Since this area was rural she enjoyed, “living far apart where no one bothers one another, but will help if need be.” (Fred), who had lived in the community 44 years, enjoyed the “rural setting and very friendly people.” (Margie) added that, “we look out for each other in our community.” While the community is rural, Candace who is a new resident enjoys that, “no one bothers one another in this community.”

### **Introductory Theme 2: Parent’s Involvement Suggested That Schools be Conscientious of**

#### **Scheduling of Events and Time**

This question provided the most responses in order for parents to attend more events. Although the distance to and from school posed difficulty, most parents wanted the school leaders to become more conscientious of when they schedule their events and times. Schools also schedule events on the same nights as other community schools, this was verified to be

difficult for some parents who have more than one child. Considering some families have children at different schools, event times play a crucial role in parent attendance.

### **Subtheme 2. 1: Distance Between School and Home Impedes Parental Involvement in Schools**

Few parents noted that the distance between school and home had a significant impact on whether they could attend parental involvement events. Candace, who had not lived within the community long, stated that, “living too far away to attend all of the events” kept her involvement lower than she would like. Georgia also supported Candace by affirming, “Living 30 minutes away from the school sometimes keep me from coming back.” Fred added that the school needed to have events, “immediately after school, so I don’t have to go home and come back.”

### **Subtheme 2. 2: Parent’s Work Schedules Conflict with School Events and Lowers Attendance Rate**

Parents noted the need for the school to be conscientious of the numerous working parents when scheduling events. Although the school was in close proximity to factories, parents felt as if their attendance would be increased if they had the option of attending events at different times throughout the day or week. Haley noted, “Work sometimes prevents me from attending all the functions that I would like too.” She then suggested that the school, “offer more activities around 6:00 p. m. so that working parents can attend. ” Margie had lived within the community for 35 years and agreed with Haley in the fact that times conflict with work schedule, “Most events are right after school, when the event is usually over by 5:00; that means I can’t go.” (Pam) sometimes leaves her job late and that prevented her from attending parental involvement activities at the school.

### **Subtheme 2. 3: School’s Event Timing Conflicts with Other Schools throughout the Community**

Parents also added that the school does not seem to coordinate their events with the other surrounding middle school and high school where they have another child attending.

Scheduling conflicts between the schools prevent parents from attending. For instance, Nicki stated, “Sometimes the times of the events interfere with other appointment times at different schools.” When Erica could not attend school events, it was usually because of her, “parental responsibilities among several kids (i.e., conferences on same night at separate locations).”

### **Introductory Theme 3: Parents Provide Suggestions in Order to Increase Attendance at Parental involvement Events**

Because schools are always looking for ways to improve, this question provided parents a way to feel included in their school’s parental involvement programs. Event times seem to be the most common constraint among parents; suggestions included offering the same event at different times and/or different days. Reiteration consisted of being conscientious of the other community schools events and times as well as offering families incentives for attending.

### **Subtheme 3. 1: Coordinate with Surrounding Schools to Create Schedule of Events**

Erica who had several children noted that the school needs to, “coordinate with surrounding schools to plan activities. ” Allison agreed, “Don’t schedule the events at the same time as the older sibling’s schools do, or at least give us different time options.” When schools coordinate with surrounding schools family time constraints are elevated given families more opportunities to attend school events.

### **Subtheme 3. 2: Schools May Offer Multiple Event Times for Parent Participation**

Becky suggested that the school make their events, “a little later than right after school. I will be at work and can’t come.” Haley, whose work schedule lowers her attendance at events, recommended the school, “Offer more activities around 6:00 p. m. so that working parents can attend.” Nicki added that the schools needs to, “Make events earlier, later, or longer participation times for the events which are held after school, and make events after school rather than during school hours.” Stacy supported the idea of different events times and stated, “Different times would be nice. The school will only give us one time and I can’t always take off work to be there.”

### **Subtheme 3. 3: Offer Incentives to Encourage Parental Participation**

Debbie suggested that the school, “Make a small activity for the younger siblings, to keep them occupied while parents are meeting with teachers.” Lisa agreed with Debbie and added, “Offer door prizes, and food is always a bonus for working moms.” Providing families with incentives such as snacks, activities, and door prizes schools can create a culture of caring for their families and children.

### **Post-Program Qualitative Themes Identified by Parent Participants**

The post-program interview provided a better understanding of parents’ viewpoints on the Family Literacy Bags after the conclusion of the program. The interview was to provide answers to the following research questions: Does a passive program such as a literacy bag lending library promote a connection between schools and home? Does an intrinsically motivated parental participation program provide parents self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school? Would a supplementary program including reading strategies intrinsically motivate parents to assist in children’s reading education?

The post-program interview questions were given ahead of time to the teacher so the parents would have access to the questions if so desired. Four of the 15 parents requested to see the interview questions prior to the post program interview. Parents who participated in the Family Literacy Bag study were asked to also participate in the post-program interview process in order to present another voice or perspective to the research study; three parents responded to the invitation. The question protocol is found in Appendix L. Parents participated in the interviews at the school site and were organized by the participating teacher and principal. This portion of Chapter 4 presents the main themes derived from the post-program parent interviews, using the aforementioned data analysis technique—open coding. The meeting began promptly after school after the students were dismissed for the day. Activities were provided for the students in attendance with their parents in order to allow parents an uninterrupted opportunity to participate in the post-program parent interview. Light refreshments were served to the students, such as juice boxes and fruit. Parents were appreciative of the activities and refreshments that was provided to their children and showed their appreciation by verbal affirmation to me. The post-program parent interviews were conducted in a similar format as the parental involvement interview prior to the implementation of the program. The meeting had a semi-structured format in which parents were read a question and had the opportunity to respond or write down answers on the questions sheet provided. To make sure that parents understood the post-program interview questions, I read aloud the questions and provided parents an appropriate amount of time to provide clarification to any questions. After each post-program question was read, I also provided parents an appropriate amount of time to record and discuss their answers. Parents seemed comfortable during this process and no questions were asked during the initial reading of the post-program interview questions. It was once again

comforting to see that parents were willing to provide their answers to the questions and did not seem to feel inferior to me as the researcher or to the parent questions that were being asked during the meeting.

The use of the post-program interview questions allowed me to gain a better understanding of parents' perceptions of the Family Literacy Bag program. Post-program questions sought to find out the following:

- If parents found that using the Family Literacy Bags were helpful to them and their children?
- Whether or not the activities in the Family Literacy Bags were engaging and interesting for both parent and child?
- If the parents believed the Family Literacy Bag program promoted a connection between school and home?
- Did the Family Literacy Bag program provided parents with motivation to help their child succeed in school?
- Did the Family Literacy Bag program provided parents with reading strategies that assisted them in helping their child in reading?
- Did parents feel comfortable using the materials provided in the Literacy Bag Program with their child?
- If parents were given the opportunity to participate in the Literacy Bag Program in the future would they participate?

Prior to the start of the meeting, parents were notified that the interviews were audio recorded and copies of the transcriptions would be available for each interviewee for review at the conclusion of the research study. Parents in the focus group provided a unique perspective



on their perceptions of the Family Literacy Bag program. The interview consisted of eight questions used to determine parent's perceptions of the Family Literacy Bags. The parents were reminded not to share their real names at the beginning of the meeting to ensure a degree of anonymity in data collection. I then used an iPad to audio record the conversations and then later transcribed the recording into MSWord document files. The transcription of the dialogue was only changed for coherence by adding punctuation and removing filler words or dialogue unrelated to the topic, such as school announcements heard over the school-wide intercom. Parents were comfortable during the interview process considering this was the same type of meeting that was held at the start of the research study. Chairs and table were provided for parents to sit and be able to write comfortably on the interview questionnaire sheet. Since there were only four parents in attendance, the setting was small and intimate for the parents, teacher, and researcher.

With the use of the open coding exercise, trends emerged from the post-program interviews which became the foundations for the data analysis. Analysis of the post-program data suggested three key themes. These themes included; (a) enjoyment level of the Family Literacy bags were contingent on activities, (b) reading strategies that were provided in the Family Literacy Bags assisted parents in their child's reading, and (c) parents felt comfortable using the Family Literacy Bag, but constricted due to the amount of time needed to complete. Once again, member checking was utilized and themes were shared with participants to ensure my focus group data analysis was an accurate interpretation. In this instance, all three participants responded to my email and affirmed the themes. Based on respondent feedback, no changes were made. The primary theme of parents' enjoyment level of the Family Literacy bags was contingent on activities within the bag included the following subthemes:

1. Students displayed excitement about the bags, books, and activities.
2. Parents appreciated the various weekly activities.
3. Parents and students lost interest due to the activities in the bags.

