

THE HOME BACKGROUNDS OF WRITERS

by

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Abstract

This study investigates whether or not some characteristics of students home environments are associated with writing skill. A sample of 160 grade six and seven students who were judged by their teachers as more effective or less effective writers was selected from four elementary schools in a large British Columbia Interior School District. The parents of students in the sample were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning the home situation and experiences of their children. As a way of gathering other important information, a stratified random sample of ten parents was selected from the larger sample to be interviewed concerning other aspects of their home situations. Questionnaire results were presented in tabular form with frequencies and percentages reported for the responses of both groups. Differences between the responses from parents of more effective writers and responses from parents of less effective writers were then analyzed for significance by a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test. This study suggests that a good environment for an aspiring young writer would be a home in which 1) reading and writing activities take place regularly and are often discussed, 2) parents and siblings regularly model language skills and have positive attitudes toward the acquisition of these skills 3) the educational level and occupational skill level of parents are high and

reading and writing materials are readily accessible; and
4) a portion of the writer's leisure time is devoted to
quiet, indoor, creative activities including reading and
writing while excluding large amounts of television
viewing.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not some characteristics of home environment are associated with writing skill. By distributing a questionnaire about their home situations to the parents of students who were classified as "more effective" or "less effective" writers, data was gathered. Additional information was collected by the use of interviews with a small group of parents who were selected from the questionnaire respondents by use of a stratified random sampling technique. The data from both sources was then analyzed to see if any associations existed between the factors of home environment and either more effective writers or less effective writers.

A. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Questions which were included in the survey were designed to gather information about reading and writing activities in the home, regular household events and home materials, leisure-time activities of both children and parents, and parental opinions. In this way, answers could be found for the four research questions.

1. Reading and Writing Activities

Little is known about which reading and writing activities in the homes of students are associated with

higher or lower levels of skill in writing. Consequently, in this study, a number of questions were designed to gather information about reading and writing activities in students' homes. Previous research has suggested which of these activities may be associated with reading and writing proficiency. For example, Dolores Durkin (1966) in her examination of the home backgrounds of early readers and of those who did not read early found the role of mothers in the homes of early readers to be singularly important in affecting the early reading achievement of their children. She stated that the children's early reading achievement was influenced by the mothers' examples and their concepts of their roles as educators of the preschool child (p. 138). She also described the homes of early readers as characterized by generous amounts of verbal interaction as well as significant amounts of time being spent on reading and writing activities. Margaret Clark (1976) found the homes of early readers which she investigated characterized by many of the same qualities that Durkin reported. Reading and writing activities were found to be prominent features of the homes of early readers. Monk (1958) examined the home backgrounds of students who had attained either high or low achievement in written English. He found that such factors as the

amount of time spent by the students in reading for pleasure and the number of letters regularly written by the students at home were all directly related to the students' achievement in written English.

2. Home Background Information

A large amount of educational research has been completed which investigates the association between home factors such as parental occupation and the scholastic achievement of students. Such factors suggested topics to question parents about for the present study. In his study concerning the home backgrounds of students, Monk determined that there was some association between the general socio-economic circumstances of homes and the students' level of attainment in written English. For example, he concluded that students' achievement in written English was directly related to parental occupation and family housing.

3. Leisure-Time Activities

Leisure time occupies a large portion of each child's day. Researchers believe that what is done during that leisure time may well affect other areas of the child's life. Questions were constructed for the present survey in order to find what association

exists between leisure-time activities and a pupil's level of skill in writing. Monk's (1958) study proved useful in constructing these questions. From his examination of leisure-time activities he was able to conclude that students in the high-achievement group spent more leisure time reading for pleasure, spent less leisure time in the company of their peers, and held fewer part-time jobs than did students in the low achievement group.

4. Parental Opinions

Researchers who have examined the home backgrounds of students agree that the attitudes of parents have an influence on the attainment of their children. Elizabeth Goodacre (1970), who summarized a number of different studies concerning the nature of the relationship between home factors and school progress, stated that the attitudes of parents have an effect on children's school attainment. Monk (1958) noted that a direct relationship existed between the importance parents attached to education and the degree of achievement reached by the child. The present study asks questions about parental attitudes in order to better describe the effect that these attitudes have on children's school attainment. Such areas as the degree of satisfaction which parents have with reading and writing instruction in the schools and the role which they should play in the education of their children are explored.

5. Summary of Background

The information gathered up to the time of the present study concerning the association between home factors and writing skill is incomplete. More information is needed in such areas as how parents respond to and help their children with written assignments, the points of view held by parents about what kinds of writing are done best by students, how much time is spent in writing at home by students and parents, and student's initial experiences in learning how to print. The present study explores each of these areas in order to add to existing knowledge concerning these topics.

B. OVERVIEW OF PROCEDURES

To examine the relationship between factors in the home environments of students and the skill with which they wrote, a questionnaire was administered to the parents of 160 grade six and seven pupils. These pupils were judged by their teachers to be either more effective writers (80 pupils) or less effective writers (80 pupils). Subsequently, interviews were conducted with the parents of ten of those pupils. Interviewees were selected using a random sampling technique that assured proportionate representation from the groups.

Quantifiable data collected by these means was coded, tabulated, and differences between groups were tested for

significance. A frequency cross-tabulation by group (group of more effective writers and group of less effective writers) identified trends and differences between the responses of the two groups. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov two-sample test was employed to determine if the differences found by examining the cross-tabulation were statistically significant.

Data which were not quantifiable were recorded and stored in written form. Such data were later reported along with the other results.

C. DEFINITION OF TERMS

"Writing proficiency" refers to an assessment of a student's writing abilities by his teacher which is global in nature and not based on a single composition or on his work in a single subject area.

"Early readers" are children who learn the skill of reading before beginning formal school instruction in reading.

The label "less effective writers" referred to a group of students (somewhat less than a third of any group at a particular grade level in a particular school) who were judged by their teachers to have shown less facility in employing all of the skills of written composition in their work in all subject areas over the period of a school year. They were judged to have shown less facility in employing the composition skills than approximately two-thirds of the students at their grade level in their school.

to a group of students (somewhat less than a third of any group of students at a particular grade level in a particular school) who were judged by their teachers to have shown more facility in employing all the skills of written composition in their work in all subject areas over the period of a school year. They were judged to have shown more facility in employing the composition skills than approximately two thirds of the students at their grade level in their school.

D. QUESTIONS

This study was designed to pursue answers to four questions:

1. Which reading and writing activities done at home by both children and their family members are associated with either more effective writers or less effective writers?
2. What materials in the home or regular events of the household are associated with either more-effective writers or less effective writers?
3. What leisure time activities participated in by student writers, their parents, or both are associated with either more effective writers or less effective writers?
4. What are the opinions of parents about their roles in helping their children learn the skills

of reading and writing which are associated with either more effective writers or less effective writers?

E. ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions underlie the current study.

1. The global judgments of teachers about which students were identified as more effective writers in one school were very similar to judgments about more effective writers which were made by other teachers at other selected schools.
2. Mothers were able to remember many events from the preschool years of the children. It was also assumed that any forgetting of such events did not introduce bias into the study.

F. LIMITATIONS

Formal generalizability of the results is qualified by the use of only four schools from a large district with approximately forty schools.

Generalizability is limited to grade six and seven students in a large British Columbia Interior School district.

The sample seems representative of but not formally generalizable to towns of medium size in British Columbia and in other parts of Canada.

A limitation of the study is the differing response rates between the group of more effective writers and the group of less effective writers. The response rate for parents of students in the group of more effective writers was 81 percent while the response rate for parents of students in the group of less effective writers was 65 percent.

A final limitation of the current study is that it is almost entirely concerned with recalled data. Such information can be distorted by poor memory, by respondents giving answers which they think the researcher wants to hear, or due to other circumstances. Care was taken, in constructing the data gathering instruments, to minimize the detrimental effects which accompany recalled data.

G. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study examines questions that are both basic to understanding more about the environments which produce writers and potentially useful to parents who wish to improve the writing skills of their children.

The question of what factors of home environment seem to influence children's skill in writing, first examined twenty-five years ago, has not been fully answered. Since that time, no researcher has investigated this question. The present study offers the opportunity to see if a relationship exists between home environment

factors and school achievement in written composition.

This study did not purport to describe the ideal home situation for producing excellent writing; it investigated whether or not proficiency in the skills of written composition was associated with factors in the home environments of students.

Finding that certain characteristics of home environment are associated with writing proficiency would provide useful information to parents and would augment what is already known about which factors of home environment seem to promote writing excellence.

H. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The background, procedures, and the results of this study are presented in five chapters.

1. Chapter 1 - The problem. This chapter presents the problem and a summary of its background, the research questions, limitations and significance of the study, and an overview of procedures.
2. Chapter 2 - Review of literature. This chapter briefly describes research into the relationship between home environment and school attainment especially in the areas of reading and writing proficiency. Research on questionnaire construction and interview planning is also briefly summarized.

3. Chapter 3 - Methodology. This chapter describes the selection of the sample, development and administration of the questionnaire, development of the interview agenda, data organization, and statistical treatments.

4. Chapter 4 - Results. This chapter presents a compilation of cross-tabulation results, an indication of statistically significant differences between the groups, a reporting of the findings for each variable, and a summary of data gathered from interviews.

5. Chapter 5 - Conclusions. A summary of findings, conclusions, and implications for further research are presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: RELATED RESEARCH

Many of the investigations of the home backgrounds of students have examined the association between home background and school attainment or the association between home background and reading attainment.

Using interview and questionnaire research investigators have found associations between high levels of language skill development and the following factors of home environment: a) the presence of family members who model language behaviors for children, b) frequent parent-child interaction concerning reading and writing activities, c) frequent participation in reading or writing activities at home by children, d) higher levels of parental education and occupation, e) easy access for children to reading and writing materials, f) children's strong and early interest in reading and writing activities, g) children's participation in quiet and, generally, solitary activities in their leisure time, and h) strong parental interest in the education of their children. Investigators of proper construction and implementation of questionnaires and interviews in research have listed principles and guidelines concerning a) word choice, b) questions to avoid, c) how to write questions, d) sequencing questions, e) survey length, f) piloting procedures, g) conditions of administration and interpretation,

h) interview types, i) facts of human nature essential to interviewing, and j) interpretation of interview responses all of which were used in the preparations for the current study.

A. LANGUAGE MODELS

Hall (1976), Taylor (1981), Teale (1978), Durkin (1966) have shown that the models that parents and siblings provide in the home exert a strong influence on children's reading and writing skills. Hall described the homes of children who learned the skill of writing earlier than usual as homes where children could often observe one parent, both parents, or siblings engaged in writing activities and where children frequently observed other family members reading (pp. 583-584). Taylor, describing families where children readily learned how to read and write, states "all of the families spoke of their children's experiencing print on a daily basis " (p.98). Further descriptions of language modeling behaviors are given by Durkin and Teale. Durkin found that the mothers of early readers read more themselves (p. 9) and Liston (1980) cites Teale's finding that regular reading by family members was associated with early reading (p. 8). Additionally, Monk (1958), in his examination of the association between home environment and school achievement in written English, discovered there was a relationship between a child's

writing achievement and his being read to in infancy. (p.68) This relationship has since been confirmed by Durkin (1966), Clark (1976), Plessas & Oakes (1964), Price (1976), and Briggs & Elkins (1973, 1977).

B. PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION CONCERNING READING AND WRITING
ACTIVITIES

Clark (1976), Durkin (1966), and Kenyon (1979) have determined that the parents and siblings of early readers spend long periods of time discussing and encouraging the reading and writing activities of children.

Clark (1976) found that the parents of children who achieved well in reading and writing tended to spend large amounts of their time helping their children with beginning reading and writing activities. Durkin (1966) determined that such parents discussed reading and writing freely and regularly with their children and that they encouraged their children to participate in reading and writing experiences.

Clark (1976) stated that the parents of early readers whom she studied welcomed verbal interaction with their children (p. 42). Durkin (1966) stated that her research indicated "...the presence of parents who spend time with their children, who read to them, who answer their questions and requests for help, who demonstrate in their own lives that reading is a rich source of relaxation, information,

and contentment " (p. 136). The encouragement of reading by family members was a characteristic of the homes examined by Kenyon (1979) and Clark (1976). Kenyon found that more students in the above average and average groups of reading achievement came from homes where family members and family activities encouraged reading. Clark noted that most parents of early readers whom she investigated encouraged their early readers in the use of the library.

C. DESCRIPTIONS OF CHILDREN'S READING AND WRITING BEHAVIORS

Clark (1976), Durkin (1966), Liston (1980), and Monk (1958) reported that accelerated acquisition of language skills took place in the early readers they studied.

Liston (1980) described early readers as being truly fluent readers and showing "...a clear strength in auditory and language memory tasks " (p. 12). Clark (1976) stated that many of the early readers she examined showed a feel for the style of written language unusual at their age, and a precision of vocabulary and of appropriate written syntax which was remarkable. (p. 9).

Both Clark (1976) and Durkin (1966) asserted that early readers tended to learn to print before or at the same time as learning to read (Durkin p. 137).

Monk (1958) found that the amount of time spent in reading for pleasure was related to the child's achievement in written English (p. 53), and that the better achievers

preferred reading as a mode of getting information (p. 85). Monk also concluded that "...children in the superior achievement group in written English tended to write more letters than did those in the inferior group" (p. 106) and "the amount of time spent in home study...seemed to be directly related to achievement in written English " (p. 71).

Monk (1958), in summarizing his findings, stated that in response to nearly every intellectual interest or activity which he questioned students about, the writers who achieved higher standards in written English tended to have that interest more or participate in that activity more than their lower achieving peers.

D. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Monk (1958), Clark (1976), Hall (1976), Durkin (1966), Goodacre (1970), Fraser (1959), and Taylor (1981) found that the home characteristics associated with superior language skills were a) both parents living in the home, b) high levels of education possessed by parents, and c) being the oldest child in a family.

Monk (1958) found that children in homes where father lived at home and worked full time tended to achieve higher marks in written English. He also stated that the achievement of children was closely and positively related to the type of occupation held by their fathers. (The high achievers had fathers with highly skilled jobs.)

Because of these two findings he was able to conclude that "the achievement of the children was directly related to parental occupation " (p. 131).

Monk (1958), Clark (1976), and Hall (1976) each explored the reading or writing attainment of children whose mothers worked outside the home. Clark found few mothers in her group of parents of early readers who worked outside the home and Hall reported that approximately one-half of the seventy-nine mothers of early writers in her study worked outside the home while their children were preschoolers (pp. 583-584). Monk found that some mothers of superior writers worked outside the home while some did not. The same was also true of mothers of lower achieving writers. Monk found no association between writing achievement and mothers working outside the home.

The findings of Durkin (1966) and Hall (1976) concerning the educational level of the parents of early readers and early writers were very similar to each other. Durkin concluded that more mothers of early readers than mothers of those who did not read early were college graduates (p. 9), and Hall found that most parents of early writers were college graduates who were either in professional occupations or qualified for them (p. 583).