The primary theme that the Family Literacy Bags assisted parents with reading strategies that assisted their child included the subtheme of information regarding weekly reading skills were helpful to parents. The primary theme that parents felt comfortable using the Family Literacy Bag, but constricted due to the amount of time needed to complete included the following subthemes:

1. Weekly bags caused fatigue with parents and students.
2. Literacy bags were separate from curriculum and families did not see the bags as important.

Table 2 provides a summary of the primary themes and corresponding subthemes.

Table 2

*Summary of Post-Program Themes and Subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
Enjoyment level of the Family Literacy bags were contingent on activities	My child was excited which made him to read The activities were different from the normal homework and I thought the activities were fun We didn't always like the activities in the bags, and we lost interest
Reading strategies that were provided in the Family Literacy Bags assisted parents in their child's reading	Reading about the weekly skills helped me help my child
Parents felt comfortable using the Family Literacy Bag, but constricted due to the amount of time needed to complete	Instead of receiving bags every week, it would be nice bi-weekly Forgot about the book bag because it wasn't a part of the homework

**Post-Program Theme 1: Enjoyment Level of the Family Literacy Bags Were Contingent on Activities**

The parent's enjoyment level throughout the program was contingent on the activities within the Family Literacy Bags. Each week the Family Literacy Bags provided parents and their children with an activity to reinforce the weekly reading skill. If the parents or child lost interest in the bag, it seemed to be due to the fact that the activities were not interesting for their child. The weekly Family Literacy Bag contained various activities, yet parents suggested that the activities were not as interesting as they would have liked.

### **Post-Program Subtheme 1.1: Students Displayed Excitement about the Bags, Books, and Activities**

Parents enjoyed seeing their child excited about the Family Literacy Bags. However, after the first few weeks, the excitement wore off. (Cali) stated, “At the beginning of the program, yes, we were excited. He was excited to be getting the book bags and that made me excited too.” Debbie also agreed and that her child was, “motivated and he was excited to do the lessons.” Allison noted that her child thought the bags were, “fun for him to get.”

Post-Program Subtheme 1. 1 provided insight to the research question, “Does an intrinsically motivated parental participation program provide parents self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school?” Parents were encouraged to participate in the Family Literacy Bags based on their children’s excitement. When parents can see that their children’s excitement is heightened, the parents become excited and thus intrinsically motivated to help their children become successful.

### **Post-Program Subtheme 1.2: Parents Appreciated the Various Weekly Activities**

Each Family Literacy Bag included one activity that related to the weekly skill presented; it was noted by parents that some activities were not as interesting as they would have liked. Allison thought that, “The activities were fun and that they were different from the normal homework assignments we had to do.” Cali continued her support of the various activities by stating, “The program sounded interesting enough . . . let’s just say the stories and activities were interesting, we just lost interest because they [activities] didn’t seem as important to do since it was a part of the curriculum. ”

### **Post-Program Subtheme 1.3: Parents and Students Lost Interest Due to the Activities in the Bags**

Allison's son enjoyed the Family Literacy Bags at first. She said, "I think we only done those [activities] a couple of times, and then he lost interest. But we get busy, and I am probably a big fault to it as much as anyone. I am going to say at first, yes, we were excited, because he was like, oh yeah! Oh yeah, let me get this out, and I will show it to you. Let me show it to you, let me show it to you, let's do this! So we would do the activities, and then it just kind of faded off I think. Maybe because it seemed, not as important as you think it would be. Does that make sense?"

Another parent, Cali, felt the same way, "He didn't always like the activities that were in the bags. Sometimes they were too easy for him and sometimes the activities were a little boring, but we completed them anyways."

### **Post-Program Theme 2: Family Literacy Bags Assisted Parents with Reading Strategies that Assisted Their Children**

Family Literacy Bags provided parents with a weekly reading guide or lesson plans to assist them in reading and completing the activities with their child throughout the week. It was hoped that the weekly guides would encourage parents to read with their child and ask specific reading skills questions that would increase students' reading comprehension by using a specific reading strategy. The weekly guides were written with the educational jargon omitted and instead written in an easy-to-use, parent-friendly way to optimize parent and student success.

Post-Program Theme 2 provided insight to the research question, "Would a supplementary program including reading strategies intrinsically motivate parents to assist in their children's reading education?" Parents appreciated reading the guide books that were

provided with the Family Literacy Bags. Parents reported that the information was helpful, and they felt comfortable using the Family Literacy Bags. When parents have more confidence in their own reading acquisition skills, the parents become intrinsically motivated to use the Family Literacy Bag program simply because they know how to and they understand the material.

For Post-Program Subtheme 2.1, “Information regarding weekly reading skills were helpful to parents,” each Family Literacy Bag reviewed a weekly reading skill for that particular week. Within the bags daily handouts were given in order to assist parents in helping their children. Parents who participated in the interviews all said that the reading strategies were helpful in using the Family Literacy Bags. When I asked parents to expound their answer Cali stated, “It was nice to see the different skills that he was working on. Reading about them helped.” Another parent supported that by stating, “Yes the skills were helpful.”

### **Post-Program Theme 3: Parents Felt Comfortable Using the Family Literacy Bags, But Were Concerned about Time Constraints**

Literacy Bag information and guide books were provide in the literacy bags to inform parents how to use the Literacy Bags throughout the week. The Family Literacy Bag information suggested that parents use the following timeline: Monday, view the family literacy bags and listen to the audio books. Tuesday, choose another book from the bag and read together specifically focusing on the week’s skill. Wednesday, read the last book in the Family Literacy Bag, and on Thursday, the family would complete the audiobook activity together. The suggestions on how to use the bags allowed the parent and child to spend 25—30 minutes listening, reading, discussing, or completing the activity nightly. However, parents noted that some Family Literacy Bags took longer to complete in addition to the nightly homework that was being assigned by the teacher.

**Post-Program Subtheme 3.1: Weekly Bags Caused Fatigue with Parents and Students**

The parents stated that both parties lost interest during the program, albeit to lack of interest in activities, the genre of stories, or the time that it took to complete the weekly bags and activities. Cali added that although interest was lost, she would participate in a Literacy Bag program in the future but added the suggestion that, “Instead of every week, maybe every other week we get a bag.” Cali then suggested that the program be instructed differently, “It [the bags] came across to the child in a different manner . . . like it was optional. When we got the bags every week . . . it kind of gets shoved off, and when it should be important, it’s not. ”

**Post-Program Subtheme 3.2: Literacy Bags Were Separate from Curriculum and Families Did Not See the Bags as Important**

Although the parents’ participation in this research study was optional, one theme that arose from the interviews supported the claim, because the Family Literacy Bags were not a part of the curriculum, the parents and students did not spend enough time completing the activities. Furthermore, to the parents it seemed as if the activities were “optional” for the students since the activities were not taken as a grade. Alison stated, “Let’s just say the stories and activities, it wasn’t the fact that they weren’t interesting, [the bags] just didn’t seem as important to do since it wasn’t a part of the curriculum.” She continued by saying, “It didn’t seem as important as everything else. I think he even misplaced it a few times because you know, not as important. ”

Post-Program Subtheme #3 provided insight to the research question, “Does a passive program such as a literacy bag lending library promote a connection between schools and home?” Although the Family Literacy Bags were not a part of the curriculum—meaning not taken for a grade by the teacher—parents and students alike did not feel as if the Family Literacy Bags held as much importance as the other homework or activities that the teacher assigned.

One parent noted that the connection was not made because, “I never received any notice if we did things right or wrong.”

### **Quantitative Research Design**

The quantitative descriptive analysis research design was conducted using a survey design for data collection (Appendix J). The descriptive analysis was conducted in Excel. This was accomplished through the use of a Likert-type scale within survey. The use of a survey instrument adds familiarity for most people and allows the researcher to make comparisons among the respondents (Siskie, 1996). The survey was conducted utilizing one classroom which consisted of 15 parents who were also participating in the Literacy Bag Program. The survey was given weekly during the four week Literacy Bag Program. The survey consisted of seven questions parents rated on a scale of 1-5 and was used to determine the effectiveness of the program. The teacher’s weekly survey consisted of six questions using a Likert-type scale in which 1 = *not effective* and 5 = *very effective*. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Quantitative data collection occurred through weekly parent and weekly teacher surveys. The parent and teacher surveys sought to provide answers to the following research questions: Does a passive program such as a Literacy Bag Lending Library promote a connection between schools and home? Does an intrinsically motivated parental participation program provide parents self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school? Would a supplementary program including reading strategies intrinsically motivate parents to assist in children’s reading education? Do school stakeholders see the literacy bag program as a worthwhile tool to increase students’ academic confidence and parental involvement?