In reference to the position of children in a family, Taylor (1981) stated "There was a general concensus that

the firstborn received more attention relating to reading and writing from parents than any subsequent child " (p. 98). She stated this after examining families in which children were readily successful in learning to read and write. Monk (1958) asserted that the highest achievement in written English was from only children who were males and from female oldest children (p. 159). Taken together, the findings of Taylor and Monk suggest that firstborn children often master language skills more readily and effectively than other children.

A report by the Institute for Development of Educational Activities (1980), which examined the home and school environment of over 18,000 students, found that "...one-parent children show lower achievement and present more discipline problems than their two-parent peers... something about the one parent home situation may impair children's school performance " (p. 3). Thompson (1979) also states "...students from two-parent families tend to record higher reading comprehension achievement scores than do students from one-parent families." These findings suggest a positive association between language skill and the presence of both parents in the home.

E. HOME CHARACTERISTICS

Hall (1976), Monk (1958), Clark (1976), Kenyon (1979), and Teale (1978) found that the homes of superior readers

and writers were characterized by supplies of books for children, readily accessible writing materials, many experiences with books, and atmospheres that encouraged reading and writing activities.

Hall (1976) found that books, magazines, and newspapers were available to all family members in the homes of the early writers whom she studied (pp. 583-584) and Monk (1958) concluded that the number of books for children and the number of books for adults in the home were both related to achievement in written English by children from the home (pp. 57, 59).

In the homes of early writers, Hall (1976) also found that writing materials were readily accessible to the child, and usually could be used without special parental permission (pp. 583-584).

Other findings concerning the reading and writing experiences of children included those of Clark (1976): "all homes (of early readers were) providing rich and exciting experiences within which books were an integral part" (p. 46). Also, Liston (1980) cites the finding of Teale (1978) that one important factor which has been shown to be associated with early reading is "availability and range of printed materials in the environment " (p. 8). Clark described the home atmosphere of early readers as warm, accepting, and non-pressurized (p. 48). Kenyon (1979)

found that there was a great deal of total family interest in reading exhibited in the homes of above average readers (p. 1) and Liston (1980) reports that Teale (1978) found that the home environments of early readers responded to what the child was trying to do (p. 8).

F. CHILDREN'S CHARACTERISTICS

Children who achieved well in reading and writing have been described as usually a) having higher than average or average IQ's, b) being girls, c) having made career plans at a young age, d) being 'self-sufficient' and 'solitary', and e) being the source of initial interest in reading (instead of such interest being initiated by parents).

Gage (1963) in his Handbook of Research on Teaching stated that a positive relationship between composition skill and intelligence was found by McCarthy (1954), Diederich (1957) and Lange & Kruglov (1950). In addition, Maloney (1967) found that one characteristic of the superior writers he studied was that they "...had high intelligence ratings..." (p. 1) and Monk (1958) concluded that intelligence was a powerful factor in determining achievement in written English (p. 185). Results obtained by Maloney (1967) also indicated that, generally, the superior writers in his sample of ninth-graders were girls (p. 1).

Another characteristic of superior writers was a

tendency to make future plans, both Maloney (1967) and Monk (1958) concluded. Maloney stated that most superior writers in his sample (of ninth-graders) had decided on a future career (p. 1). Monk found that the desire to finish high school was associated with high achievement in written English (p. 153) and the higher achieving students had chosen more highly skilled jobs for their futures while the lower achieving students had chosen less skilled jobs (p. 155).

Clark (1976) described the early readers she investigated as having "powers of concentration and self-sufficiency" (they could be content either in the company of others or on their own) (p. 102). While finding that the early readers she studied were often described as 'solitary' or 'doing things on their own' (p. 42) she also discovered that these children "...appeared well-adjusted to school and...(were) seen as generally acceptable to their classmates " (p. 102).

Goodacre (who cites research done by Regan (1967)) found that the characteristics of the ideal personality (for success in school) were self-sufficiency, perseverance, self-control, and fastidious individualism (p. 117). Durkin's matching of early readers and those who did not read early, however, showed little difference between the two groups.

"Initial interest in reading was from the child and... they (the parents) just responded to requests for help." (p. 54) stated Clark (1976). Durkin (1966) also described the interests of early readers. She found that their interests were characterized by 'interest binges' during which certain interests were indulged in for long periods of time, then suddenly discarded. (p. 137).

Superior readers and writers have been described as having a strong interest in reading and writing activities as well as being the initiators and the ones who sustain that interest. They have also been described as having average or higher intelligence ratings, being girls, making future plans at a young age, and being 'solitary' and 'self-sufficient'.

G. LEISURE ACTIVITIES OF CHILDREN

Monk (1958) investigated the leisure activities of children to ascertain which of them were associated with superior writers. Among other findings, he concluded that the even budgeting of leisure time among a number of possible activities and a high frequency of participation by parents and their children in the preferred activities of children were associated with superior writers.

Monk (1958) found that the effect of time spent in the company of peers appeared to be detrimental in its influence on the achievement in written English of

students (p. 97). He also noted that time spent with peers was inversely related to achievement in written English (p. 97).

Closely related to leisure-time pursuits in which children engage is the budgeting of leisure time. Monk (1958) found that the higher achieving writers tended to budget their time more evenly over a variety of recreational activities than did the lower achieving writers (p. 180). He also concluded that having a part-time job was related to lower achievement.

Concerning the listening and watching activities of children during leisure time, Monk found that the lower-achieving group spent more time watching television than did the higher-achieving group (p. 81) but that watching television occupied a large part of the free time of pupils in both groups (p. 79). The television viewing habits of early readers were described by Clark (1976) as being selective. She reported that early readers absorbed themselves in a book or left the room if they were not interested in what was on television (p. 55).

Monk (1958) stated that there was a relationship between the level of achievement in written English and the frequency with which parents participated with a child in his preferred activity; for example, baseball or picnics (p. 95). Because of this, he went on to advise

"...parents should be encouraged to share the recreational activities of their children" (p.95).

H. PARENT OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES.

Studies by Burt (1969), Durkin (1966), Clark (1976), and Monk (1958) revealed that the parents of students who achieved well took a stronger interest in their children's schoolwork, took a more active part in educating their children in the home, and expressed a stronger respect for the value of education than did the parents of their lower achieving peers. Parents of higher-achieving students also expressed stronger satisfaction than the parents of lower-achieving students did with their roles as parents.

Goodacre (1970) quotes Burt (1969): "In the child's home circumstances, the one factor which contributes most to his progress in school is the attitude of his parents towards, and interest in his day-to-day educational work " (p. 83).

Durkin (1966), in exploring the attitudes of parents toward teaching their children reading at home discovered that more mothers of early readers thought it appropriate for parents to teach reading at home than did the parents of children who did not read early (p. 9). Her findings led her to the conclusion that the parents of early readers did not feel reading had to be taught by an expert (p. 111).

Clark (1976) described the parents of early readers as having a respect for the value of education (p. 42) and Monk (1958) stated "...a direct relationship existed between the importance attached to it (education) by the parent and the degree of achievement reached by the child." (p. 137)

An attitude of parents which also influenced the attainment of children was positive feeling toward the role of parenting. Clark (1976) found that the parents of early readers were quite satisfied being completely absorbed in the job of parenting (p. 93) and "A contentment and satisfaction with the role of mother and a deep involvement with their children's interests was clearly evident..." (p. 43)

I. SURVEY METHODS

Questionnaire items for the present study were constructed using the advice of such researchers as Oppenheim (1966), Jacobs (1974), and Charach (1975) concerning a) word choice b) question types c) writing questions d) sequencing questions in the questionnaire e) questionnaire piloting, and f) conditions of interpretation and administration of questionnaires.

Jacobs (1974) described some important guidelines for survey construction. He explained that care must be taken in choosing every word that appears in a

questionnaire. Each word that is selected should mean what it is intended to mean, be the simplest word possible in its context, and be absolutely necessary (p. 10).

Questions of all three types which Jacobs (1974) described were employed in the current study. Three two-way questions were constructed. Such questions were difficult to construct but easy to respond to and analyze. Multiple choice questions made up the majority of questions in the present survey. While also hard to formulate, they provided much more complete data from the respondents than did two-way questions. A further advantage of multiple choice questions is that they are not difficult to answer or analyze. A number of questions which combined the features of multiple choice questions and open-ended questions were also used.

A list of questions to be avoided in survey construction was presented in a handbook for questionnaire construction produced by Social and Community Planning Research (1972): (a) leading questions (b) highbrow questions (c) irritating questions (d) apologetic questions (e) overly complicated questions (f) arithmetical questions (g) hypothetical questions (h) ambiguous questions (i) secondary questions (pp. 44-46). Additionally, Jacobs (1974) advises that questions should contain terms which are familiar to respondents, present all viewpoints in their responses, be short and simple, and not present undesirable choices or be 'loaded'.

In addition to writing questions for surveys carefully, the researcher should also place questions in the correct sequence in his survey. The Social and Community Planning Research (1972) handbook on questionnaire construction advised that questions which are interesting and easy to answer be placed at the beginning of a survey, more difficult and emotionally loaded questions be put in the middle, and straightforward questions appear at the survey's end (p. 32).

The length of a survey is another important consideration for the researcher. While Charach (1975) states that length has little effect on response rate (pp. 5-6) making a survey too long can have detrimental effects on the validity of responses. If respondents are fatigued and bored by extremely long surveys, their responses will be adversely affected.

Jacobs (1974) also outlines the piloting procedure which was adopted for use in this survey. A group which was representative of the final target audience and which knew the subject of the survey pretested it and as Jacobs advised "...explained their responses" (p. 31).

Charach (1975) states that in order to obtain honest and frank responses and thereby aid survey validity, it is also necessary to assure the complete anonymity as well as the confidentiality of their (the subjects') responses

to those outside the research staff (p. 5). Additionally, he states that non response or low response rates can introduce bias to the study, and should be carefully considered when interpreting results.

In conclusion, investigators such as Oppenheim (1966), Clark (1976), Jacobs (1974), and Charach (1975) provided a description of how to build an effective survey for the present study. The information provided by these researchers was about question types, piloting procedures, and conditions of administration and interpretation.

J. INTERVIEW METHODS

The interview agenda constructed for the present study was formulated using the results of such investigators as Kahn (1960) and Garrett (1942) concerning (a) the different types of interviews, (b) the purposes of interviewing, (c) facts of human nature needing to be understood by interviewers, and (d) the interpreting of interview responses.

Descriptions of the type of interview constructed for the present study were provided by Kahn (1960) and Garrett (1942). Kahn states that such interviews were concerned with attitudes, values, feelings, hopes, plans, and descriptions of self (p. 18).

Garrett (1942) listed four facts of human nature which are essential for the interviewer to remember if an

effective interview is to be conducted.

1. Respondents do not have to know or be able to name a cause for their actions (often they simply cannot do so).

2. Every fact of human experience (objective fact) has its corresponding emotional attitudes (subjective fact) and both must be considered when interviewing.

3. Ambivalence - the harboring of conflicting feelings, interests, desires and emotions about causes of actions; is present to some extent in each person.

4. The development of an emotional rapport--positive or negative-between the interviewer and the interviewee is inevitable. The interviewer should aim to control that rapport (not eliminate it) (p. 20).

In order to achieve the most frank and open responses from respondents, interviewers should keep these facts of human nature in mind and try to understand - (not pass judgment on) the actions of respondents.

The last task of the interviewer is to interpret the responses which he received. Garrett (1942) describes the procedure as one of constantly forming, testing, and accepting or rejecting hypotheses about the responses he observes (p. 42) (this is done confidentially). After the interview is complete such hypotheses can be jotted down and undergo further changes if necessary.

While interviewing is, as Kahn (1960) notes, a fallible measuring instrument which is subject to substantial errors and biases (p. 20) it has great value in gathering data concerning the attitudes, feelings, interests, and motivations of people. Such information would be difficult to collect by any other means.

K. SUMMARY

Based on the data presented in this chapter the following generalizations about research into the home backgrounds of students can be made.

1. The models provided by parents and siblings exert a strong influence on children's reading and writing skills. Hall (1976) and Taylor (1981) described homes of early readers as places where children experienced print on a daily basis and often observed parents or siblings engaged in reading or writing activities. Durkin (1966) and Teale (1978) concluded that all members of the families of early readers (including the early) were regular readers. Monk (1958) found that children who were often read aloud to in infancy achieved higher marks in written English.

2. The parents and siblings of early readers spent long periods of time discussing and encouraging the reading and writing activities of children. Both Clark (1976) and Durkin (1966) found that discussions about and help with the reading and writing activities of children were common

occurrences in the homes they encountered. Clark, Durkin, and Kenyon (1979) also found that in the homes of higher achievers, the children were encouraged to read by family members and family activities.

3. Children who possessed superior reading and writing skill development were strongly interested in reading and writing activities and participated in them quite regularly. Monk (1958) found that the higher achieving writers which he examined: (a) preferred reading as a mode of getting information, (b) wrote more letters than an inferior group, and (c) spent more time reading for pleasure than did the lower achieving group.

4. Research has shown the three following home situation characteristics are associated with superior language skill development: (a) both parents living at home, (b) highly educated parents, and (c) being the oldest child in the family. Durkin (1966) and Hall (1976) found that the parents of early readers were more highly educated than the parents of those who did not read early. Thompson (1979) and the Institute for Development of Educational Activities (1980) assert that the academic performance (which includes language skill) of children from two parent families was superior to the performance of children from one-parent families. Taylor (1981) and Monk (1958) assert

that firstborn children receive more attention from parents relating to reading and writing and achieve higher levels.

5. The homes of superior readers and writers were characterized by readily accessible reading and writing materials and many experiences with books. Monk (1958) and Hall (1976) found that books, magazines, newspapers and writing materials were readily accessible to children and could usually be used without parental permission. Clark (1976) stated that experiences with books were an essential part of the activities which took place in the homes of early readers.

6. Previous research has shown that superior readers and writers were usually able to work effectively in a group or by themselves. Clark (1976) described the early readers she investigated as having powers of concentration and self-sufficiency which enabled them to be content either in the company of others or on their own.

7. Superior readers and writers have also been described by researchers as (a) having high intelligence ratings, (b) being girls, (c) making future plans at an early age. Gage (1963), McCarthy (1954), Deiderich (1957), Lange and Kruglov (1950), and Monk (1958) have found that intelligence is a powerful influence on reading and writing skill. Monk (1958) and Maloney (1967) found that, generally, the superior writers in their samples were girls and that

superior writers tended to make their future plans at a younger age than did the lower achieving writers.

8. Previous research suggests that a characteristic of superior readers and writers is budgeting their time evenly over a variety of recreational activities. Monk (1958) found that higher achieving writers budgeted their time more evenly than did lower achieving writers. He also concluded that higher achieving writers spent less time viewing television and spent less total time in the company of their peers than did the lower achieving writers.

9. The parents of superior readers and writers exhibited strong interest in the school progress of their children and a great deal of satisfaction with their roles as parents. Goodacre (1970) cites Burt (1969) in saying that the attitude of parents toward a child's day-to-day educational work is the home factor which contributes most to the child's school progress. Monk (1958) states that he found the parents of early readers to be content and satisfied with their roles as parents.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to find answers to four questions:

- 1) Which reading and writing activities done at home by children and their family members are associated with either more effective writers or less effective writers?
- 2) What materials in the home or regular events of the household are associated with either more effective writers or less effective writers?
- 3) What leisure-time activities done at home by children, their parents, or both are associated with either more effective writers or less effective writers?
- 4) What are the opinions of parents about their roles in helping their children learn the skills of reading and writing which are associated either with more effective writers or less effective writers?

In order to gather information that would answer these questions a questionnaire was designed and subsequently administered to the parents of a sample of students in grades six and seven. These students had

been identified by their teachers as "more effective writers" or "less effective writers". Once questionnaires had been completed, they were collected and tabulated as well as cross-tabulated by group (group of more effective writers or group of less effective writers). A Kolmogorov-Smirnov two-sample test for statistical significance of the differences between the responses of the groups was used.

Interviews were conducted with a stratified random sample of ten respondents in order to gather additional information about the home backgrounds of students which a questionnaire could not gather.

The chart below describes the approximate dates and amounts of time spent on each part of the project. During the summer months, full days were spent on the project, but during the school year time was quite limited.

B. TIMELINE FOR STUDY

School district permission to conduct study	- April 1982
Questionnaire development	July - August 1981
	July - August 1982
Questionnaire piloting: stage one	July - August 1981
stage two	May - June 1982
Administration of questionnaire	June 1983
Interview questions development	May - June 1983
Interviews conducted	August 1983

C. SAMPLE

The study sampled parents of selected students in grades six and seven at four elementary schools in a large British Columbia Interior school district. The reason for choosing the parents of grade six and seven students was that such parents have children that have been in the school system long enough to have participated in many writing activities both at home and at school. These parents are more likely to have had experiences with, and have opinions about, their children's involvement in writing activities. Four different schools were selected to provide a statistically large enough sample and to supply a diversity of home environments and socio-economic circumstances for the study. The four schools served a suburban community, a semi-rural community near a larger center, a small resort town, and a combined suburban community and rural area. Students were placed into groups by their teachers after careful consideration was given to each student's overall ability in written composition (Appendix J lists all of the guidelines which teachers used to make these decisions). In each of the four schools, ten students at each grade level formed a group of more effective writers, making a total group of 80 more effective writers. In the same way, 80 less effective writers were chosen, bringing the total number

of selected students to 160. The parents of these students formed the sample.

D. QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

Wondering about whether or not the home background of students has any influence on the skill with which they write prompted the current study. Questions exploring this area were developed in consultation with colleagues and by examining similar research done by Monk (1958), Durkin (1966), and Clark (1976).

Four categories of questions for this study were designed

- 1) Reading and writing activities of children and their parents,
- 2) Background information (including questions about reading and writing materials in the home, conditions in the home, and parents' education),
- 3) At-home leisure activities of children, and
- 4) Parental opinions about their roles in helping their children learn the skills of reading and writing.

A copy of the final version of the questionnaire is found in Appendix A.

E. PILOTING OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was piloted in two stages. An initial, longer version of the questionnaire was piloted

using a class of teachers who were in the process of completing a graduate professional education course during a summer school session. As a result, twenty-two of an original fifty-three questions were deleted from the questionnaire because they were judged less important than other questions.

Questions which were deleted concerned such topics as family size, rooms in the home, parents' reading habits, children's reading habits, children's jobs, and future plans for the children. The remaining thirty-one questions were more directly concerned with the child's writing experiences. Many of the remaining questions were reworded or restructured as a result of suggestions.

A group of parents who regularly volunteered their services as helpers in an elementary school library and teaching staff in the target schools piloted the questionnaire at the second stage. While this is a skewed population, it helped to identify some weaknesses and places where further editing was needed. For example, a question concerning family income was deleted from the questionnaire as a result of this second stage of piloting.

Additionally, some minor adjustments were made to several questions in wording or in deleting part of the

question. There was also a section added to the questionnaire concerning the types of writing which parents do on the job or at home.

F. METHOD OF QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTRATION

A covering letter explaining the questionnaire was sent home to parents of pupils who had been placed into the group of more effective writers or the group of less effective writers. (Appendix B contains the covering letter). The letters were addressed to the mothers of the pupils since in most cases the mother would be able to provide the most extensive information about the background and experiences of their children. Parents were reassured that their responses were completely anonymous. No names were written on questionnaires or on the envelopes in which they were returned. Parents were requested to seal the completed questionnaire in a smaller envelope which was provided and then to insert the questionnaire in its sealed envelope into a larger one which was also provided. After writing their names on the larger envelope, they were asked to return the questionnaire to the school with their children. The school secretary then collected the questionnaires, checked the names off a master list and discarded the larger envelopes. When the researcher received the

questionnaires, they were sealed in unmarked envelopes, and the anonymity of the respondents was thus protected.

Follow-up on unreturned questionnaires was carried out by the principal or a person whom he designated in each school and the classroom teachers of the students, who reminded those who had not returned the questionnaires after approximately a week had elapsed. In most cases this proved to be reasonably effective, as can be seen from a response rate of over 75 percent. The rate at which questionnaires were returned by parents of students in the group of more effective writers (81 percent) was much higher than the rate at which parents of students in the group of less effective writers returned their questionnaires (65 percent). One hundred twenty-one questionnaires were answered and returned from the whole sample of 160 making the response rate for the sample 76 percent.

G. INTERVIEW DEVELOPMENT AND PILOTING

Questions best suited to use in the interviews were those concerning the more subjective aspects of home environment, those which a questionnaire could not uncover. All of the questions used in the interviews were designed to be open-ended so that they could serve as starting points for exploration and discussion of

children's writing experiences. Topics which the questions concerned were:

- 1) Help which parents gave when their children were doing writing at home
- 2) Help which parents gave to their children when they were initially learning to read
- 3) More information about how children spent their out-of-school time
- 4) The child's early experiences in reading
- 5) Information about discussions between parents and teachers which may or may not have taken place
- 6) Information about steps taken by parents to help their child when they encountered difficulties with schoolwork
- 7) More information about children's television viewing habits
- 8) Parents' opinions about the purpose of education
- 9) Descriptions of children and their reactions to certain situations
- 10) How the schools might better inform parents about what is happening at school

(A complete interview agenda is found in Appendix C)

The interviewer piloted the interview procedure

with friends and acquaintances. As a result of piloting, the wording of certain questions was changed to improve clarity and ambiguous questions were reworded. Tones of voice and mannerisms which made respondents uncomfortable were eliminated.

H. METHOD OF INTERVIEW ADMINISTRATION

Ten parents were chosen using a stratified random sampling technique. This sampling technique employed the following steps:

1. All questionnaire respondents were assigned a two digit number.
2. Using a table of random numbers, respondents were selected for interviewing purposes.
3. The group of interviewees (n=10) matched the sample (n=160) in percentages of parents of males and females and in percentages who were parents of more effective writers or less effective writers.
4. Respondents were selected until the matching described above was completed.

This procedure ensured that there was a proportionate number of males and females in the interview group to the numbers of selected students. Interviewees were contacted first by letter (a copy of this letter is found in Appendix D) and then by telephone to arrange a convenient time for the interviews to take place.

I. RATIONALE

Questions on the newly-created survey dealt with the topics of reading and writing activities, home background information, leisure-time activities, and parental opinions.

Topic 1: Reading and Writing Activities

The initial section of the questionnaire contained twenty-one questions on the reading and writing activities which took place in the homes of respondents.

Four of these questions dealt with parents' writing habits, six of them concerned the writing experiences of students, and seven of the questions were about how parents interacted with their children concerning the written assignments children do for school. There were two questions each dealing with students' homework habits and the frequency with which parents read aloud to their children. As mentioned in Chapter 2, both Durkin (1966) and Clark (1976) found that more reading aloud behavior took place in the homes of early readers than in the homes of those who did not read early. Monk (1958) also determined that those who reached higher levels of achievement in written English had been read to more regularly than had those who reached lower levels of achievement. Questions in the current study explore reading aloud by parents to children who read for themselves and children who do not read for themselves in relation to overall skill in writing.

Monk (1958) and Goodacre (1970) found that the

amount of time spent on homework assignments was related to the students' achievement in written English. The present study asks questions about how much time is spent on homework and how often homework is done.

Durkin (1966) found that early readers tended to show initial interest in learning how to print at the age of four. In order to find out what the ages of initial interest in learning how to print among those classified as more effective and less effective writers are, a similar question was asked in this study. Durkin determined that among early readers, printing was usually learned before reading or they were learned at the same time. This is, of course, the opposite of the order in which schools usually teach them. The current study attempted to find out what order of learning the skills is associated with more effective and less effective writers at the grades six and seven level. Durkin (1966) also reported that nearly all early readers printed before entering grade one. The present study ascertained the level of printing ability which was achieved by students prior to grade one who were later classified as more effective and less effective writers.

Seven questions were asked about what events took place in the home just prior to and during the completion of a writing assignment and what events regularly took

place at home when a written assignment which had already received a mark from a teacher was brought home. Questions were about such topics as the types of help parents gave their children during the completion of a written assignment, and their responses to his work. Such questions as these have had little exploration, but recent research suggests that this part of the writing process could have been an influence on the quality of work produced by students.

The writing habits of parents were also explored as an area that could have an effect on the skill with which children write. Questions were asked about letter writing frequency and types of writing done at home and at work by mothers.

Topic 2: Home Background Information

There was a total of twelve questions in this part of the questionnaire. Two of them asked about books and chalkboards in the home, three of them dealt with the experiences of mothers who worked outside the home, three of them concerned the presence of children's natural parents in the home, and four questions were about the educational and occupational levels of parents.

As stated in Chapter 2, Monk (1958) examined the availability of books for children at home and stated that a relationship existed between the number of books

for children in the home and the written achievement of students.

Durkin (1966) found that the home of every early reader in her study contained a chalkboard. This was such an interesting result that the present study attempted to ascertain if there was any tendency for the homes of more effective writers to contain chalkboards.

Several researchers have investigated the role which mothers working outside the home plays in affecting different areas of student achievement. Fraser (1973) found no relationship between mothers working outside the home and their children's school progress, Monk (1958) found his results on this question inconclusive, and Clark (1976) found that few of the mothers of early readers worked. The present study asks questions on this topic to augment what is known about it.

Fraser (1973) states that the educational level attained by parents is related to children's progress at school. The current study investigates this question in order to clarify this subject.

There is general agreement between Monk (1958) and Fraser (1973) that the father's occupation exerts some kind of influence on his child's school progress. Monk states that there is a "direct relationship" and Fraser calls it a "close relationship". Clark (1976) found a

great diversity of occupations among the fathers of early readers. The purpose of asking questions about the father's occupation is to add to the knowledge we already have.

Little exploration of the occupations held by mothers of students has been done before. Therefore, to explore this area, the present study asked questions about the types of jobs held by mothers.

Topic 3: Leisure Time Activities

Two questions concerning the television viewing habits of students, six questions about which activities students choose to do when alone, and one question dealing with the source of students' information about world events made up the part of the questionnaire concerned with how leisure time was spent.

As described in Chapter 2, Durkin (1966) and Clark (1976) found that early readers watch television selectively and they also watch it less often than do those who do not read early. Monk (1958) found that those who achieved lower marks in written English watched television more often than did those who achieved higher marks. Just what effect television viewing might have on the skill with which children write as well as what restrictions, if any, are placed on children's viewing were the purposes for asking about television viewing

in the present study.

Durkin (1966) found that early readers both preferred to play alone and were more able to participate in quiet activities when alone than were those who did not read early. Clark (1976) supported this finding when she stated that early readers she examined had an ability to occupy themselves when alone. To explore further the whole area of solitary behavior, and choices of activities when alone, a series of six questions was asked about this topic in the current study.

Monk (1958) found that students who had achieved high marks in written English tended to use reading rather than listening to get most of their information about world events. Consequently, the question concerning this in the present study was simply a follow-up, to see what source students classified as more effective or less effective writers used to get their information about world events.

Topic 4: Parents' Opinions

The section of the questionnaire on parental opinions was made up of: (a) two questions concerning the satisfaction of parents with school instruction in reading and writing, (b) a single question about the amount of interest that students show in school, (c) five questions dealing with what activities the ideal parent

should do, and (d) eight questions concerning the activities that parents felt their children should do.

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, Durkin (1966) found that parents of early readers were not as satisfied with school instruction as were the parents of students who did not read early. Two questions in the current study were designed to give information on this issue.

Clark (1976) stated that verbal interaction between parents and children was welcomed by the parents in the homes of early readers.

Goodacre (1970) felt that an examination of parent's motivation to help in their children's education was an important step to understanding the parents' role. Questions which the present study asks explore the parents' motivation to help in the education of their children as well as the way in which they deal with their children at home in order to understand better how mothers and fathers view their parenting roles.

A series of eight questions about parental opinions concerning activities children should do was designed as a way of finding out the attitudes of parents toward home management issues. The activities covered in this section range from academic ones such as homework to everyday occurrences such as grocery shopping. Responses

helped define parents' attitudes about what they found appropriate for their children to do.

The amount of interest shown by children in their schooling is an area to which one question is devoted in order to ascertain if the "enthusiastic" and "adventure-like" quality of the early readers' home described by Clark (1976) and Durkin (1966) carries over the years into the upper grades and from the home to the school.

J. DATA ORGANIZATION

Three types of data were collected by the questionnaire. There was directly quantifiable data, data which needed translation in order to make it quantifiable, and non quantifiable data.

Forty-nine of the 58 questions in the survey yielded directly quantifiable data. This information was collected in response to multiple-choice questions and Likert scales. For example,

1. a) Indicate the number of letters you usually write at home.
 1. one or more each week
 2. one or two each month
 3. fewer than one per month
 4. none - I use other means to contact friends and relatives

Tell how much you agree or disagree with the statement below.

29. a) The ideal parent should check his child's homework regularly.

strongly agree	agree	not sure
disagree	strongly disagree	

Nine questions of the 58 in the survey produced data that was quantifiable after being translated. Questions producing such data were either short answer, fill-in-the-blank questions, or a combination of multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank questions as the following examples illustrate.

1. c) What other types of writing do you do at home? _____
7. Which type of writing listed below would you say your child does best?

1. letters	4. notes
2. stories	5. diaries
3. poems	6. other (please describe)

A third type of data collected by the questionnaire was the unsolicited comments of parents. Such comments appeared on the back of the last page or in the body of the questionnaire. The comment below was written on the back of the last page of the questionnaire by a respondent:

"I feel you are being discriminatory by asking mothers to fill this out. Why not either parent?"

Once all quantifiable data had been directly coded after translation (where necessary) the University of British Columbia Data Entry Service was used to enter the data into the computer for subsequent statistical

analysis.