## Quantitative Data Analysis

During the data collection period, four of the parent participants had incomplete survey submissions. Even though the sample size was already small, it was appropriate to eliminate the four parent participants' surveys for the overall analysis. After the information was entered in Excel, descriptive statistics were generated. The statistics were processed on each question for the duration of the Literacy Bag Program for the participating teacher and parents with complete survey participation. The goal of developing descriptive statistics is the ability to take raw scores (i.e., parent surveys) and summarize them in a form that is more manageable. For each survey question the mean, median, mode, and the standard deviation were generated.

### Parent Survey Question 1

The weekly means, medians, and standards deviations for the survey item asking parents to rate how effective literacy bags were in terms of, "Promoting your involvement in your child's literacy experiences" is evidenced in Table 3. Considering the five-point Likert-type scale in which 1 = *not effective* and 5 = *very effective*, the overall four-week mean was high (overall average of 4.00). The median or *middle* value was consistent at 4.00 and 5.00, trending higher as the overall mean increased throughout the four-week period. Save the second week, overall standard deviations were tight throughout the data collection period, evidencing small differences in respondent feedback across this survey question.

Table 3

*Question 1, Weeks 1 to 4 Descriptive Statistics*

Question 1	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<i>M</i>	4.00	3.80	4.33	4.67
<i>Mdn</i>	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00
<i>SD</i>	1.04	1.40	0.87	0.50

**Parent Survey Question 2**

The weekly means, medians, and standards deviation for the survey item asking parents to rate how effective literacy bags were in terms of, “Providing opportunities for your child to see parents valuing literacy” is evidenced in Table 4. For the five-point Likert- type scale in which 1 = *not effective* and 5 = *very effective*, the overall four-week mean was high (overall average of 4.21). The median of *middle value* was consistent at 4.00 and 5.00, trending higher during weeks two and three. Once again, standard deviations were close throughout the data collections period, reporting a small difference in respondent feedback across this survey question.

Table 4

*Question 2, Weeks 1 to 4 Descriptive Statistics*

Question 2	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<i>M</i>	3.86	4.20	4.44	4.33
<i>Mdn</i>	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.00
<i>SD</i>	1.03	1.14	0.88	0.71

**Parent Survey Question 3**

The weekly means, medians, and standards deviations for the survey item asking parents to rate how effective literacy bags were in terms of, “promoting literacy among your family” is verified in Table 5. Using the five-point Likert- type scale in which 1 = *not effective* and 5 = *very effective*, the overall four-week mean was high (overall average of 4.11). The median or *middle* value was consistent at 4.00 and 5.00 with an increasing overall median from week one to five. Overall, standard deviations were tight during the data collection period, evidencing small differences in respondent feedback across this survey question.

Table 5

*Question 3, Weeks 1 to 4 Descriptive Statistics*

Question 3	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<i>M</i>	3.57	4.10	4.33	4.44
<i>Mdn</i>	3.50	4.00	5.00	5.00
<i>SD</i>	1.28	0.88	1.00	0.73

#### Parent Survey Question 4

The weekly means, medians, and standards deviations for the survey item asking parents to rate how effective literacy bags were in terms of, “ talking about culture and human values with your child” is evidenced in Table 6. Considering the Likert-type scale in which 1 = *not effective* and 5 = *very effective*, the overall four-week average was not as high as the previous questions (overall mean of 3.88). The median or *middle* value increased through the four-week period with the fourth week median holding high with 5.00. The standard deviations became tighter throughout the four-week program, still evidencing small differences in respondent feedback especially during weeks two through four.

Table 6

#### *Question 4, Weeks 1 to 4 Descriptive Statistics*

Question 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<i>M</i>	3.14	3.80	4.00	4.56
<i>Mdn</i>	3.00	4.00	4.00	5.00
<i>SD</i>	1.51	1.03	1.12	0.73

#### Parent Survey Question 5

The weekly means, medians, and standard deviations for the survey item asking parents to rate how effective literacy bags were in terms of, “increasing your child’s motivation for reading” is verified in Table 7. Considering the five-point Likert-type scale in which 1 = *not effective* and 5 = *very effective*, the overall four-week mean was high (overall average of 4.27). The median or *middle* value was consistent at 4.00 and 5.00, trending higher as the mean

increased in week four. The standard deviations were tight, especially in week 2 and 3, evidencing small differences in respondent feedback across this survey question.

Table 7

*Question 5, Weeks 1 to 4 Descriptive Statistics*

Question 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<i>M</i>	3.79	4.50	4.22	4.56
<i>Mdn</i>	4.00	5.00	4.00	5.00
<i>SD</i>	1.12	0.71	0.97	1.01

**Parent Survey Question 6**

The weekly means, medians, and standard deviations for the survey items asking parents to rate how effective literacy bags were in terms of, “increasing your child’s ability to read” is evidenced in Table 8. Considering the five-point Likert-type scale in which 1 = *not effective* and 5 = *very effective*, the overall four-week mean was high (overall average of 4.11). The median or *middle* value trended high through the four week program. Save the third week, overall standard deviations were tight throughout the data collection period, evidencing small differences in respondent feedback across this survey question.

Table 8

*Question 6, Weeks 1 to 4 Descriptive Statistics*

Question 6	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<i>M</i>	3.93	4.30	3.89	4.33
<i>Mdn</i>	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.00
<i>SD</i>	1.07	0.82	1.54	1.12

**Parent Survey Question 7**

The weekly means, medians, and standard deviation for the survey item asking parents to rate how effective literacy bags were in terms of “meeting your family’s needs and time constraints” is presented in Table 9. Considering the five-point Likert-type scale in which 1 = *not effective* and 5 = *very effective*, the overall four-week mean was high (overall average of 4.02). The median or *middle* value increased throughout the program and trending highest weeks three and four. Overall standard deviations were tight weeks one through three during the data collections period, evidencing small differences in respondent feedback across this survey questions.

Table 9

*Question 7, Weeks 1 to 4 Descriptive Statistics*

Question 7	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<i>M</i>	3.43	4.30	4.22	4.11
<i>Mdn</i>	3.00	4.50	5.00	5.00
<i>SD</i>	1.22	0.82	0.97	1.45

### Teacher Weekly Survey Results

The means, medians, and standard deviations for the weekly teacher surveys during the Family Literacy Bag program is evidenced in Table 10. Considering the five-point Likert-type scale in which 1 = *not effective* and 5 = *very effective*, the teacher survey proved beneficial in providing answers the aforementioned research questions. Weekly means for Questions 1 and 4 was high (overall average of 4.13). Question 1 survey item asked the teacher if, “the Family Literacy Bags promoted the excitement of reading within your classroom,” and Question 4 survey item asked the teacher if the “Family Literacy Bag program increased students reading confidence.” Questions 5 and 6 had a lower overall mean and median in weeks one to four compared to the first four questions. Question 5 asked teachers if the “Family Literacy Bag program increased their student’s ability to read,” whereas Question 6 asked the teacher if the “Family Literacy Bags met teacher expectations with encouraging parental involvement at home.” The median was consistent in the beginning of the program (4.00). Overall standard deviations were tight throughout the data collection period, evidencing little difference in respondent feedback across the survey questions.

The teacher weekly survey results addressed Research Question 4, “Do school stakeholders see the literacy bag program as a worthwhile tool to increase students’ academic confidence and parental involvement?” Although the mean for the weekly questions ranged between 2.75 to 4.25 (Table 10), it was determined that the school stakeholders found the Family Literacy Bags merely *somewhat effective* as a worthwhile tool to increase students’ academic confidence and parental involvement.