No data collected from interviews were quantified. Such data took the form of short answers to questions and the jotted impressions of the interviewee's opinions by the researcher. This information was summarized in written form and reported along with questionnaire results in Chapter Four.

K. STATISTICAL TREATMENTS

To ascertain if associations existed between any of the factors of home environment which were asked about in the questionnaire and the students' skill in writing three statistical procedures were employed.

A simple frequency distribution for all variables on the questionnaire was compiled so that sample trends could easily be spotted on a question.

A more useful cross-tabulation of all responses by group (group of more effective writers and group of less effective writers) was then employed. Using the cross-tabulation by group, characteristics of the two groups were isolated and described.

In order to decide if the differences between the groups were statistically significant a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two Sample test was used. It tested the significance of the differences between the responses of the group of more

effective writers and the responses of the group of less effective writers on the variables. In his Nonparametric Statistics, Sidney Siegel (1956) explains that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-sample test determines whether two independent samples (in this case the two groups - more effective writers and less effective writers) have been drawn from the same population (or from populations with the same distribution). He goes on to explain that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-sample test is an efficient way to determine whether two small samples are drawn from populations which differ in any respect at all. Because the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-sample test is sensitive to various differences in samples (for example differences in central tendency, differences in dispersion, differences in skewness, etc.) it was chosen over such tests as the Mann-Whitney U test which is particularly sensitive to differences in central tendency. A two-tailed probability statistic, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov "Z" score, and an absolute value of the difference (D) between the maximum observed cumulative step functions of the two groups were reported for each variable.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

A. INTRODUCTION

Examination of the reading and writing activities of students and parents revealed differences between members of the group of more effective writers and members of the group of less effective writers. These differences are summarized below under the headings Significant Variables, Variables Which Approached Significance, Variables Which Were Not Significant but in the Hypothesized Direction, and Variables on Which There Was Little Difference.

1. Significant Variables

On the following variables a significant difference (at the .05 level of confidence) was found between the responses of the parents of more effective writers and the responses of parents of less effective writers. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test was used to test for these differences.

- a) More effective writers spent more of their leisure time writing than did less effective writers.
- b) Parents of more effective writers read aloud to their children more regularly than did the parents of less effective writers after the children had learned to read for themselves.

- c) The jobs held by fathers of more effective writers were classed as more highly skilled than were the jobs held by fathers of less effective writers.
- d) As an activity to occupy themselves when alone, more effective writers chose television viewing less often than less effective writers did.
- e) Parents of more effective writers expressed stronger satisfaction with reading instruction in the schools than did the parents of less effective writers.

2. Variables Which Approached Significance

The following differences between responses from the group of more effective writers and the group of less effective writers approached significance when tested with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

- a) More effective writers showed an interest in learning how to print at an earlier age than did less effective writers.
- b) The parents of less effective writers agreed more strongly than did the parents of more effective writers that parents should check their children's homework regularly.

3. Variables Which Were Not Significant but in the Hypothesized Direction

- a) The mothers of more effective writers reported

doing more different kinds of writing at home and at work than did the mothers of less effective writers.

- b) Parents of more effective writers read through their children's written assignments more regularly and contacted their children's teacher less often than did the parents of less effective writers.
- c) More effective writers were reported to work on homework more often each week than were less effective writers.
- d) More effective writers received less help from their parents with revising and proofreading written assignments than did less effective writers.
- e) Parents of more effective writers read aloud to their children before they could read for themselves more often than the parents of less effective writers did.
- f) In the homes of more effective writers there were more books for children than in the homes of less effective writers.
- g) The educational level and occupational skill level possessed by the mothers of more effective writers was higher than the levels possessed by

the mothers of less effective writers.

- h) More effective writers watched fewer hours of television each week and had more restrictions placed on their television viewing by their parents than did the less effective writers.
- i) More effective writers were described as playing alone more often than were less effective writers.
- j) More effective writers preferred indoor activities to outdoor ones more strongly than did less effective writers.
- k) More effective writers were more interested in their schooling than were less effective writers.
- l) The parents of more effective writers expressed stronger agreement than the parents of less effective writers did with the ideas that children should be read to regularly when small and that children should help at home by doing regular chores.
- m) The parents of more effective writers did not agree as strongly as did the parents of less effective writers with the statement that children should be able to make most of their own choices about books to read and programs to watch.
- n) More skill in printing was reported upon grade

one entry by more effective writers than by less effective writers.

- o) More effective writers were reported to spend longer periods of time on their homework than were less effective writers.
- p) More of the mothers of more effective writers worked outside the home since their children had been born than had mothers of less effective writers.
- q) Fathers of more effective writers possessed higher levels of education than did fathers of less effective writers.
- r) More effective writers were reported to choose reading as an activity to occupy themselves when alone more often than were less effective writers.
- s) Making things with their hands was an activity which was chosen more regularly by the more effective writers than by the less effective writers.
- t) Parents of more effective writers more strongly agreed that parents should volunteer to help with school activities than did the parents of less effective writers.
- u) Mothers of more effective writers wrote letters more frequently than did the mothers of less

effective writers.

v) Parents of less effective writers offered more help to their children with getting started on writing assignments than did parents of more effective writers.

w) The parents of less effective writers more strongly agreed that children should help pay for the bills at home than did the parents of more effective writers.

4. Variables on Which There Was Little Difference

a) Little difference between the order in which children in the two groups learned the skills of reading and writing was found.

b) Little difference in the number of chalkboards found in the homes of more effective writers and the number found in the homes of less effective writers was found.

c) Parents of more effective writers and parents of less effective writers expressed the same strong agreement with statements that parents should help teach their children reading and writing and parents should be aware of new teaching methods.

d) Both the parents of more effective writers and the parents of less effective writers strongly

agreed that children should be read to regularly when they are small.

- e) There was little difference between the opinions held by the parents of more effective writers and the opinions of parents of less effective writers concerning two "children should" variables. Both groups strongly agreed that children should complete their homework without asking many questions and that children should help at home by cleaning their rooms and doing regular chores. Both groups of parents also agreed, although less strongly, that children should help do the grocery shopping.

B. READING AND WRITING ACTIVITIES

The twenty-two questions concerning reading and writing activities revealed differences between the activities of the members of the group of more effective writers and the activities of the members of the group of less effective writers. For example, parents of students in the group of more effective writers wrote more letters, read through the written work that was brought home by their children, offered more diversified help in aiding their children with learning how to print, and read aloud to their children before their children could read for themselves more regularly than

did parents of students in the group of less effective writers. Students in the group of more effective writers brought home more written assignments for their parents to see, did more different kinds of writing at home more often, exhibited an interest in learning how to print at an earlier age, and spent more nights each week and longer periods of time on homework assignments than did the students in the group of less effective writers.

1. Parents' Letter Writing Habits

Letters were written more regularly by mothers of more effective writers than by mothers of less effective writers but the differences between the two groups were not significant. By totalling the last three columns in Table 1 it can be seen that 91 percent of the mothers of the students in the group of more effective writers reported writing letters at least once per month while 85 percent of the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers reported this. However, these differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

While fewer fathers than mothers wrote letters on a regular basis, more letters were written by the fathers of students in the group of more effective writers than by fathers of students in the group of less effective writers and this was a significant difference. Looking

Table 1

The letter writing frequency of mothers expressed in percentage

group	none	fewer than one monthly	one or two monthly	one or more weekly
more effective	9	38	33	20
less effective	15	44	31	10

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test

Z	D	p	decision
0.721	.1324	.676	NS

The letter writing frequency of fathers expressed in percentage

group	none	fewer than one monthly	one or two monthly	one or more weekly
more effective	45	39	7	2
less effective	77	17	4	3

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test

Z	D	p	decision
1.427	.2620	.034	Significant

at the first column of Table 1 shows that while 45 percent of the fathers of students in the group of more effective writers wrote no letters, a much larger percentage (77 percent) of the fathers of students in the group of less effective writers did this. The differences between the letter writing frequencies of fathers in the two groups were significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

2. Mothers' Home and Work Writing Habits

More writing was done at home and at work by the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers than by the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers but neither of these differences between the groups were significant at the .05 level of confidence.

As Table 2 indicates, a larger proportion of mothers of students in the group of more effective writers (33 percent) reported doing two or three kinds of writing at home than did mothers of students in the group of less effective writers where 14 percent reported doing two or three kinds of writing at home. The differences between the groups on this question were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test. Appendix E lists the types of writing which mothers reported doing at home. Examples include

notes to family members, taking notes for study purposes, record keeping for volunteer organizations, poem and story writing, and other forms of writing.

Table 2

The home and work writing habits of mothers expressed in percentage

writing at home				
group	no writing	1 kind of writing	2 kinds of writing	3 kinds of writing
more effective	30	36	29	4
less effective	42	44	8	6
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test				
	Z	D	p	decision
	0.647	.1187	.797	NS
writing at work				
more effective	48	32	16	4
less effective	62	23	15	0
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test				
	Z	D	p	decision
	0.956	.1756	.320	NS

Table 2 shows that writing which was done at work was done more regularly by mothers of students in the group of more effective writers than by mothers of students in the group of less effective writers. Fifty-two percent of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers reported doing at least one kind of writing at work while 39 percent of the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers reported this. These differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test. Appendix E lists the types of writing which mothers reported doing at work. Examples include letter writing, bookkeeping, charting (done by nurses), report writing, and other forms of writing.

3. Parental Response to Written Work Which Was Brought Home

When asked about their responses to written assignments which were brought home with marks on them from teachers, parents of students in the group of more effective writers indicated that assignments such as these were brought home more regularly and fewer contacts were made with teachers to discuss such assignments than was true in the homes of students in the group of less effective writers. However, neither of these differences between the groups were statistically significant.

Discussions with respondents during interviews also

strongly support these differences. Interviewees who were parents of students in the group of more effective writers used such terms as "weekly" and "all the time" to describe how often their children showed them written school assignments while the parents of students in the group of less effective writers who were interviewed described the frequency with which they saw their children's work as "seldom" or "not often".

As can be seen in Table 3, a larger proportion of the students in the group of more effective writers (51 percent) than the proportion of students in the group of less

Table 3

The frequency with which marked written assignments are seen by parents expressed in percentage

group	no response	never	seldom	sometimes	regularly
more effective	1	3	13	32	51
less effective	2	2	31	32	33
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
	Z	D	p	decision	
	0.417	.0766	.995	NS	

effective writers (33 percent) brought home assignments regularly for their parents to see; however, this was not a statistically significant difference at the .05 level of confidence when tested with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

Table 4

The responses of parents to the marked written assignments of their children expressed in percentage

	read through the assignment				
group	no response	never	seldom	sometimes	regularly
more effective	1	0	3	9	87
less effective	2	2	6	17	73
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
	Z	D	p	decision	
	.0877	.1611	.425	NS	
	contacted the teacher to discuss the assignment				
more effective	7	54	25	13	1
less effective	8	38	40	12	2
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
	Z	D	p	decision	
	.0651	.1196	.790	NS	

Table 4 shows that more parents of students in the

group of more effective writers read through their children's assignments regularly (87 percent) than did the parents of students in the group of less effective writers (73 percent). The differences between the groups were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

Fewer parents of students in the group of more effective writers (39 percent) reported that they contacted their children's teachers to discuss written assignments than did parents of students in the group of less effective writers (54 percent) as can be seen by adding the last three columns in Table 4. These differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence when tested with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

4. Students' Leisure-Time Writing Habits

Students in the group of more effective writers spent leisure time writing more often than did students in the group of less effective writers and this was a significant difference (at the .05 level of confidence) between the two groups.

A majority (75 percent) of the parents of students in the group of more effective writers reported that their children spent time once a month or more often writing during their leisure time while just over half (52 percent) of the parents in the group of less effective

writers reported this. This is revealed by adding the last three columns of Table 5. These differences between the amounts of writing done at home by the groups were significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

When questioned about the manner in which their children used their leisure time to write, mothers indicated that students in the group of more effective writers more regularly spent their leisure time engaged in writing than did students in the group of less effective writers.

5. Students' Early Printing and Reading Experiences

Questions about children's early printing experiences indicated that students in the group of more effective writers printed more things upon entering grade one, showed an earlier interest in learning how to print, and were offered more varied help in learning how to print than were students in the group of less effective writers. None of these differences between the groups were statistically significant.

As can be seen in Table 6, a larger percentage of mothers of students in the group of more effective writers (32 percent) than mothers of students in the group of less effective writers (15 percent) reported that their children printed most things when they

Table 5

The frequency of writing during the leisure time of children expressed in percentage

group	no response	never	rarely	once monthly	once weekly	every two days	once daily or more often
more effective	0	1	23	28	29	10	9
less effective	2	6	42	20	10	14	8
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test							
	Z			D		p	decision
	1.381			.2536		.044	Significant

Table 6

The skill in printing which children possessed upon
grade one entry expressed in percentage

group	no response	did not print	printed a few things	printed most things
more effective	0	1	67	32
less effective	2	6	77	15

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test

Z	D	p	decision
.0794	.1458	.554	NS

entered grade one. Differences in the way the two groups responded on this variable were not statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

Table 7 shows that 15 percent of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers reported that their children showed an initial interest in learning how to print at the ages of five or six while 34 percent of the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers reported this. The differences between the groups were not significant at the .05 level

Table 7

The reported ages of initial interest in learning how to print expressed in percentage

group	no response	three years	four years	five years	six years
more effective	0	39	46	13	2
less effective	2	33	31	27	7

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test				
Z	D	p	decision	
1.200	.2205	.112	NS	

of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

When asked about the order in which their children learned the skills of printing and reading, a majority of the respondents indicated either that printing was learned first by their children or that the skills were learned at approximately the same time.

Table 8 shows that both the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers and the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers gave very similar responses and no significant differences at the .05 level of confidence were found using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

Table 8

The order in which children learned the skills of printing and reading expressed in percentage

group	no response	printing then reading	at the same time	reading then printing
more effective	0	43	41	16
less effective	4	46	33	17
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test				
	Z	D	p	decision
	.250	.0460	.999	NS

During interviews with the ten selected respondents questions about the early reading habits of children were asked. Most interviewees indicated that they did not attempt to teach their preschool children to read.

Interviewees described how early interest in reading was shown by their children. The children in the group of more effective writers were described as having a very active interest in learning how to read by such phrases as:

- a) he really enjoyed books,
- b) she picked out words and then took

over the reading on her own, and

- c) she often asked "What does that say?"

The less active interest in learning how to read of the children in the group of less effective writers was described by such phrases as:

- a) he watched Sesame Street quite often,
- b) he didn't learn to read until age 10, and
- c) he had no interest in learning to read.

Parents were also asked during interviews about how children reacted to the help which they received while learning to read. Parents of students in the group of more effective writers described the reactions of their children using such phrases as:

- a) he didn't notice it,
- b) it was as normal as breathing,
- c) he was quite excited to get reading help,
- d) he would often ask "Are you sure?" when we answered his questions, and
- e) she was eager to learn.

Parents of students in the group of less effective writers could not describe reactions since few of them recalled helping their children in learning to read.