Table 10

*Teacher Survey, Weeks 1 to 4 Descriptive Statistics*

Weeks 1 to 4	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6
<i>M</i>	4.25	3.75	3.25	4.00	2.75	2.75
<i>Mdn</i>	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.00	3.00
<i>SD</i>	0.50	0.50	0.96	0.00	0.50	0.50

**Summary**

Fifteen parents from a rural school in Cumberland Gap, Tennessee, voluntarily contributed to participate in this research study. Parents met prior to the implementation of the Family Literacy Bag Program to acquire a better understanding of the research study along with gaining a better perspective of parental involvement and student academic achievements. The data analysis consisted of a parental involvement questionnaire prior to the implementation of the program and weekly parent surveys through the duration of the four-week program, along with a parent post-program parent interview. The teacher who participated in the study also completed weekly teacher surveys throughout the four week program. The parental involvement pre-program questionnaire provided a better understanding in how parents viewed their involvement within the school and home, and three themes and nine subthemes emerged from the questionnaire with the use of open coding. Post- program interviews were conducted with parents to gain additional insight of their views after the program concluded. With the use of open coding, three themes and six subthemes emerged from the parent interviews. Parent and teacher weekly surveys were collected each Friday for quantitative data analysis.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This concurrent mixed-method design provided a more comprehensive look at the role of a non-presumptuous literacy bag program as a component of increasing parental involvement in a rural Appalachia school. I also looked at parents' perceptions of their involvement in parental activities that the school hosted. This study provided me the opportunity to investigate how the parents and teachers viewed the use of the Family Literacy Bag program in a small rural community in Claiborne County, Tennessee. The school that participated in this research study included first grade students who attended a Title-I public school located in the rural district of Claiborne County, Tennessee. The students in the participating school ranged from six to eight years of age and were of Caucasian, and mixed races. 66% of students' enrolled received free and reduced lunch yet since the schools economically disadvantage students was reported at 58% the school was awarded a grant ensuring all enrolled students received free lunch. The school attendance is high and suspension is low, which equates to students that seem to want to be at school. The student ethnicity is comprised of mostly white students (450) with only 2% of students reported as black or African Americans. The school reported that 19.6% of the students have disabilities.

My interest in this topic stemmed from having been born and raised within the hills of the rural Appalachian community. I found my passion in serving children whose literacy achievement is limited due to SES, limited print resources at home, lack of intrinsic motivation,

or limited parental involvement. My goal as a researcher stands upon the preceding factors that seem to plague the students of rural Appalachia. Like this investigation and study, I strongly believe that parents and schools should work together in order to increase student achievement at home and in the classroom. In addition, I believe that schools should set the tone for a positive parental involvement climate by providing parents with tools and skills they need to help their children at home. With this mixed-methods study approach, I was able to gain insight from parents regarding their amount of parental involvement within the school along with their perceptions on the Family Literacy Bag Program.

One first grade teacher and 15 parents whose children were enrolled in first grade in a rural elementary school located in Claiborne County, Tennessee, participated in this study. The school was randomly selected and was first to accept the proposal to participate in the study. The participating school served students from a lower-socioeconomic background. Parents who participated in the program took part in pre-program questionnaire, weekly parent surveys, and a post-program interview. The teacher also completed weekly surveys for the duration of the Family Literacy Bag program. Each component of this mixed-methods study added to the overarching results that as a researcher, was extremely beneficial to my investigation of parental involvement and Family Literacy Bags. Parents had different viewpoints on how active they felt they were in parent events the school sponsored; the various viewpoints at the conclusion of the Family Literacy Bags provided additional insights as to how Family Literacy Bags could become a part of any school's parental involvement program. Common primary themes and subthemes arose from the parent questionnaires, surveys, and interviews throughout the duration of this study.

This chapter is organized into three major sections. The first section presents summaries of the findings from the introductory themes and subthemes and post-program themes and subthemes that presented themselves during the qualitative analysis. This section is organized around the original research questions that guided this study. Summaries of the descriptive data supporting the original research questions are also reported in this chapter. The second section discusses the implications and additional findings of particular themes that did not provide additional insight in how the program was implemented. The third section contains recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of Findings**

#### **Research Question 1**

“Does a passive program such as a literacy bag lending library promote a connection between schools and home?” Themes emerged showing that the Family Literacy Bag program promoted a connection between home and schools. Introductory Theme 2 concluded that most parents involved in the research showed great concern about the distance to and from school and how that impeded parental involvement. Introductory Subtheme 2.1 suggested that the use of Family Literacy Bags could assist parents who lived further distances from school in which they could not always attend parental involvement meetings. Introductory Subtheme 2.2 also supported the use of Family Literacy Bags as a component of parental involvement since parent’s work schedules limited their attendance at parent events. The use of Family Literacy Bags encouraged students and parents to work cooperatively at home in completing activities and practicing specific reading skills. The use of Family Literacy Bags would also eliminate parents’ concerns of conflicting event times among other schools. Parents wanted schools to become more aware of the limitations that are placed on working parents who live 10 or more

miles from the school, or those parents, in particular, whose children attend middle or high school. Schools need to work with the parent's schedules, and evidently parents agreed upon by the suggestions they provided on the questionnaires. The use of Family Literacy Bags as a component of a parental involvement program would assist working parents. Introductory Subtheme 2.3 suggested that parents would like to receive incentives to encourage parent's participation. Parents and students who use the Family Literacy Bags could be given incentives for completing the program if the schools deemed that as a necessary component for completion.

### **Research Question 2**

“Does an intrinsically motivated parental participation program provide parents self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school?” Themes emerged post-program that showed that the Family Literacy Bags promoted parents' self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school. Post-Program Subtheme 1.1 indicated that when students displayed excitement about the bags, books, and activities that parents were encouraged to participate in the Family Literacy Bags based on their children's excitement. When parents could see that their children's excitement was heightened, parents were excited and motivated to help their children. Additional themes such as the enjoyment level of the Family Literacy Bags were contingent on activities, and the theme suggested that Family Literacy Bags assisted parents with reading strategies both supported parents' self-efficacy in helping their children. Family Literacy Bags can provide parents additional motivation to become successful at home by increasing their parental involvement with their children. The descriptive analysis supported that Family Literacy Bags promoted parents' involvement in their children's literacy experiences. Parent survey Question 1 had an overall four-week average of 4.00. Parent Survey Question 2 asked if the Family Literacy Bags, “provided opportunities for your child to

see parents valuing literacy” and this survey response had an overall four-week average of 4.21.

The median was consistent at 4.00 and 5.00, trending higher during weeks two and three.

Parents agreed that the Family Literacy Bags promoted their involvement in their child’s reading education, thus promoting parents’ self-efficacy.

### **Research Question 3**

“Would a supplementary program, including reading strategies, intrinsically motivate parents to assist in children’s reading education?” Two post-program themes supported that when parents received supplementary readings as a guide in using the Family Literacy Bags, the enjoyment level for both parents and students is heightened. Post-Program Theme 2 verified that parents appreciated reading the guide books that were provided with the Family Literacy Bags. The guide books were easy-to-read information covering weekly reading skills and techniques that would be helpful to parents in completing the activities within the bag. Parents were comfortable using the Family Literacy Bags with their children because of the guide books. When parents have more confidence in their own reading acquisition skills, the parents were intrinsically motivated to use the Family Literacy Bag program simply because they understood the material within the bags; Post-program Subtheme 2.1 noted this finding. Although parents understood the material and felt comfortable using the Family Literacy Bags, the descriptive analysis for parents’ Survey Question 3 also supported this finding. Question 3 on the parent survey asked how effective literacy bags were in terms of, “promoting literacy among your family?” The overall four-week mean ( $M = 4.11$ ) was high. The Family Literacy Bags were able to promote literacy within the household and was deemed effective by parents.

#### **Research Question 4**

Do school stakeholders see the literacy bag program as a worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement? The descriptive analysis supported that the stakeholders from the teacher's standpoint thought the Family Literacy Bags were *somewhat effective* as a worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement. Viewing parents as part of the school stakeholders would suggest the literacy bags are a worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement. The descriptive analysis supported this with Parent Survey Questions 5 and 6. Parent Survey Question 5 asked if the literacy bags were effective in "increasing your child's motivation for reading." The overall four-week mean ( $M = 4.27$ ) was high. Parent Survey Question 6 determined that Family Literacy Bags were effective in "increasing your child's ability to read." The overall four-week mean ( $M = 4.11$ ) was high. Viewing parents as a school stakeholder supported that the Family Literacy Bags was a worthwhile tool to increase student's academic confidence and parental involvement.