Most interviewees reported that their children could not read upon entering grade one. In both groups,

however, there was a single interviewee who indicated that his or her child could read upon grade one entrance.

Previous research has found that early readers are often early writers also. A question for the survey was therefore designed to ascertain whether or not more effective writers might also be early writers.

Mothers were asked to describe the kind of help they gave their children in learning how to print (before their children began formal instruction at school in printing). They were asked to select from these options:

- 1) I made no attempts to teach printing,
- 2) I showed my child how to form letters,
- 3) I let him or her experiment on his or her own and provided materials, and
- 4) other: for example, "printed words then using phonics, sounded them out" .

(Appendix F lists all of the responses to part four of this question.

Significant differences in the responses of the two groups to this question were found. Just over half (53 percent of the respondents) indicated that they showed their children how to form letters (option 2). The help offered by the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers and by mothers of students in

the group of less effective writers was quite similar in the way it was distributed among the choices. Since more mothers of students in the group of more effective writers reported offering two or more kinds of help, the help offered by the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers was more diversified than the help offered by the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers. Using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test, statistically significant differences at the .05 level of confidence were found in the responses of the two groups to this question.

In summary, the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers reported that their children printed more things upon entering grade one than did the children in the group of less effective writers, differences which were significant at the .05 level of confidence. Although children in the group of more effective writers were reported to exhibit earlier interest in learning how to print than were children in the group of less effective writers and the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers offered their children more varied help in learning how to print than the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers did, these differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

6. Students' Homework Habits

Respondents indicated that students in the group of more effective writers did homework more often and spent longer periods of time on their homework than did the students in the group of less effective writers but neither of these differences between the groups were significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Adding the last two columns in Table 9 shows that a larger proportion of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers (83 percent) than mothers of students in the group of less effective writers (62 percent) reported that their children spent

Table 9

The frequency with which children worked on homework assignments expressed in percentage

group	no response	once per week or less often	two or three nights per week	each school night
more effective	0	17	33	50
less effective	4	35	33	28

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test

Z	D	p	decision
0.209	.0385	.000	NS

time on two nights or more each week doing homework. However, these differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

Mothers were asked how long their children usually spent when they worked on homework. Students in the group of more effective writers were reported to spend longer periods of time on homework than were students in the group of less effective writers. Adding the last two columns in Table 10-shows that 83 percent of the students in the group of more effective writers

Table 10

The amount of time spent on homework assignments by children during each session of work expressed in percentage

group	no response	fifteen minutes or less	thirty minutes	forty-five minutes	one hour or longer
more effective	0	6	11	26	57
less effective	6	10	39	21	25

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test

Z	D	p	decision
1.043	1.915	.227	NS

usually spent forty-five minutes or longer when they worked on homework while 46 percent of the students in the group of less effective writers were reported to spend this length of time. This difference between the groups, however, was not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

These results, which indicate longer periods of time spent on homework by students in the group of more effective writers than by students in the group of less effective writers, were supported by interviewees. Parents of children in the group of more effective writers who were interviewed consistently described the amount of time their children spent on homework as greater than the amount of time spent on homework by children in the group of less effective writers. Typical descriptions of the length of time spent by students in the group of more effective writers were "one hour daily" or "two hours daily" while students in the group of less effective writers were typically described as spending "ten minutes per day while on the bus" or "30 minutes daily."

In summary, there were no significant differences at the .05 level of confidence between how long the two groups spent on their homework assignments or how often they worked on such assignments. Those in the

group of more effective writers however, usually spent longer on their homework.

7. Writing Help given by Parents

Answers to questions on the questionnaire about the kinds of help with writing given by parents to their children indicated that three common types of help were given less regularly by parents to students in the group of more effective writers than to students in the group of less effective writers but none of the differences between the groups was significant at the .05 level of confidence when tested with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

Table 11 shows that a slightly smaller proportion of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers (23 percent) than mothers of students in the group of less effective writers (27 percent) reported that they helped their children weekly in getting started on writing assignments. This was not a significant difference at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

Results which are presented in Table 11 show a large difference between the groups of respondents when asked how often they helped their children with revising written work. Although this difference was not statistically significant, there was a higher percentage of mothers of more effective writers than mothers of less effective

Table 11

The frequency with which help on written assignments was given by parents expressed in percentage

Help on Getting Started					
group	no response	once yearly	twice yearly	monthly	weekly
more effective	12	20	17	28	23
less effective	17	8	23	25	27
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
	Z	D	p	decision	
	0.662	.1215	.774	NS	
Help with Revising					
more effective	9	13	12	44	23
less effective	17	2	14	35	33
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
	Z	D	p	decision	
	0.480	.0881	.976	NS	
Help with Proofreading					
more effective	6	6	12	42	35
less effective	14	4	12	31	39
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
	Z	D	p	decision	
	0.622	.1143	.834	NS	

writers who reported giving weekly help to their children on revising written assignments.

As can be seen in Table 11, proofreading help was given to students in the group of more effective writers less regularly (35 percent received it weekly) than it was given to students in the group of less effective writers (39 percent received it weekly). These differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

When asked about several further kinds of help with writing which parents could give, interviewees indicated that more of these kinds of help was given by parents of children in the group of more effective writers than by parents of students in the group of less effective writers. Parents of children in the group of more effective writers who were interviewed indicated that they talked about ideas for writing more often ("every couple of weeks, a couple of times a week") than did parents of students in the group of less effective writers ("a couple of times a year, seldom").

Children in the group of more effective writers were reported to read drafts of assignments to their mothers more often than were students in the group of

less effective writers. The parents of students in the group of more effective writers described the frequency with which their children read them drafts of written assignments with such phrases as "often, sometimes, when proud of it", or "when having difficulty", while "sometimes, once yearly", and "seldom" described the frequency with which children in the group of less effective writers read their parents drafts of written assignments.

In summary, while mothers of the students in the sample reported that all three kinds of help (help on getting started, assistance with revising written work, and help with proofreading of assignments) were given less regularly to students in the group of more effective writers than they were given to the students in the group of less effective writers, none of these differences was significant at the .05 level of confidence when tested with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

Interviewees indicated that parents of students in the group of more effective writers talked about ideas for writing with their children and read drafts of their children's written assignments more often than did parents of students in the group of less effective writers.

8. Reading to Children Which is Done by Parents

Results of the current study indicated that students

in the group of more effective writers were read to more regularly before they could read for themselves than were students in the group of less effective writers but this was not a significant difference.

Table 12 indicates that a greater proportion of parents of students in the group of more effective writers (76 percent) than parents of students in the group of less effective writers (40 percent) read aloud one or more times each week to their children who were unable to read for themselves. These differences were not, however, significant at the .05 level of confidence when tested with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

Table 12 shows that few parents read aloud to their children regularly after the children had learned to read aloud for themselves but that students in the group of more effective writers were read aloud to more regularly than were students in the group of less effective writers. The differences between the responses of the two groups to this question were significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

To summarize, mothers reported that both before their children could read for themselves and after they had learned, more time was spent reading aloud to children by parents of students in the group of more

Table 12

The frequency with which parents read aloud to their children expressed in percentage

Before Their Children Could Read for Themselves

group	no response	never	rarely	once every few weeks	weekly	once every few days	daily
more effective	1	0	3	0	1	19	76
less effective	2	4	6	6	4	38	40
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test							
	Z	D	p	decision			
	0.906	.1664	.384	NS			

After Their Children Could Read for Themselves

more effective	0	22	46	17	12	2	1
less effective	2	19	46	19	8	6	0
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test							
	Z	D	p	decision			
	1.800	.3305	.003	Significant			

effective writers than by parents of students in the group of less effective writers. In the latter case, results were significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

9. Parent-Child Discussions Concerning Reading and Television Viewing

Interviewees reported that discussions between parents and their children about the children's reading and television viewing were more regular occurrences in the homes of students in the group of more effective writers than they were in the homes of students in the group of less effective writers. Parents of students in the groups of more effective writers described the frequency of such discussions with such phrases as "frequently, quite often" and "sometimes". The parents of students in the group of less effective writers reported in their interviews that they seldom had such discussions with their children.

Interviews with respondents provided an opportunity to assess the attitudes of family members toward reading and writing activities and to ascertain the frequency with which these topics were discussed in the every day lives of family members. Interviews were proportionately divided among the more effective writers, less effective writers, males, and females in a way that reflected the

composition of the groups who returned their questionnaires.

Respondents from the homes of students in the group of more effective writers described writing stories or discussing what they were reading with their children as regular occurrences in their lives. Interviewees from the group of more effective writers indicated that helping their preschool children with reading was something that

- a) "we didn't notice because it was such
a regular occurrence
- b) didn't bother me
- c) gave us a kick; we enjoyed it"

Respondents from the homes of students in the group of less effective writers, however, nearly always mentioned reading and writing activities in association with school assignments and such activities as frequent reading and discussion of what was read did not form regular features of their lives. Further responses of interviewees are presented in Appendix J.

C. HOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Investigation of the work habits of mothers who worked outside the home, the educational levels and occupations of parents, and the presence of certain reading and writing materials in the homes of respondents revealed differences between the homes of students in the group of more effective writers and homes of students in

the group of less effective writers. In the homes of more effective writers there were more books for children, more mothers had worked outside the home since their children's births, and mothers were better educated than in the homes of less effective writers. These are all differences which were not significant at the .05 level of confidence. However, a significant difference between the educational levels attained by fathers in the two groups was found with the fathers of more effective writers being better educated.

1. Books and Chalkboards in the Home

About half of the homes of all respondents contained chalkboards. The homes of students in the group of more effective writers contained more books for children than did the homes of students in the group of less effective writers but this was not a significant difference.

Although not a significant difference at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test, there was a difference between the percentage of homes of students in the group of more effective writers which contained chalkboards (57 percent) and the percentage of homes of students in the group of less effective writers which contained chalkboards (48 percent). This can be seen by adding the last three columns of Table 13.

Table 14 shows that a higher percentage of the homes of students in the group of more effective writers (82 percent) were reported as having fifty or more books

Table 13

The frequency with which chalkboards were found in the homes of respondents
expressed in percentage

	no response	no chalkboard	a large chalkboard	a small chalkboard	more than one chalkboard
more effective	1	42	38	15	4
less effective	2	50	29	15	4
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
	Z	D	p	decision	
	0.261	.0479	.999	NS	

for children than were homes of students in the group of less effective writers (56 percent). Although the difference was not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test, the information was confirmed through discussions with interviewees. Interviewees from the homes of more effective writers described their homes as containing many books for children while interviewees from the homes of less effective writers reported that their homes contained fewer books.

In summary, about half of all respondents reported having chalkboards in their homes, and the homes of students in the group of more effective writers contained more books for children than did the homes of students in the group of less effective writers. Differences

Table 14

The number of books for children in the homes of respondents expressed in percentage

	no response	less than ten books	11-20 books	21-50 books	50 or more books
more effective	1	3	1	13	82
less effective	2	5	8	29	56
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
	Z	D	p	decision	
	0.539	.0989	.934	NS	

between responses from mothers of students in the group of more effective writers and mothers of students in the group of less effective writers about chalkboards and books for children were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

2. Mothers' Work Outside the Home

Questions about work done outside the home by mothers of students in both groups revealed that more mothers of students in the group of more effective writers than mothers of students in the group of less effective writers worked outside the home after their children had been born but these differences between the groups were not significant.

A higher percentage of mothers of students in the group of more effective writers reported having worked outside the home since their children had been born (81 percent) than did the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers (73 percent). As Table 15 indicates, differences between the groups on this variable were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test. These differences, however, did approach significance at the .05 level of confidence ($p = .076$).

Table 15 also shows that before their children attended school more mothers of students in the group of

Table 15

The frequency with which mothers reported working outside the home expressed in percentage

<u>Since Their Children Were Born</u>			
group	no response	did not work	did work
more effective	0	19	81
less effective	0	27	73
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test			
Z	D	p	decision
1.278	.2347	.076	NS
<u>Before Their Children Attended School</u>			
more effective	0	35	65
less effective	2	40	58
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test			
Z	D	p	decision
.440	.0808	.990	NS

more effective writers than mothers of students in the group of less effective writers were working outside the home. However, the differences between the groups on

this variable were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

Mothers of students in the group of more effective writers finished their work outside the home earlier in the day than did the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers. While 35 percent of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers finished their work outside the home before 4:30 p.m., 17 percent of the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers finished before that time. This was not a significant difference between the groups when tested with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

To summarize, more of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers reported that they had worked outside the home at some time since their children had been born but this difference between the groups was not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test. Additionally, more mothers of students in the group of more effective writers than mothers of students in the group of less effective writers reported that they had worked outside the home before their children attended school but the differences between the two groups on this variable were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

3. The Absence of Natural Parents from the Home

Most homes of respondents from the two groups contained both natural parents. There was no pattern to the ages at which parents left the homes or entered them and no significant differences between the groups.

A slightly higher percentage of mothers of students in the group of more effective writers than mothers of students in the group of less effective writers reported homes which contained both of the child's natural parents. Using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test, these differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence ($Z=0.823$, $D= .1511$, $p = .508$).

There were only slight differences between the ages of children in the two groups when parents left or entered their homes. These differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

4. Level of Parental Education

Both mothers and fathers of students in the group of more effective writers had higher levels of education than did the mothers and fathers of students in the group of less effective writers. The difference between the educational levels of mothers was not significant while the difference between the educational levels held by fathers was significant at the .05 level of confidence.

When the last four columns are added together, Table 16 shows that 61 percent of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers had some education beyond the grade twelve level while 22 percent of the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers possessed this level of education. The differences between the groups on this variable were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

Adding together the last four columns in Table 17 indicates that a higher percentage of fathers of students in the group of more effective writers (49 percent) than fathers of students in the group of less effective writers (33 percent) possessed a level of education beyond the grade twelve level. The differences between the educational levels of fathers of students in the group of more effective writers and the educational levels of fathers of students in the group of less effective writers were significant at the .05 level of confidence. This was determined by using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

In summary, both fathers and mothers of students in the group of more effective writers possessed higher levels of education than did the parents of students in the group of less effective writers but statistically

Table 16

The highest level of school attained by mothers expressed in percentage

group	no response	some secondary school	grade twelve graduate	community college	technical training	some university	university graduate
more effective	0	10	29	16	13	16	16
less effective	4	35	40	10	4	6	2
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test							
	Z 0.337		D .0619		p .999	decision NS	

Table 17

The highest level of school attained by fathers expressed in percentage

group	no response	some secondary school	grade twelve graduate	community college	technical training	some university	university graduate
more effective	1	30	19	6	7	13	23
less effective	6	44	17	8	10	0	15
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test							
	Z 2.163		D .3972		p .001	decision Significant	

significant differences (at the .05 level of confidence) were found only on the variable of fathers' educational level.