#### **Additional Findings**

Considering that the level of parental involvement is such an important component of the successfulness of the Family Literacy Bag program, the pre-program parental involvement questionnaire was helpful in gaining insights of parent participation. Additional themes arose that were beneficial to the research and could be implied for any future research related to this study. Introductory Theme 1 placed an emphasis that parental involvement was contingent on the parents' enjoyment about their school and community. Introductory Theme 1 allowed me to find that the majority of parents who filled out questionnaires placed great importance on living within the small community of Claiborne County, Tennessee. Twelve of the 15 parents stated

that they enjoyed the small community feel. Being a close knit community where “people help each other out” is not an understatement. Eighty percent of parent participants included small, rural, and/or tight-knit in their answers. The town climate evidenced a feeling of family—kind, nice, and caring citizens. Furthermore, parents expressed their appreciation for the people, small community, and their school within the small community. Having been a resident of this small town, I can attest to the fact that this is a small community where “everyone knows your name.” Based on Pre-Program Theme 1, Subthemes 1.1 (Students Displayed Excitement about the Bags, Books, and Activities), 1.2 (Parents Appreciated the Various Weekly Activities), and 1.3 (Parents and Students Lost Interest Due to the Activities in the Bags) all related to the values that parents place on their small community, community members, and schools.

Introductory Theme 3 provided additional findings with parent suggestions. Parents provided suggestions in order for schools to increase the parent attendance at school-sponsored events. Subthemes 3.1 (Weekly Bags Caused Fatigue with Parents and Students), 3.2 (Literacy Bags Were Separate from Curriculum and Families Did Not See the Bags as Important), 3.3 (Offer Incentives to Encourage Parental Participation) gave additional insights into the suggestions parents provided for schools to be conscientious of. Suggestions included coordinating with surrounding schools to create schedule of events, offer multiple events times to increase participation, and offer incentives to encourage parent’s participation.

Once the Family Literacy Bag program had concluded participating parents were asked to contribute in the post-program interviews. The parent interviews would give additional insights that would be included in the study. The following post-program themes and subthemes offer researchers additional insight on how parents’ views could affect the implementation of the Family Literacy Bags in a parent program. Although the following themes did not negate the

original research questions for this study, the additional findings are related to the implementation of the program not the original research questions.

The following themes would recommend how to restructure the design and implementation of the Family Literacy Bag programs in order for parents to become more involved. Post-Program Theme 1 centered on parents' enjoyment of the Family Literacy Bags and how their enjoyment was contingent on the activities within the bag. Weekly bags contained specific reading activities related to the weekly skill. Some Family Literacy Bags activities required students and parents to color, cut, paste, and draw. On weeks that the activities did not include the above-mentioned activities, parents would assist their children in completing activities that required numbering sentences for sequencing, writing the main idea of a story, and finding supporting details, writing a summary for the text, and completing graphic organizers. Those in particular activities would mimic the activities that students completed in the classroom and parents or students may not find those activities as enjoyable. Post-program Subtheme 1.2 noted that parents appreciated the various weekly activities, and Post-program Subtheme 1.3 demonstrated that parents and students lost interest due to the activities in the bags.

Considering how parents voiced their views regarding the activities within the Family Literacy Bags, the results from the Post-program Theme 3 also provided additional insight on their enjoyment levels. Post-program Theme 3 suggested that parents felt comfortable using the family literacy bags; however, they were concerned about how much time it took to complete the activities. This time constraint could be contingent upon the activities that students did not seem to enjoy. When students do not enjoy what they are doing, it makes it harder on the parents in accomplishing the task at hand. This lack of enjoyment tied directly with Post-program



Subtheme 3.1 in which weekly bags caused fatigue with parents and students. This fatigue occurred later in the program and could be directly related to the activities that students and parents did not find interesting.

Although the Family Literacy Bag was an optional program for parents to participate in, it was understood that students did not receive a grade for the activities that they completed from the teacher. Students completed the weekly activities with parents and Post-program Subtheme 3.2 was related to this concern; although the Family Literacy Bags were separate from curriculum, families did not see the bags as important. This result could be due to the fact that the students did not receive feedback from their teacher once the activities in the bags were completed (i.e., homework checks, grades, stickers). Although teachers did not promote the bags nor give extrinsic motivation in completing the bags, students' excitement levels could have been diminished which in turn made the activities more difficult for parents to complete with their children.

The quantitative research design provided this study with a descriptive analysis of the parents' questions and their relation to the original research questions. Additional findings showed the Parents' Survey Questions 4 and 7 did not support original research questions, but did provide me with additional findings that were substantial to future research. It was my hope that the different genres of books and activities would assist parents in "talking about culture and human values with your child." This survey question did not yield high-ranked results as opposed to the previous parent questions. The overall four-week average for this question had an overall mean of 3.88 and rated as *somewhat effective*. Parent Survey Question 7 asked if the Family Literacy Bags were effective in "meeting your family's needs and time constraints." This question also ranked lower due to relation of Post-program Theme 3 and the two subthemes.

Parents enjoyed the literacy bags and so did the child at the beginning of the program, but the weekly activities seem to cause fatigue with students and parents.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study were influences beyond the researcher's control. The limitations of this study included:

- The sample size involved a small number of students and teachers from an intact group at one school.
- The purpose of this study was to seek themes and common experiences from parents whose children were included in the study. As the primary researcher, I took notes along with recordings of interviews in an effort to collect as much accurate data as possible; however, there is a possibility that some comments made by parents relayed from their children may have been misinterpreted by me.
- The location of this study took place where I was raised, which provided access to an impoverished rural school during the study's timeframe. The location was also identified as *distressed*; a locale in which literacy development was most challenged and parent participation in schooling is marginal.
- The parent survey questions were vetted by Midwestern educators at the researcher's place of employment and as such, may have included words or phrases not familiar to study participants.

### **Implications**

#### **Implications for School Administrators**

Parents from this study spoke about several aspects of their schools' parental involvement programs: event times, scheduling, and incentive programs. All of these concerns

are impacted by the decision-making of the school administrator(s). School administrators are tasked with a multitude of decisions that must be made every single day. From the results of this research it is hope that administrators will work toward the following:

1. Become conscientious of event times when scheduling parental events.

According to parents, their involvement would be increase if schools would work with surrounding schools to provide times that works for all parents. Dwyer and Hecht (1992) noted that parents work many hours per week and are not available when the teacher is. In order to reach parents schools should look at the times they are offering interaction with parents. "Scheduling times other than the traditional "after school" slot for parent meetings could possible help parents who have little time" (Dwyer & Hecht, 1992, p. 285). There is potential for parental involvement programs to have increased attendance if administrators schedule events using parent feedback from this study in relation to working parents. This might include offering the same event at multiple times throughout the day to accommodate varying schedules. Plan beyond the customary after school event held once or twice a semester. Instead, offer parents options for attending these events. Meetings during teachers' planning period, before school events, after school events, or schedule the same event twice a week for working parents.

2. Offer incentives (i.e., snacks, door prizes, food, child services) for parents in order to increase parental participation. Schools could also focus efforts on implementing a school-wide incentive program that concentrates on rewarding parent's involvement at home and at school. Look at your current parental

involvement program and determine if you are motivating your students and your parents to become more involved.

Most parents want to be involved in their children's education, they may not be exactly should how to go about it, especially if, like most parents, they work during the school day.

### **Implications for Educators**

A recommendation for teachers from this research is to be intentional about seeking the opinions of parents to find out what they believe is or is not working for them in relation to the parental involvement within your classroom and school. Administrator(s) must keep the lines of communication open to parents and this is also a priority for teachers. "The exact ways and means of the involvement must vary according to the situation of the school and the parents, but all programs must begin with the simple act of communicating" (Dwyer & Hecht, 1998, p. 286). Sending home surveys asking parents how you could improve parental involvement at home is beneficial insight for the educators to reevaluate their parental communication. To gather first-hand opinions, educators would be well served to converse with parents to determine if the classroom and school-wide parental involvement program is conducive to increasing their parental involvement. As Dwyer and Hecht (1992) noted, teachers must change their views that school is "only an 8 to 3 proposition" (p. 287). Dwyer and Hecht also recommended that educators establish regular hours outside of the school day to check email, and to respond by telephone when necessary, to parent questions or concerns (p. 287).

### **Implications for Parents**

This study reaffirmed parent impact on student achievement when school is made a priority in the home. The use of the Family Literacy Bags in the home can provide motivation

incentives for goals reached by completing together. Showing students that school is important by making time for homework in the evening and working together in completing the Family Literacy Bags can send that message to children. Parents working with their children in the home can have a great impact on school success by making the point clear to the child that school is important. Parents have important knowledge about their child's likes, dislikes, needs, and problems that the school may not be aware of. Parents may also have ideas for improving their child's schools and they need to work together so all children can succeed in school (Epstien, 1995).

### **Implications for Future Research**

When beginning this study, the hope was that parents of students enrolled in first grade classrooms in a rural Appalachia community would participate. The county is home to eight elementary schools, and it was anticipated prior to this study that multiple schools would participate in order for the sample size to be larger. Due to financial restrictions with providing multiple schools Family Literacy Bags this was unattainable and therefore, the population size was limited to one school and 15 participants who participated in the Family Literacy Bag program. Although parents in this study gave ideas of consideration, it would be interesting to attempt this same study in the future with a larger population and sample size to discover if it elicits greater participation and deeper, more thoughtful understanding of the original research questions. With the limited number of participants involved in the study, it is recommended that future studies on a Family Literacy Bag program incorporate a larger demographic of participants to better generalize and transfer results of the study.

Location also matters for future research relative to the level of socioeconomic status and average grade level of parent participants. Lessons learned from this study could inform school

administrators, educators, and parents how to work cooperatively together in creating a positive school culture, increase student engagement, and provide an additional component to a school-wide parental involvement program.

Lastly, an important factor to consider in future research relates to the type of Family Literacy Bags that will be provided to parents within the study. Due to financial restrictions Family Literacy Bags were created by the researcher using the guidelines set forth by research on this topic (Zeece & Wallace, 2009). However, these bags were not fully vetted for validity and reliability. Future research could be positively impacted if the study included literacy bags that included research-based materials (e.g., books, activities, parent guidebooks).

### **Summary**

One rural Appalachian elementary school, 15 parents of first grade children, and one first grade elementary school teacher participated in this concurrent mixed-methods study design. This study was conducted to seek a deeper understanding of parental involvement and to increase the family involvement at home with the use of Family Literacy Bags. Through the use of face-to-face meetings, interviews, questionnaires, and surveys, parents voluntarily contributed to participate in the research study. Common themes were discovered throughout the duration of this study. The parent participants generously shared their views on parental involvement, and various ways the school could enhance their parental involvement program to increase the involvement of parents in their children's academics. Parents also took part in a literacy bag program in which the participants completed weekly surveys through the duration of four weeks, along with participating in a parent post-program parent interview. The teacher completed weekly teacher surveys throughout the four week literacy program. The parental involvement pre-program questionnaire provided a better understanding in how parents viewed their

involvement within the school and home, weekly surveys were used to determine the effectiveness of the literacy bag program with parents and their child in the home, and the post-program interview allowed parents to give their viewpoints on the four-week literacy bag program.

There were limitations, implications, and recommendations for further research, as noted earlier in this chapter; I believe that this study successfully accomplished what I set out to do. I identified that parental involvement is necessary to increase student achievement, and that a non-presumptuous literacy bag program would be a positive addition to a school's parental involvement program. The common themes derived from this study confirmed that Family Literacy Bags can increase parental involvement in the home. It is my desire that this study will help districts, school administrator, and teachers to reevaluate their parental involvement program with the hope of adding a literacy bag program to their curriculum.

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APPENDIX A: TRANSCRIPT FOR ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL/SUPERINTENDENT IN  
RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL/DISTRICT

On the Phone:

“Hello, my name is Ashley Overton. I am a doctoral student at Indiana State University. In the coming weeks I will be conducting a research study about parental involvement and how to increase the level of involvement at home by using a non-presumptuous literacy bag program with the first grade students’ parents and guardians. I am calling to ask if you would be willing to allow me to conduct my research at a/your school with one of your first-grade teachers.

“If interested, I will provide you with my contact information, and will also contact the first grade teachers in your building. If you have questions about your participation, I can be reached at 865. 585. 1517 or [aoverton@msdsc.us](mailto:aoverton@msdsc.us).

If not interested, I will end the call, “Thank you for your time. ”

APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPT FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHER IN RURAL ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL

On the Phone:

“Hello, my name is Ashley Overton. I am a doctoral student at Indiana State University. In the coming weeks I will be conducting a research study about parental involvement and how to increase the level of involvement at home by using a non-presumptuous literacy bag program with the first grade students’ parents and guardians at your school. I am calling to ask if you would be willing to allow me to conduct my research in your classroom with the parents of your students.

“If interested, I will provide you with my contact information, and will also contact the first grade teachers in your building. If you have questions about your participation, I can be reached at 865. 585. 1517 or [aoverton@msdsc.us](mailto:aoverton@msdsc.us).

If not interested, I will end the call, “Thank you for your time.”



APPENDIX C: TEACHER CONSENT FORM ENCOURAGING PARENTAL  
INVOLVEMENT WITH THE USE OF LITERACY BAG PROGRAM

My name is Ashley Overton and I am a student at Indiana State University. I am working to determine if parental involvement can be encouraged and increased with the implementation and use of a ten week Literacy Bag program.

I am seeking your help in order to conduct this research in your classroom. If you agree, I would like to discuss the current level of parental involvement in your classroom. I will ask you some questions about the level of parental involvement you are currently seeing this academic school year.

I am asking for your permission to include you in my research. This consent form will give you the information you need to understand the Literacy Bag Program and why this study is being done.

If you decide to participate in this study, please sign this form. The signed form may be returned to the literacy director at your school and I will provide you a signed copy via U. S. Mail.

- **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the implementation of a Literacy Bag program as a critical component of increasing parental involvement in Rural-Appalachia schools as it relates to student literacy achievement.

- **PROCEDURE**

Data collection will occur through initial interviews and weekly parent and teacher surveys. All participants will be informed that their involvement is voluntary and the consent form will be read to each parent to ensure they fully understand the nature of their participation. I will interview parents, in small groups of five participants or fewer, whose children are in first grade. Each focus group of parents will only be interviewed one time prior to the implementation of the Literacy Bag program. The duration of the program will rely upon weekly parent and teacher surveys that seek to provide answers to the following questions: Does a passive program such as a Literacy Bag Lending Library promote a connection between schools and home? Additionally, this study will develop a theoretical understanding of the following questions. What does an intrinsically motivated parental participation program need to provide parents in order to promote self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school? Would a supplementary program including reading strategies intrinsically motivate parents to assist in children's reading education? Do school stakeholders see the literacy bag program as a worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement?

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information in the study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the persons conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

- **BENEFITS**

There will be benefits to you and your students from participating in this study. The use of the supplies and materials in each literacy bag will be provided to you at no cost. The implementation and duration of the program will be completed by the researcher.

- **QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study and your participation, you may contact the investigator Ashley Overton (865). 585. 1517 or her advisor, Dr. Bradley Balch, at (812). 237. 2802.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB's mission is to protect the rights and welfare of all participants in research projects. If you feel at any time during the duration of this project you've been placed at risk, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at Indiana State University at (812). 237. 8217 or irb@indstate.edu

- **PARTICIPATION**

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the research described above. I understand that participation in the study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions, you can email me at aoverton@msdsc.us or call me at 865. 585. 1517

Your printed name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of person obtaining consent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D: PARENT CONSENT FORM ENCOURAGING PARENTAL  
INVOLVEMENT WITH THE USE OF LITERACY BAG PROGRAM

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Ashley Overton and I am a student at Indiana State University. I am also an elementary school teacher in Angola, Indiana. My faculty sponsor is Dr. Bradley Balch. My contact information is [aoverton@msdsc.us](mailto:aoverton@msdsc.us) or (865). 585. 1517.

I am asking for your permission to include you in my research. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. This consent form will give you the information you need to understand the Literacy Bag Program, why this study is being done, and why you are being invited to participate. If you decide to participate in this study, please sign this form. The signed form may be returned to your child's teacher and I will provide you a signed copy via U. S. Mail.

- **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this study is to learn more about parental involvement and to determine if the use of a Literacy Bag Program in your child's classroom will increase parents' involvement in reading activities at home. I hope to use what I learn from the study to make changes to current parental involvement programs in public schools.

- **PROCEDURE**

The study consists of weekly activities and reading assignments throughout a 10 week program. These activities will include: (1) weekly parent survey; (2) weekly reading of children's books; and (3) weekly reading activities to complete with your child. Your child will be responsible for bringing home a literacy bag on Monday and returning the bag on Friday for duration of four weeks. The use of the supplies and materials in each Literacy Bag will be provided to you at no cost.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information in the study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the persons conducting the study. No references will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study. All data collected from participants will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name) as an identifier.