5. Parental Occupation

An examination of the occupations reported by the respondents indicated that in the homes of more effective writers more mothers worked outside the home and both mothers and fathers held slightly more highly skilled jobs than did parents of students in the group of less effective writers but these differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Occupations were categorized using a five-part scale. Examples of typical jobs in each category are listed below.

1. unskilled--janitor, domestic help
2. semi-skilled--truck driver, secretary
3. skilled--tradesman, machine operator
4. business and management--store manager
5. professional--pharmacist, teacher

Appendix G lists all occupations which were reported by respondents and which category each was placed in).

Upon adding the last five columns of Table 18 it becomes evident that more mothers of students in the group of more effective writers (66 percent) than mothers of students in the group of less effective

Table 18

The occupational classification of jobs held by mothers expressed in percentage

group	no response	did not work	unskilled	semi- skilled	skilled	business & managerial	professional
more effective	1	33	12	28	15	4	7
less effective	4	44	13	23	12	4	0
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test							
			Z 0.915	D .1681	p .372	decision NS	

Table 19

The occupational classification of jobs held by fathers expressed in percentage

group	no response	did not work	unskilled	semi- skilled	skilled	business & managerial	professional
more effective	6	3	4	29	28	10	20
less effective	8	4	17	19	31	10	10
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test							
			Z 1.109	D .2037	p .170	decision NS	

writers (52 percent) worked outside the home. The skill classification of jobs held by mothers of students in the group of more effective writers and mothers of students in the group of less effective writers are quite similar with a slightly larger group of mothers of students in the group of more effective writers (7 percent) than in the group of less effective writers (no mothers) holding jobs classified as professional. These differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence when tested using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

The occupations of fathers in the sample are tabulated in Table 19. Fathers of students in the group of more effective writers generally held jobs rated as more highly skilled than did fathers of students in the group of less effective writers. For example, 20 percent of the fathers of students in the group of more effective writers held occupations classified as professional while 10 percent of the fathers of students in the group of less effective writers held such occupations. The differences between the responses of the groups on this variable were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

In summary, both mothers and fathers of students in the group of more effective writers held jobs rated

as more highly skilled than the jobs held by the mothers and fathers of students in the group of less effective writers, but no significant differences at the .05 level of confidence were found.

D. LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Examination of the at-home leisure activities of students revealed that students in the group of more effective writers were reported to watch fewer hours of television each week and have more restrictions placed on their television viewing than were students in the group of less effective writers. Students in the group of more effective writers were also reported to choose to read books and magazines, make things with their hands, participate in quiet indoor games, and to play alone more often than were students in the group of less effective writers.

1. Students' Television Viewing

Table 20 shows that students in the group of more effective writers generally watched fewer hours of television each week than did students in the group of less effective writers but differences between the groups on this variable were not significant. For example, Table 20 shows that a smaller percentage of the students in the group of more effective writers (6 percent) than the percentage of students in the group of less effective

Table 20

The frequency of television viewing by children expressed in percentage

group	no response	no viewing	5 or fewer hours	6-10 hours	11-15 hours	15 or more hours
more effective	1	2	30	42	19	6
less effective	4	2	23	36	23	12

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test

Z	D	p	decision
0.514	.0945	.954	NS

writers (12 percent) watched fifteen or more hours of television each week but the differences between the groups were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

Interviewees reported that less television viewing was done by children in the group of more effective writers than by children in the group of less effective writers. This information agreed with the responses to the questionnaire. The television viewing habits of children in the group of more effective writers were variously described by interviewees as "limited",

non-existent ("he seldom watches"), or supplanted by reading ("she usually reads instead"). Most interviewees who were parents of children in the group of less effective writers described the television viewing habits of their children as regular. These interviewees were each able to name a number of programs which their children viewed on a regular basis.

Table 21 shows that restrictions of some kind were placed on the viewing of most students in the sample and that a higher proportion of students in the group of more effective writers had restrictions placed on their television viewing (71 percent) than did students in the

Table 21

The frequency of restrictions on the television viewing of children expressed in percentage

group	no restrictions	some restrictions
more effective	29	71
less effective	48	52

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test

Z	D	p	decision
0.464	.0853	.982	NS

group of less effective writers (52 percent). However, these differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence when tested using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test. Restrictions which respondents reported are presented in Appendix H.

In summary, students in the group of more effective writers were reported to watch fewer hours of television each week and have more restrictions placed on their television viewing than students in the group of less effective writers but neither of these differences between the groups were significant at the .05 level of confidence.

2. Students' Solitary Activities

Mothers were asked how often, when alone, their children chose to do five different activities. They reported that students in the group of more effective writers chose to look at books or magazines, make things with their hands, and participate in quiet indoor games more often than the students in the group of less effective writers did. All of these differences between the groups were not significant. Respondents also reported that students in the group of more effective writers chose to watch television (a significant finding at the .05 level of confidence) and participate in active outdoor games (not a significant finding) less often than did students in the group of less effective

writers. Students in the group of more effective writers also played alone more often than did students in the group of less effective writers but the differences between the groups on this variable were not significant.

Table 22 indicates that a higher proportion of students in the group of more effective writers (93 percent) regularly or sometimes chose to look at books or magazines than did students in the group of less effective writers (73 percent). These differences, however, were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

According to parents, students in the group of more effective writers chose to watch television less often than did students in the group of less effective writers (as Table 22 shows). The differences between the groups on this question were significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test. (Respondents could choose from the following responses: regularly, sometimes, seldom, or never when answering these questions.)

Table 22 indicates that "participates in active outdoor games" was chosen "regularly" or "sometimes" by 77 percent of the respondents in the group of more effective writers and by 74 percent of the respondents in the group of less effective writers. Differences

Table 22

The frequency with which children chose five solitary activities expressed in percentage

group	look at books	watch television	do active outdoor games	make things with hands	do quiet indoor games
more effective	93	78	74	77	70
less effective	73	85	77	69	50
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two Sample Test					
Z	1.040	1.800	0.555	1.115	0.209
D	.1909	.3305	.1020	.2048	.0385
p	.230	.003	.917	.166	.999
decision	NS	Significant	NS	NS	NS

Note: frequency= the percentage of students who "regularly" or "sometimes" chose these activities.

between the groups on this variable were not found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

Respondents indicated that more (77 percent) of the students in the group of more effective writers regularly or sometimes chose to "make things with their hands" than did students in the group of less effective writers (69 percent). A Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test found the differences between the groups on this variable were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Respondents also indicated that 70 percent of the more effective writers "regularly" or "sometimes" chose to participate in quiet indoor games while only 50 percent of the parents reported that students in the group of less effective writers chose indoor games that often. The differences between the groups on this variable were, however, not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

When asked how often their children played alone, parents indicated that playing alone was done more regularly by students in the group of more effective writers (33 percent did so "regularly") than by students in the group of less effective writers (25 percent did

so "regularly") as Table 23 shows. The use of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test found that these differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

In summary, the solitary activities chosen more often by students in the group of more effective writers than by students in the group of less effective writers were

- a) looking at books or magazines
- b) making things with the hands
- c) participating in quiet indoor games

The differences between the groups in the frequency

Table 23

The frequency with which children played alone expressed in percentage

group	no response	rarely	sometimes	regularly
more effective	0	19	48	33
less effective	4	17	54	25

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test

Z	D	p	decision
0.856	.1572	.456	NS

with which they chose these three activities were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Activities which were chosen less often by students in the group of more effective writers than by students in the group of less effective writers were "watches television" and "participates in active outdoor games". Differences in the frequency with which students from the two groups chose to watch television were significant at the .05 level of confidence.

E. PARENTAL OPINIONS

Examination of the opinions of parents about their roles in helping their children learn the skills of reading and writing revealed significant and non-significant differences between respondents in the group of more effective writers and respondents in the group of less effective writers. Non-significant differences between the groups were found when respondents in the group of more effective writers indicated that their children were more interested in school and that they as parents were more satisfied with writing instruction in the schools than were respondents who were parents of students in the group of less effective writers. A significant difference between the groups was that the parents of more effective writers were more satisfied with school instruction in reading. The mothers of students in the group of more effective writers also expressed a stronger commitment

to the school progress of their children in a series of opinionnaire questions (these differences were not significant).

1. Students' Interest in School

Mothers of respondents indicated that students in the group of more effective writers were more interested in school than were students in the group of less effective writers but this was not a significant difference (at the .05 level of confidence).

Table 24 shows that stronger interest in school was shown by students in the group of more effective writers (46 percent were extremely interested) than be students in the group of less effective writers (12 percent were extremely interested). Using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample tests, the differences between the groups on this variable were not statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence.

2. Parental Satisfaction with School Instruction

Parents were more satisfied with reading instruction in the schools than were parents of students in the group of less effective writers. This was a significant difference (at the .05 level of confidence). Table 25 shows that a larger percentage of the parents of students in the group of more effective writers reported that they were very satisfied with writing instruction in the

Table 24

The amount of interest children were reported to have in school expressed in percentage

group	no response	not interested	not sure	adequately interested	extremely interested
more effective	0	0	16	40	46
less effective	6	4	35	44	12
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
	Z	D	p	decision	
	0.278	.0510	.999	NS	

Table 25

The opinions of parents about reading and writing instruction in the schools
expressed in percentage

Reading Instruction						
group	no response	very dissatisfied	dissatisfied	not sure	satisfied	very satisfied
more effective	4	0	0	6	68	22
less effective	0	4	4	19	69	4
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test						
	Z	D	p	decision		
	1.688	.3099	.007	Significant		
Writing Instruction						
more effective	4	0	3	13	67	13
less effective	4	10	10	23	63	0
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test						
	Z	D	p	decision		
	0.765	.1405	.602	NS		

schools than did parents of less effective writers. However, differences between the groups on this variable were not significant at the .05 level of confidence. Results also showed that most parents in the sample were more satisfied with reading instruction than they were with writing instruction.

Table 25 indicates that 22 percent of parents of students in the group of more effective writers were "very satisfied" with reading instruction in the schools while 4 percent of the parents of students in the group of less effective writers were "very satisfied". The differences between the responses from the group of more effective writers and from the group of less effective writers were significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

As might be expected, parents of students in the group of more effective writers expressed stronger satisfaction with writing instruction than did parents of students in the group of less effective writers, as Table 25 shows. Among respondents from the group of more effective writers, 13 percent were very satisfied with writing instruction in the schools while there were no respondents from the group of less effective writers who were very satisfied. The differences between the responses of the two groups on this variable were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

In summary, parents of students in the group of more effective writers expressed greater satisfaction with both reading and writing instruction in the schools than did the parents of students in the group of less effective writers, but only on the reading variable were the differences between the groups significant at the .05 level of confidence.

3. "Ideal Parent" Variables

Mothers were asked to express the amount of agreement they had with five activities which the ideal parent should do. The activities were:

1. check her child's homework regularly
2. volunteer to help with school activities
3. help his or her child learn to read and write
4. not go to the school unless asked to
5. be aware of new teaching methods

No significant differences between the groups was found on any of these questions.

The statement "the ideal parent should volunteer to help with school activities" was more strongly agreed with by mothers of more effective writers (75 percent agreed or strongly agreed) than be mothers of less effective writers (69 percent agreed or strongly agreed). These differences which were not significant at the .05 level of confidence (using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test) are reported in Table 26.

Table 26

The amount of agreement expressed by parents with the statements that the ideal parent should: (expressed in percentage)

group	check homework regularly	help with school activities	help teach reading and writing	not go to school unless asked to	be aware of new teaching methods
more effective	80	75	87	10	88
less effective	88	69	86	10	90
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test					
Z	0.675	0.803	0.337	0.325	0.586
D	.1240	.1474	.0619	.0596	.1076
p	.752	.540	.999	.999	.882
decision	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

Note. amount of agreement = the percentage of parents who agree or strongly agree

Table 26 indicates the strong agreement which was expressed by respondents with the statement "the ideal parent should help his or her child learn to read and write." While it is not shown in the table, the data revealed that parents of students in the group of more effective writers felt more strongly (41 percent strongly agreed) than parents of students in the group of less effective writers (31 percent strongly agreed) that the ideal parent should "help his or her child learn to read and write". When tested using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test, these differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

Little difference between the opinions of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers and the opinions of mothers of students in the group of less effective writers about the statement "the ideal parent should be aware of new teaching methods" was found. There was uniform agreement expressed by the whole sample with this statement, as Table 26 shows. There were no significant differences at the .05 level of confidence on this variable (using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test).

The mothers of students in the group of more effective writers and the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers also held virtually the same opinions

concerning the statement "the ideal parent should not go to the school unless asked to." Both groups disagreed strongly with this statement. While there were some differences between the groups in the pattern of their disagreement, no significant differences at the .05 level of confidence were found between the groups using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

The agreement expressed by respondents from the group of more effective writers was not as strong as the agreement expressed by respondents from the group of less effective writers with the statement "the ideal parent should check his or her child's homework regularly". Table 26 shows that while 80 percent of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement 88 percent of the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers agreed or strongly agreed with it. These differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test.

No significant differences were found between the opinions held by the parents of more effective writers and the opinions of parents of less effective writers concerning the five statements:

1. parents should check homework regularly,

2. parents should help teach reading and writing to their children,
3. parents should not go to the school unless asked to,
4. parents should be aware of new teaching methods, and
5. parents should volunteer to help with school activities.

4. "Children should" Variables

Mothers were next asked to indicate how much agreement or disagreement they had with the following four statements concerning the possible reading and writing activities of children:

1. be read to regularly when they are small
2. receive parental help on homework when needed,
3. be able to make most of their own choices about books to read and programs to watch, and
4. not always be asking their parents how to do their homework.

When responses were analyzed using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test, no significant differences at the .05 level of confidence were found on any of these four variables.

Table 27 shows that in response to the statements "children should be read to regularly when they are

Table 27

Parents' agreement with four activities children should or should not do
expressed in percentage

group	be read to regularly when small	receive home- work help when needed	make own choices about books and programs	complete homework without questions
more effective	94	97	45	57
less effective	92	92	52	54
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test				
Z	0.396	0.209	0.607	0.252
D	.0727	.0385	.1115	.0463
p	.998	.999	.855	.999
decision	NS	NS	NS	NS

Note. Parents' agreement = the percentage of parents who agreed or strongly agreed

small," "children should receive parental help on homework when needed," and "children should not always be asking their parents how to do their homework" more effective writers expressed slightly stronger agreement than the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers did. Only with the statement "children should be able to make most of their own choices about books to read and programs to watch" did mothers of students in the group of more effective writers express less strong agreement than that expressed by mothers of students in the group of less effective writers.

The last group of questions asked mothers to indicate the amount of agreement or disagreement they had with the following statements concerning regular household events which children should participate in:

1. help pay for the bills at home,
2. help do the family grocery shopping,
3. clean up their rooms without being reminded,
- and 4. help at home by doing regular chores

Table 28 shows that stronger agreement with the statement "children should help at home by doing regular chores" was expressed by mothers of students in the group of more effective writers (97 percent agreed or strongly agreed) than by mothers of students in the group of less effective writers (92 percent agreed or

strongly agreed) but this difference was not significant at the .05 level of confidence using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test. With the other three statements there was little difference between the opinions expressed by mothers of students in the group of more effective writers and mothers of students in the group of less effective writers and, using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample test, no significant differences at the .05 level of confidence were found.