- **QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study and your participation, you may contact the investigator Ashley Overton (865). 585. 1517 or her advisor, Dr. Bradley Balch, at (812). 237. 2802.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB's mission is

to protect the rights and welfare of all participants in research projects. If you feel at any time during the duration of this project you've been placed at risk, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at Indiana State University at (812). 237. 8217 or [irb@indstate.edu](mailto:irb@indstate.edu)

- **PARTICIPATION**

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the research described above. I understand that participation in the study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions, you can email me at [aoverton@msdsc.us](mailto:aoverton@msdsc.us) or call me at 865. 585. 1517

Your printed name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of person obtaining consent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E: LITERACY BAG INFORMATION

Congratulations on receiving your Family Literacy Bag! For the next four weeks your child will bring a weekly Family Literacy Bag home that contains the books and activities for the entire week. Literacy Bags are colored totes filled with one audiobook, two books and a reading activity for you and your child to enjoy at home. The books are a selection from various authors and topics and the books inside each bag reflect different reading levels: so you are encouraged to assist your child while reading and completing the activities.

The Family Literacy Bags will be sent home on Mondays and must be returned on Fridays. Students are taught that Family Literacy Bags are precious and their responsibility to keep them in great condition, and to bring them back to school on Fridays.

The suggested use of Family Literacy Bags is provided below:

**Monday:** View the Family Literacy Bag Materials. Show excitement with your child as he/she previews the different stories. Each bag contains an audiobook that allows your child to enjoy books that are above his/her reading level. Audiobooks provide a good model for fluent reading, and help to develop listening skills to assist your child's vocabulary and introducing him/her to unfamiliar dialects (accents). Listening to a book being read aloud by a talented storyteller can really bring a story to life, making the story funny, or adding drama.

**Tuesday:** Encourage your child to choose another book from their Literacy Bag. This story will have a predictable text and the pictures are very important, as they support the child's "reading" of the words. At times your child may forget the predictable words and if that happened, you can help them be reading the first few pages together.

**Wednesday:** Encourage your child to choose the last book from their Literacy Bag. This story will also have a predictable text and the pictures are very important, as they support the child's "reading" of the words. At times your child may forget the predictable words and if that happened, you can help them be reading the first few pages together.

**Thursday:** Complete the Audiobook activity together. Family Literacy Bags include literacy activities that go along with the audiobook that you and your child read/listened to on Monday. You are encouraged to view and discussed the audio book again to set the stage for the activity. **Parent surveys will also need to be filled out on Thursdays and placed back in the Literacy Bags for evaluation.**

## APPENDIX F: PARENTS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions were used to guide the interview process:

### **Rapport Building for All Interviews**

1. How long have you lived in the community?
2. What do you enjoy most about this community?

### **Questions for Parents**

1. Do you participate in parental involvement activities provided by the school? (i. e. Meet the Teacher Night, PTO Meetings and Student Music Programs, Book Fair Family Night)
2. What prevents you from attending parental involvement activities at school?
3. What can the school do to make it possible for you to attend parental involvement activities at school?

## APPENDIX G: INITIAL MEETING WITH TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

My name is Ashley Overton and I am a student at Indiana State University. I am working to determine if parental involvement can be encouraged and increased with the implementation and use of a ten-week Literacy Bag program.

I am seeking your help in order to conduct this research in your classroom. If you agree, I would like to discuss the current level of your parental involvement. I will ask you some questions about the level of parental involvement you are currently providing this academic school year.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask any questions about things you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the implementation of Literacy Bag program as a critical component of increasing parental involvement in Rural-Appalachia schools as it relates to student literacy achievement.

### **PROCEDURE**

Data collection will occur through initial interviews and weekly parent and teacher surveys. I will interview parents, in small groups of five participants or fewer, whose children are in first grade. You will only be interviewed one time prior to the implementation of the Literacy Bag program. The duration of the program will rely upon weekly parent surveys that seek to provide answers to the following question: Does a passive program such as a Literacy Bag Lending Library promote a connection between schools and home? Additionally, this study



will develop a theoretical understanding of the following questions. What does an intrinsically motivated parental participation program need to provide parents in order to promote self-efficacy in helping their children succeed in school? Would a supplementary program including reading strategies intrinsically motivate parents to assist in children's reading education? Do school stakeholders see the literacy bag program as a worthwhile tool to increase students' academic confidence and parental involvement?

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information in the study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the persons conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

- **BENEFITS**

There will be benefits to you and your students from participating in this study. The use of the supplies and materials in each literacy bag will be provided to you at no cost. The implementation and duration of the program will be completed by the researcher.

## APPENDIX H: PRE- AND POST-HOME QUESTIONNAIRE

Part A: Rate how effective you feel literacy bags are in terms of:

- a. Promoting your involvement in your child's literacy experiences.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                  2                  3                  4                  5

Part B: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you feel literacy bags are in terms of:

- b. Providing opportunities for your child to see parents valuing literacy.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                  2                  3                  4                  5

Part C: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you feel literacy bags are in terms of:

- c. Promoting literacy among your family.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                  2                  3                  4                  5

Part D: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you feel literacy bags are in terms of:

- d. Talking about culture and human values with your child.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                  2                  3                  4                  5

Part E: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you feel literacy bags are in terms of:

- e. Increasing your child's motivation for reading.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                  2                  3                  4                  5

Part F: On a scale of 1 to 5 how effective are literacy bags in terms of

- f. Increasing your child's ability to read.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                  2                  3                  4                  5

Part G: Rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective literacy books are in terms of:

g. Meeting your family's need and time constraints.

Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective		
1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX I: PARENTS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions were used to guide the interview process:

### **Rapport Building for All Interviews**

1. How long have you lived in the community?
2. What do you enjoy most about this community?

### **Questions for Parents**

1. Do you participate in parental involvement activities provided by the school? (i. e., Meet the Teacher Night, PTO Meetings and Student Music Programs, Book Fair Family Night)
2. What prevents you from attending parental involvement activities at school?
3. What can the school do to make it possible for you to attend parental involvement activities at school?

## APPENDIX J: PARENT PROGRAM EVALUATION SURVEY

Part A: Rate how effective you felt literacy bags were in terms of:

- a. Promoting your involvement in your child's literacy experiences.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Part B: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you felt literacy bags were in terms of:

- b. Providing opportunities for your child to see parents valuing literacy.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Part C: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you felt literacy bags were in terms of:

- c. Promoting literacy among your family.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Part D: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you felt literacy bags were in terms of:

- d. Talking about culture and human values with your child.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Part E: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you felt literacy bags were in terms of:

- e. Increasing your child's motivation for reading.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Part F: On a scale of 1 to 5 how effective were literacy bags in terms of

- f. Increasing your child's ability to read.

Not Effective    Somewhat Effective                  Very Effective

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Part G: Rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective literacy books were in terms of:

Meeting your family's need and time constraint.

Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective		
1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX K: TEACHER WEEKLY SURVEY

Part A: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you felt Family Literacy Bags were in terms of:

a. Promoting the excitement of reading within your classroom.

Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective		
1	2	3	4	5

Part B: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you felt Family Literacy Bags were in terms of:

b. Promoting literacy discussions among your students.

Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective		
1	2	3	4	5

Part C: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you felt Family Literacy Bags were in terms of:

c. Increasing student's attention in the classroom.

Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective		
1	2	3	4	5

Part D: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how effective you felt Family Literacy Bags were in terms of:

d. Increasing students reading confidence. (Classroom discussion, fluency, etc. )

Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective		
1	2	3	4	5

Part E: On a scale of 1 to 5 how effective were Family Literacy Bags in terms of:

e. Increasing your student's ability to read.

Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective			
1	2	3	4	5	

Part F: On a scale of 1 to 5 how effective Family Literacy Bags were in terms of:

f. Meeting your expectations with encouraging parental involvement at home.

Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective			
1	2	3	4	5	



## APPENDIX L: POST PROGRAM PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Did you find using the Family Literacy Bags helpful?
2. Did your child find using the Family Literacy Bags helpful?
3. Were the activities in the Family Literacy Bags engaging and interesting for both you and your child?
4. Did you believe this program promoted a connection between school and home?
5. Did the program provide you with motivation to help your child succeed in school?
6. Did the program provide you with reading strategies that assisted in helping your child in reading?
7. Did you feel comfortable using the materials provided in the Literacy Bag Program with your child?
8. If given the opportunity to participate in the Literacy Bag Program in the future would you participate?

## APPENDIX M: LESSON PLANS – PARENT GUIDE BOOKS

**Week 1: Fluency****When working with your child, please encourage him/her to:**

- Point to each word as he or she says it.
- Go back and re-read if he or she gets confused.
- If your child gets stuck, look at the pictures. Ask, “What is the picture telling us?”

**Learning to read is a lot like learning to speak.**

- Believe your child will learn to read.
- Praise and encourage your child’s every attempt, just like you did with their first words.
- Reread books over and over and over.
- Make reading a relaxed and enjoyable experience.

While it is easy to become impatient or upset when reading with your child, if you or your child becomes too frustrated while completing the readings or activities, take a break and wait for another time to complete. Don’t always expect your child to sound out each letter, nor cover the pictures to prove your child is “really” reading.

Also, don’t worry if it appears that your child has memorized the text. Just make sure he or she are pointing to every word as they read.

I appreciate your support of the Family Literacy Bag program in our classroom. The opportunity to provide students with Literacy Bags is a great opportunity to encourage reading at home with parents. We look forward in watching your child grow as a reader with you through your participation in this program.

**Week 2: Main Idea and Details**

This week you are going to work in Main Idea and Details. You will want to first begin by playing a game called, Unpacking the Main Idea! Pull the following items out of a bag: a toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, and mouthwash. Ask your child to tell you about what they think the big idea of the bag is based on the items.

**Parent Modeling:**

Explain to your child that the main idea of a text is what the text is mostly about. Read any storybook that is in your literacy bag. First, think aloud about the title and what the passage is mainly about. Second, take a picture walk with your book. (Take a few minutes to flip through the pages to see what the pictures are telling you. ) Third, talk about what you think the main idea is with your child.

**Guided Practice:**

Read the storybook together and discuss what the main idea could be. Your child may respond that he or she thinks the story was mostly about the title, and another topic that the book mentioned. Take time to talk about both choices. Tell your child that he or she is now thinking about the most important idea of the story and not just a small detail.

**Independent Practice:**

Complete the reading response activities. See activities in your bag to complete together while discussing the main idea and details of the different books in your literacy bag.

I appreciate your support of the Family Literacy Bag program in our classroom. The opportunity to provide students with Literacy Bags is a great opportunity to encourage reading at home with parents. We look forward in watching your child grow as a reader with you through your participation in this program.

**Week 3: Retelling a Story**

This week you are going to work with your child on how to retell a story using the main idea and details of the story.

Talk to your child about something they enjoy doing at home or school. Choose an activity that your child is familiar with and help them as they think aloud. Activities could include: helping with supper, cleaning their room, getting ready for church.

**Parent Modeling:**

Explain to your child that you enjoyed listening to them retell their favorite activity. Let them know that the same thinking process it took for them to retell their favorite activity is the same way they retell a story they have read. Readers have two jobs when they read. One job is to figure out the words and the other job is to understand the words and the ideas. Retelling is a strategy readers use to understand the words and ideas in the texts. When you retell the story, you only tell the important parts of a text.

**Guided Practice:**

Have your child pick any storybook out of the literacy bag, read the first page together and model how you stop, think about and retell the text as you read. Look for details in the picture to help you remember what is important. Show your child that when you finish reading a page, you will stop and think about it, not rush to the next page.

**Independent Practice:**

Finish reading the text together and have your child tell you what they are enjoying about the text. Have them stop and retell each page they read, and continue retelling as they read.

Complete the reading response activities. See activities in your bag to complete together while retelling all the different books in your literacy bag.

I appreciate your support of the Family Literacy Bag program in our classroom. The opportunity to provide students with Literacy Bags is a great opportunity to encourage reading at home with parents. We look forward in watching your child grow as a reader with you through your participation in this program.

#### **Week 4: Sequencing a Story**

This week you are going to work with your child on how to sequences details in a story. Sequencing details of a story is the ability to understand and talk about a story as an ordered series of events. This lesson is designed to introduce this skill to your child using the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. Your child will discuss the beginning, middle, and end of the story, by sequencing the events. At the end of the lesson, you will ask them to tell what happens at the beginning, middle, and end of the story so that you will know whether they have learned what you want to teach them.

Talk to your child about different activities they do at home that include steps in sequential order. For example, have your child identify the steps it takes for them to brush their teeth.

#### **Parent Modeling:**

Explain to your child that you enjoyed listening to them sequence their activity. Let them know that the same thinking process it took for them to sequence their favorite activity is the same way they sequence a story they have read. Readers have two jobs when they read. One job is to figure out the words and the other job is to understand the words and the ideas. Sequencing is a strategy readers use to understand the words and ideas in the text. When you sequence the story, you discuss what happens at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

**Guided Practice:**

Start this week by introducing the book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Have your child tell you, what they think a very hungry caterpillar eats and allow your child an opportunity to share their ideas. Begin reading the book to your child. As you read, pause to identify the parts of the text. For instance, before reading the first page say, "Let's see what happens at the beginning of the book. " When you get to the part where the caterpillar begins to eat you might say, "Here comes the middle of the story. " Finally, as the caterpillar builds his cocoon you might wonder aloud, "I think this is the ending of the book. " Since you are modeling this for students, think aloud and go back through the book to do a picture walk while you say something such as, "What happened at the beginning of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*? Well, in the beginning, there was an egg. The caterpillar was born in the beginning of the story. Let's see. I will look back at the book to find out what else happened at the beginning of the story. At the beginning of the story, it was Sunday. "

**Independent Practice:**

Finish reading the text together and have your child tell you what happened next. Have your child identify the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

Complete the reading response extension activities. See activities in your bag to complete together while sequencing all the different books in your literacy bag.

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**Week 5: Finding the Problem and Solution**

This week you are going to work with your child on how to retell the problem and solution of a story. This week you will discuss with your child that the problem and solution must fit together like a puzzle.

Most stories that you read will have a problem and the solution, or answer to the problem. When you read a story, you will soon find out the main character has a problem in the story. Something happened that needs to be fixed. So, the main character has a problem, and at the end of the story the problem is fixed, so there is a solution to the problem. Tell your child finding the problem and the solution of the story can help you become a better reader.

**Parent Modeling:**

Model for the child an example of problem and solutions. Use any of the following examples: Take a pencil and drop it on the floor or misplace your phone and act as if you can't find it. Explain to your child why this is a problem and you must find the solution.

Let them know you appreciate their insights as he or she helped you solve your problem, and that the same thinking process it took for them to find a solution to the problem is the same way they find the problem and solution to a story he or she has read. Readers have two jobs when they read. One job is to figure out the words and the other job is to understand the words and the ideas. Problem and solution is a strategy readers use to understand the key ideas in the text.

**Guided Practice:**

Have your child pick any storybook out of the literacy bag, read the first page together and model how you stop, think about and retell the text as you read. Look for details in the picture to help you remember what is important. Show your child that when you finish reading a

page, you will stop and think about it, not rush to the next page. Have your child listen to you read the story and discuss the problem. As you continue throughout the story build off the pages before to continue discussing the main characters problem. Have your child listen to you read as you tell the solution to the story.

**Independent Practice:**

Finish reading the text together and have your child tell you the solution to the problem. Have he or she stop and retell each page they read, and continue retelling as he or she reads.

Complete the reading response activities. See activities in your bag to complete together while discussing the problem and solutions within the books of your literacy bag.

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**Week 6: Making Connections to a Story**

This week you are going to work with your child on how to connect stories to their own life. You and your child will read books about families and make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections using the books in your literacy bag. When your child makes a connection to the story he or she will gain a deeper understanding of the text.

The stories that you read from your literacy bag this week all center around different families. To begin this week's lesson, ask your child to answer questions about his or her family. When you read a story, you will soon find out that the families within the book may do things similar as we do. Read aloud any book in your bag and after reading, ask your child to think about the following questions:



- What does the story remind you of?
- Can you relate to the characters of the story?
- Does anything in this story remind you of our family?

The above questions support focusing on text-to-self connections.

**Parent Modeling:**

Model for the child an example of text-to-self connection as you read a story. Provide a model by sharing with your child a personal connection to the text. Allow him or her to help you make further connections with the story, and let him or her know you appreciate his or her insights as he or she helped you make connections, and that the same thinking process it took for the or she to help you is the same way he or she can find connections to a story he or she has read.

**Guided Practice:**

Have your child pick any storybook out of the literacy bag, read the first page together and model how you stop, think about and retell the text as you read. Look for details in the picture to help you remember what is important. Show your child that when you finish reading a page, you will stop and think about it, not rush to the next page. Have your child listen to you read the story and discuss connections to the text. As you continue throughout the story build off the pages before to continue discussing connections.

**Independent Practice:**

Finish reading the text together and have your child tell you some connections that he or she thought of. Complete the reading response activities. See activities in your bag to complete together while discussing different connection to the stories within the books of your literacy bag.