In summary, there was little difference between the responses of the mothers of students in the group of more

Table 28

The amount of agreement expressed by parents with the statements nowadays children such as my child should:
(expressed in percentage)

group	help do the grocery shopping	clean their room without reminding	do regular chores at home	help pay for the bills at home
more effective	68	90	97	4
less effective	67	90	92	4
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test				
Z	0.209	0.590	0.276	1.120
D	.0385	.1084	.0507	.2057
p	.999	.877	.999	.163
decision	NS	NS	NS	NS

Note. the amount of agreement = the percentage of parents who agreed or strongly agreed.

effective writers and the mothers of students in the group of less effective writers concerning regular events of the household. Mothers of students in the group of more effective writers expressed stronger agreement than mothers of students in the group of less effective writers, however, with three of the four statements concerning reading and writing activities which they were asked about. This indicates a stronger interest in the reading and writing progress of their children among mothers of students in the group of more effective writers.

F. OTHER VARIABLES

Forming part of the results but not directly dependent on how respondents answered the survey were certain "static" variables.

1. Sex

Analysis of the composition of the groups formed by those who returned their questionnaires revealed that sex was not an evenly distributed variable between the group of more effective writers and the group of less effective writers. Table 29 indicates that questionnaires returned by the parents of females made up a much larger part of the group of more effective writers (71 percent) than did questionnaires returned by the parents of males (29 percent). The table also shows that males were more

Table 29

Questionnaire respondents grouped by sex and reported
in percentage

group	female	male
more effective	71	29
less effective	27	73

numerous in the group of less effective writers (73 percent) than were females who made up 27 percent of this group.

G. SUMMARY

1. The following significant differences between more effective writers and less effective writers were found by the present study.

- a) More effective writers spent more of their leisure time writing and chose to watch television less often than did less effective writers.
- b) The fathers of more effective writers were better educated and wrote letters more often than the fathers of less effective writers did.
- c) The parents of more effective writers read aloud to their children after the children could

read for themselves and were more satisfied with reading instruction in the schools than were the parents of less effective writers.

2. Approaching significance at the .05 level of confidence were the following results.

- a) More effective writers showed an earlier interest in learning how to print than did less effective writers.
- b) The parents of more effective writers less strongly agreed (than did the parents of less effective writers) with the statement children should help pay for the bills at home.

3. The following results were not significant at the .05 level of confidence but were in the hypothesized direction:

- a) More effective writers did homework assignments more often, spent longer on the homework assignments, received less help from their parents with revising and proofreading written assignments, watched fewer hours of television each week, had more restrictions placed on their television viewing by their parents, played alone more often, preferred indoor activities over outdoor ones, exhibited more interest in school, exhibited more skill

in printing upon grade one entry and chose reading as an alone activity more often than did less effective writers.

b) The mothers of more effective writers did more different kinds of writing at home and at work, worked outside the home more often, wrote letters more frequently and possessed higher educational and occupational skill levels than the mothers of less effective writers did.

c) The fathers of more effective writers possessed higher levels of education than the fathers of less effective writers.

d) The parents of more effective writers read through their children's written assignments more regularly, contacted their children's teacher less often to discuss assignments, gave less help to their children revising and proofreading written assignments, read aloud to their children before they could read for themselves more often, more strongly agreed that children should be read to regularly when small and should help at home by doing regular chores, agreed less strongly that children should be able to make most of their

own choices about books to read and programs to watch, more strongly agreed that parents should volunteer to help with school activities, offered their children less help with getting started on written assignments, and less strongly agreed that children should help pay for the bills at home than did the parents of less effective writers.

e) More books for children were in the homes of more effective writers than in the homes of less effective writers.

4. On the following variables little difference between more effective writers and less effective writers was found:

- a) the order in which the skills of reading and writing were learned,
- b) the number of chalkboards in homes,
- c) the opinions of parents about teaching their children reading and writing and reading aloud to their children when they were small, and
- d) the opinions of parents that children should complete their homework without asking questions, children should help at home by doing regular chores, and children should sometimes help do the grocery shopping.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

A. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

To investigate which factors of home environment were associated with different levels of skill in writing, parents of selected students in grades six and seven were asked to complete a questionnaire. Students in grades six and seven at four elementary schools were judged by their teachers on their overall proficiency in the skills of written composition and then ranked from most proficient to least proficient. The ten most proficient writers at each grade level formed a group labelled "more effective writers" and the ten least proficient writers at each grade level formed a group labelled as "less effective writers." This procedure formed a group of 40 students at each of four schools for a total of 160 students. At both grade levels and in each school there was a group of at least ten students whose skills in composition were judged to be between those of the more effective and the less effective writers. Parents of students in the groups of more effective writers and less effective writers were asked to complete a questionnaire. Results from the questionnaires were cross-tabulated by group (group of more effective writers or group of less effective writers) and the significance of the differences between the responses of the groups

were analyzed by use of a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two-Sample Test.

Interviews were conducted with a stratified random sample (stratified by sex and group to match the composition of the total sample) of ten questionnaire respondents. The interviews were conducted to gather additional information concerning the association between home environment and writing skill.

The following differences between more effective writers and less effective writers were significant at the .05 level of confidence or better.

1. Children in the group of more effective writers spent more of their leisure time at home writing. This difference was significant at the .044 level of confidence.

2. Fathers of children in the group of more effective writers possessed higher level of education than did fathers of less effective writers. This finding was significant at the .001 level of confidence.

3. Fewer of the children in the group of more effective writers chose to watch television. This finding was significant at the .003 level of confidence.

4. Parents of children in the group of more effective writers expressed more satisfaction with reading instruction in the schools than did the parents of less effective

writers. This finding was significant at the .007 level of confidence.

5. The parents of children in the group of more effective writers read aloud to their children who could already read for themselves more often than did the parents of children in the group of less effective writers. This difference was significant at the .003 level of confidence.

6. The fathers of more effective writers wrote more letters than did the fathers of less effective writers. This finding was significant at the .034 level of confidence.

Approaching significance at the .05 level of confidence were the following results.

1. More effective writers showed an interest in learning how to print at an earlier age than did less effective writers ($p = .112$).

2. The parents of less effective writers more strongly agreed that children should help pay for the bills at home than did the parents of more effective writers ($p = .163$).

Other results of the study which were in the hypothesized direction are presented below. These results were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

1. The mothers of more effective writers did more writing at home and at work.

2. Both the questionnaire results and interview data showed that the more effective writers brought home their marked assignments more regularly for their parents to see and these children also did homework more often each week.

3. The parents of more effective writers read aloud to their preschoolers more often and expressed stronger agreement that children should be read to than did the parents of less effective writers.

4. Information gathered during interviews indicated that each of the following kinds of help with writing took place more often in the homes of more effective writers than in the homes of less effective writers:

(a) conversations about ideas for writing, (b) reading preliminary drafts of assignments, and (c) help from fathers in formulating writing ideas.

5. Interview data showed that more effective writers showed a stronger interest in learning to read. Interviews also revealed that a greater number of the parents of more effective writers thought teaching their children to read was a natural part of their lives which they hardly noticed doing.

6. Other differences which were not statistically

significant were found between the homes of more effective writers and the homes of less effective writers. For example, the home conditions below were more commonly found in the homes of the more effective writers: (a) chalkboards in the homes, (b) a large number of books for children, (c) highly educated mothers, and (d) highly skilled occupations outside the home held by mothers.

7. The more effective writers watched fewer hours of television each week. This was a difference supported by information from the interviews. More effective writers were selective in their television viewing, interviews indicated, and children in the more effective group had more restrictions placed on their television viewing.

8. More effective writers were reported to play alone more often and when playing alone they were reported to prefer quiet indoor games more than the less effective writers did. More effective writers did not choose active outdoor games as regularly as less effective writers did.

9. Respondents indicated that children in the group of more effective writers were more strongly interested in school than were less effective writers.

10. A greater percentage of the parents of more effective writers (than the percentage of the parents of less effective writers) expressed strong agreement with these statements: (a) parents should help their

children learn to read and write, and (b) children should do regular chores at home.

11. Stronger agreement was expressed by the parents of more effective writers than by the parents of less effective writers with the idea that parents should visit the school more often than just when asked to.

12. There was less strong agreement that children should be able to make most of their own choices about books to read and programs to watch among the parents of more effective writers than among the parents of less effective writers.

13. Interviews showed a more active involvement in the reading and writing activities of children by the parents of more effective writers. This involvement took the form of regular discussions about writing and help with writing assignments.

14. The more effective writers showed an earlier interest in learning how to print and greater printing skill upon entering grade one. Both of these differences were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

15. More effective writers spent more time on their homework but this was not a significant difference at the .05 level of confidence. This difference between the groups is, however, supported by interview results which showed that more effective writers spent considerably more time on homework.

16. Fathers of children in the group of more effective writers held more highly skilled occupations than did the fathers of less effective writers.

17. Children in the group of more effective writers had the following preferences for activities when occupying themselves: (a) more of them chose reading and (b) more of them chose to make things with their hands.

18. Parents of children in the group of more effective writers expressed the following opinions: (a) more satisfaction with writing instruction in the schools and (b) more agreement that parents should volunteer to help with school activities.

B. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Of the 26 results reported in the preceding summary, a majority of 25 of them were in the hypothesized direction. Six of the 23 were significant findings at the .05 level of confidence (and all of the significant findings were in the hypothesized direction). Each of the significant findings is discussed below.

1. Children in the group of more effective writers spent more of their leisure time writing than did members of the group of less effective writers. Monk (1958), in his investigation of the home backgrounds of children who had high achievement in written English, concluded

that there was a strong association between the higher achieving writers and nearly every intellectual interest or activity which he questioned respondents about. The results of the current study agree with Monk's findings but are more specific. The present study found that more effective writers did more writing in their leisure time than did less effective writers.

Although more effective writers spent more of their leisure time writing than did less effective writers neither group spent their leisure time writing very often. Forty-eight percent of the more effective writers spent leisure time writing once a week or more often while 32 percent of the less effective writers wrote that often.

Future researchers could address several questions. How much writing in leisure time is associated with more skillful writing? What forms of writing do more effective writers engage in most often?

2. More effective writers chose television viewing as a solitary activity less often than did less effective writers both questionnaire and interview results indicated. This description is much like those provided by such researchers as Durkin (1966), Monk (1958), and Clark (1976). Each of these researchers found that higher achieving children spent less time watching

television than did lower achieving children. Additionally, Clark found that early readers watched television selectively, often preferring to read instead.

Investigations of how children use their leisure time conducted by Durkin and Clark concluded that early readers prefer solitary activities and are adept at them, and they (early readers) also have an excellent ability to occupy themselves when alone.

Future research into the question of why higher achieving children watch less television could prove helpful to parents. Finding out why higher achieving children prefer quiet activities and playing alone could help explain why these children achieve higher levels of skill in reading and writing. Also, finding out what it is about television viewing that causes more effective writers to choose it less often than less effective writers do, would help describe the activities which are associated with better writing.

3. Two significant findings concerning the differences between fathers of more effective writers and the fathers of less effective writers were found in the current study. Questionnaire results showed that the fathers of more effective writers were better educated and wrote more letters than did the fathers of less effective writers.

Monk (1958) and Fraser (1973) both found a close

relationship between the occupations of fathers and the school progress of children. The present study confirms these findings. Few descriptions of the letter-writing habits of fathers, however, were found in the literature. For this reason the finding of this study that fathers of more effective writers wrote letters more often than did the fathers of less effective writers is useful in describing the environments of more effective writers.

It seems possible that these two factors are related. Letter writing may well be an activity that is associated with higher levels of education. Put another way, those with higher levels of education may do more writing in their leisure time than do those with less education. This is a question for future researchers to explore.

4. The current study also found that the parents of more effective writers were more satisfied with reading instruction in the schools and that they read aloud to their children more often (after their children had learned to read) than did the parents of less effective writers.

Interview results confirmed the description above. Parents of more effective writers expressed much more satisfaction with the schools in general and the reading and writing instruction specifically.

It seems logical that parents of children who are

successful in school would be satisfied with the job the schools are doing. It should be noted, however, that the results of the present study also show that the parents of high achieving students didn't leave all the teaching to the schools. While feeling satisfied with the job done by the schools, they still felt the need to give their children help at home. Future research should explore why such parents felt compelled to help with a job they felt the schools were handling quite competently.

Reading aloud to children by their parents was something which previous research had found was related to children's later performances in reading and writing. Monk (1958), Durkin (1966), and Clark (1976) all reported this finding. Therefore it was not surprising to find an association between writing skill and being read aloud to in the current study. There was a surprising finding in the current study however. A stronger association between writing skill and reading aloud by parents after children had learned to read for themselves was found than was found between writing skill and reading aloud by parents before children could read for themselves. This finding may be due to the rarity of reading aloud by parents after children can read for themselves. That is, while many parents read aloud to their preschoolers,

only parents with an extremely strong interest in their children's progress in reading and writing skills take time to read aloud to their children after the children can read for themselves. This is a question for future researchers.

One question raised by these findings is why some parents choose to do these beneficial things with their children while others do not. Future researchers addressing this question could provide information of use to parents, students, and those who work with both of these groups by answering this question.

Two results of the current study which approached significance at the .05 level of confidence are discussed below.

1. One of the results of the present study which approached significance at the .05 level of confidence was that more effective writers exhibited an earlier interest in learning how to print than did less effective writers. This result is supported by interview responses also. Interviewees who were parents of more effective writers often described their children as having an early interest in printing. Durkin (1966) observed that much interest in printing was shown at an early age by the early readers whom she investigated as well. The success of more effective writers in their writing

activities seems to explain their tendency to participate in such activities more often because they found writing to be an enjoyable activity. Another important question is what caused the success of more effective writers in their writing activities. Future researchers could explore this question as well as the question of what prompts more effective readers and writers to show earlier interest in reading and writing activities than their peers? The strong interest shown by such children has been found to begin at quite an early age.

2. The second result of the present study which approached significance at the .05 level of confidence was that the parents of more effective writers agreed less strongly than did the parents of less effective writers that children should help pay for the bills at home. This result fits the description of home management styles which emerges from the current study. A home management style that judiciously delegated responsibility to children was a characteristic of the homes of more effective writers. Parents in this group expressed more agreement than did the parents of less effective writers with the statements children should help at home by doing regular chores and parent should not always be checking the homework of their children.

On other issues, however, parents of more effective writers felt they must retain more control. Parents of more effective writers did not agree as strongly as parents of less effective writers did with the statement children should be able to make most of their own choices about books to read and programs to watch. As well, parents of more effective writers placed more restrictions on the television viewing of their children than the parents of less effective writers did. The non-significant findings described above suggest that the parents of more effective writers in the current study seemed better able to make wise choices in the delegating of responsibility to their children than did the parents of less effective writers.

Explorations by future researchers of how parents of more effective readers and writers came to decisions about delegating responsibility could prove useful to parents. Effective delegation of responsibility appears to be associated with superior achievement in reading and writing.

The following discussion of characteristics of more effective writers and less effective writers is based on results of the current study which were not significant at the .05 level of confidence.

1. A strong interest in reading and writing

was exhibited by more effective writers and their parents. These parents exhibited a stronger interest in their children's general school progress than did the parents of less effective writers. Parents of more effective writers in the present study showed this stronger interest by reading through their children's written assignments more regularly, reading aloud to their preschoolers more regularly, talking about ideas for writing more often with their children, and expressing a stronger agreement that learning to read was a natural part of their home lives than did the parents of less effective writers results from interviews and questionnaires indicated.

This description matches the finding of such researchers as Clark (1976), Monk (1958), and Durkin (1966). Clark stated that the verbal interaction which she found in the homes of early readers was welcomed and encouraged by parents. She also concluded that these parents took part in this verbal interaction by talking with their children and answering their questions even when time allotted for other activities had to be used to do so.

Further results of the present study showed that more effective writers exhibited a stronger interest in and more frequent participation in reading and writing activities than less effective writers did. This

description of more effective writers is similar to the ones provided by Monk (1958), Goodacre (1970), and Durkin (1966). Monk and Goodacre both found that the amount of time spent in home study was related to children's school attainment. These strong interests in reading and writing activities were also discovered in the current study.

In summary, both the parents of more effective writers and the more effective writers themselves showed strong interest in the reading and writing activities which the children participated in. The current study identifies many of the conditions present in the homes of more effective writers. An important question for future researchers is what factors cause this strong interest in reading and writing activities to develop.

2. Data gathered in the present study supported the description of the home conditions of more effective writers as "favorable". The current study showed that fathers of more effective writers held more highly skilled jobs than did the fathers of less effective writers. The current study also showed that the homes of more effective writers contained more books for children than did the homes of less effective writers.

Larger numbers of books in the home were associated with superior writing ability by Monk (1958). Monk

(1958) and Fraser (1973) both found a close relationship between the occupations of fathers and the school progress of children.

Previous research has suggested that the number of books and other reading and writing materials in the home is at least partly dependent on the occupational level of the parents. This assumption should be examined by future researchers in greater detail to determine how strong an influence on writing the occupational level of parents is and why it exerts such an influence. The question of what kinds of reading and writing materials are most closely associated with writing skill is also a question requiring investigation by future researchers.

3. Leisure activities of children. More effective writers in the current study exhibited an ability to occupy themselves and a preference for solitary activities. The present study also showed that more effective writers chose reading and making things with their hands more often than less effective writers did and the more effective writers chose television viewing less often than the less effective writers did.

Durkin (1966) and Clark (1976) described the early readers whom they investigated as preferring solitary activities and having an ability to occupy themselves when alone. This is a description strongly supported

by the data gathered in the current study. How such preferences are developed and why such activities are preferences of early readers are questions for future researchers. It seems logical that since both reading and writing are solitary activities, skillful readers and writers would prefer such activities. However, many solitary activities have no other similarity to reading and writing other than the fact that they are done alone and done quietly. Why these seemingly unlike activities are associated is a question still needing to be answered.

4. Parents' opinions. Non-significant results in the current study showed that the parents of more effective writers exhibited a desire for a good education for their children. Parents of more effective writers expressed stronger agreement (although differences were not statistically significant) than the parents of less effective writers did with such ideas as (a) parents should help their children learn to read and write, (b) parents shouldn't hesitate to visit the schools, and (c) helping children with reading and writing at home should be a natural part of everyday life. The present study also determined that parents of more effective writers were more satisfied with writing instruction in the schools than were parents of less effective writers.

Clark (1976) described both the respect for the

value of education and the desire they had for their children to have a good education expressed by the parents of early readers. She found that such parents had strong respect for the value of education and were strongly concerned that their children receive a good education. Because of Clark's (1976) findings, the results of the current study were expected. It was not surprising, for example, to find that more effective writers had a strong desire for their children to do well. Nor was it unexpected to learn that parents of more effective writers were more satisfied with writing instruction in the schools than were parents of less effective writers. What was most interesting among these results was that the parents of more effective writers, while quite satisfied with writing instruction in the schools, still felt it was necessary to help their children learn the skills of reading and writing.

5. Language modeling. As described in Chapter Two, Hall (1976) described the homes of early writers as places where children regularly saw others writing. By using questionnaire and interview results the current study ascertained that both mothers and fathers of more effective writers participated in more writing activities at home than did the parents of less effective writers. This was not an unexpected result. Previous research had led

the researcher to expect to find that more reading and writing was happening in the homes of more effective writers. Several questions, however, remain unanswered. More information about what is read and what is written is needed. Future researchers should also explore the motivations of parents to participate in writing activities. The current study suggests that parental participation in reading and writing activities is usually prompted by the occupation of parents or their leisure time pursuits (for example writing required to be done for courses or clubs). A definitive answer to this question by future researchers would be useful in further describing the environment which produces effective writers.

6. The fact that more mothers of more effective writers than mothers of less effective writers in the current study worked outside the home suggested that this factor alone was not as strongly associated with reading and writing skill as previous research had suggested it was. Instead, this suggested that perhaps the type of job held by mothers, the time at which they arrived home, or the type of care their children received were strongly related to reading and writing skill.

The current study, in fact, revealed a stronger

association between writing skill and occupational skill level of mothers than it did between writing skill and the fact that mothers worked. This fact supports the idea that something about the occupations held by mothers was more important in the association between writing skill and mothers' occupations than simply whether or not they held jobs outside the home. Future research to clarify what aspects of the occupational status of mothers are associated with writing skill would be helpful in describing this interrelationship.

7. Results which were not in the hypothesized direction. (a) In conducting the current study, the researcher expected to find that mothers of more effective writers worked outside the home the same amount or with less frequency than did the mothers of less effective writers. As reported, in Chapter Two, Clark (1976) found few mothers of early readers worked outside the home and Hall (1976) reported that about 50 percent of the mothers of early readers worked outside the home. In the current study, however, more of the mothers of more effective writers worked outside the home at some time since their children had been born than did mothers of less effective writers. Additionally, the percentage of mothers of more effective writers who had worked outside the home was 81 percent - a much higher figure

than expected. Future researchers should examine the question of why more mothers of children in the higher achieving group worked outside the home than did mothers of children in the lower achieving group. The present study suggests that the association of this factor alone with reading and writing skill was not as strong as previous research had suggested. Perhaps some other aspect of the mother's work such as the type of job or the arrival time at home are factors which do influence reading and writing skill. (b) Findings of Hall (1976), Taylor (1981), Clark (1976), and Durkin (1966) describe an abundance of language modeling and interaction behaviors in the homes of children who had superior skills of reading and writing. The researcher in the current study therefore expected to find more help with writing being given to more effective writers than to less effective writers. The present study found that in the area of discussion of writing ideas this was true but slightly less help in the areas of getting started on assignments, revising, and proofreading was given by parents of more effective writers than by parents of less effective writers. Such findings suggest that in the homes of more effective writers more general interaction about reading and writing took place in everyday life than did in the homes of less effective writers. The

interaction about writing which took place in the homes of less effective writers, however, was usually specific and focused on help with assignments rather than general discussion about reading and writing. More descriptions of the interaction about reading and writing which takes place between parents and their children needs to be gathered by future researchers.

C. PROFILES OF WRITERS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS

Results from the current study revealed the descriptions of more effective writers and less effective writers which follow. Asterisks indicate that significant differences between the groups were found on that variable.

1. The Home Background of the More Effective Writer

a) Characteristics of children in the group of more effective writers:

- early mastery of reading and writing skills
- * -a greater amount of leisure time was spent participating in reading and writing activities by more effective writers than by less effective writers
- strong preference for quiet indoor games and for playing alone
- * -less frequent television viewing than less effective writers

-a strong interest in school

b) Characteristics of the parents of children in the group of more effective writers:

-more reading aloud to their children before their children learned to read

* -more reading aloud to their children after their children read for themselves

-placed more restrictions on children's television viewing

-regularly read preliminary drafts of their children's work

-made reading and writing materials for their children's use readily available

-parents of more effective writers expressed strong agreement that parents should actively help out and visit the schools

* -expressed much satisfaction with school instruction in reading

-strongly believed that parents should help their children at home with learning the skills of reading and writing

-strongly felt children should help by doing chores at home

c) Characteristics of the mothers of students in the group of more effective writers:

- did several different kinds of writing both at home and at work
- read through their children's assignments more often than the mothers of less effective writers did
- regularly worked outside their homes
- possessed highly skilled jobs and higher levels of education than the mothers of less effective writers

d) Characteristics of the fathers of children in the group of more effective writers:

- * -wrote more letters than fathers of less effective writers
- regularly discussed ideas for writing with their children
- held more highly skilled jobs than fathers of less effective writers did
- * -possessed higher levels of education than did the fathers of less effective writers

2. The Home Background of the Less Effective Writers

a) Characteristics of less effective writers:

- showed less interest in learning to print and less interest in school than did more effective writers
- were also reported to spend less of their

leisure time writing, completing homework, and reading than more effective writers did

- had strong interest in active, outdoor games

- watched more hours of television each week than did more effective writers

b) Characteristics of the parents of less effective writers:

- provided fewer books and chalkboards for their children's use and read aloud to their children less often than did the parents of more effective writers

- restricted the television viewing of their children less

- felt reluctant to visit the school uninvited

- felt somewhat dissatisfied with the job the schools were doing in teaching reading and writing

- felt less strongly (than the parents of more effective writers did) that reading aloud should be done at home

c) Characteristics of the mothers of children in the group of less effective writers:

- did fewer different kinds of writing at home and at work than did the mothers of more effective writers

- held less highly skilled jobs and possessed lower levels of education than the mothers of more effective writers did

- worked outside the home less often than did the mothers of more effective writers

d) Characteristics of the fathers of less effective writers:

- wrote fewer letters than did the fathers of more effective writers

- held less highly skilled jobs and possessed lower levels of education than the fathers of more effective writers did.

D. EPILOGUE

This study suggests that a good environment for an aspiring writer would be a home in which (1) reading and writing activities take place regularly and are often discussed; (2) parents and siblings regularly model language skills and have positive attitudes toward the acquisition of these skills; (3) the educational and occupational skill levels of parents are high and reading and writing materials are readily accessible; and (4) a portion of the writer's leisure time is devoted to quiet, indoor, creative activities including reading and writing while excluding large amounts of television viewing.

A high frequency of both reading and writing

activities taking place or being discussed at home were factors of home environment most closely associated with writing skill in the present study. Such activities are clearly a desirable component of the writer's environment.

The factors of environment which are found by the current study to have the next strongest association with writing skill were the language modelling and opinions of parents and siblings. Positive attitudes toward reading and writing activities, interest in helping children learn the skills, and regular modelling of reading and writing were features associated with better writing.

The current study found an association between writing skill and certain home situation factors; for example, educational and occupational skill level and the number of books in the home. This association was not as strong as the one found between writing skill and the frequency of language activities taking place at home.

Leisure time that was devoted to activities other than reading and writing was not strongly associated with children's skill of writing. However, it has already been noted that the better writers preferred

and spent significant amounts of their leisure time in quiet, indoor activities which included reading and writing.

The current study concurs with the findings of Durkin (1966) who concluded that home environment was causative in the superior achievement of children in language skill development (p. 10). The present study found children's reading and writing activities at home to be closely associated with writing skill. These results suggest the importance of encouraging writing at home. To paraphrase Hall (1976), to facilitate interest in both writing and reading and perhaps contribute to initial success in school, parents should provide writing materials, write with their children, and demonstrate a model of writing behavior (p. 585).

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APPENDIX A

Writers' Home Background Questionnaire and Directions for Completion

The questions ask you to circle a number in front of a sentence, mark a box, or write a short answer to a question.

For questions that give three or more numbered choices, please choose the answer which you most closely agree with and circle the number in front of it.

Some questions will contain a scale with choices of answers from one extreme to another (for example: strongly agree to strongly disagree). On these questions, boxes will be provided and you are to put an X in the box which corresponds to your preference for each part of the question.

If no choice is given, blanks will be provided. Please answer in a word or two or a short sentence if you like.

Since this questionnaire concerns the home environment of your child who brought the questionnaire home, please keep his/her experience in mind as you answer the questions.

WRITER'S HOME BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please circle the number which corresponds to the answer of your choice.

Please do not
mark in this
column.

READING AND WRITING ACTIVITIES

A YOUR ACTIVITIES

1. a) Indicate the number of letters you usually write at home.
1. one or more each week
 2. one or two each month
 3. fewer than one per month
 4. none- I use other means to contact friends and relatives
- b) Tell how many letters your husband usually writes at home.
1. one or more each week
 2. one or two each month
 3. fewer than one per month
 4. none- he uses other means to contact friends and relatives
- c) What other types of writing do you do at home?
- _____
- d) What other types of writing do you do at work, if you work outside the home?
- _____

B YOUR CHILD'S ACTIVITIES

2. How often does your child bring home a written assignment which has been handed back to her/him for you to look at?
1. quite regularly
 2. sometimes
 3. occasionally
 4. never

Please do not
mark in this
column.

3. Please describe how often your child uses his leisure time at home to do writing (excluding homework assignments) by circling the number next to your answer choice below.
1. once every day or more often
 2. every couple of days
 3. about once a week
 4. about once a month or less often
 5. she/he rarely writes at home
 6. she/he never writes at home
4. Indicate the skill with which your child printed upon entering grade one.
1. he/she did not print
 2. he/she printed a few things (name, etc.)
 3. he/she printed most things
5. Try to recall the age at which your child first showed an interest in learning how to print. Please indicate that age by circling the number beside it on the list below.
1. three years of age
 3. five years of age
 2. four years of age
 4. six years of age
6. Please tell how often your child does each of the following types of writing at home by putting an X in one of the boxes beside each type of writing.
1. letters
 2. stories
 3. poems
 4. diaries
 5. other (please describe) _____

☐☐☐☐

Please do not
mark in this
column.

7. Which type of writing listed below would you say your child does best?

1. letters

2. stories

3. poems

4. notes

5. diaries

6. other (please describe) _____

8. To the best of your knowledge, what was the order in which your child learned how to print and how to read?

1. first printing was learned; then reading

2. the two skills were learned at about the same time

3. first reading was learned; then printing

9. a) About how often does your child usually work on homework?

1. each school night

2. two or three school nights each week

3. once a week or less often

b) When your child works on homework, how long does he/she usually spend?

1. one hour or longer 3. thirty minutes

2. forty-five minutes 4. fifteen minutes or less

10. Before your child attended school, what attempts did you make to teach her/him how to print?

1. I made no attempts to teach printing.

2. I showed her/him how to form letters.

3. I let her/him experiment on her/his own and provided materials

4. other (please describe) _____

Please do not
mark in this
column.

11. When your child has a written assignment to do for school, indicate the frequency with which you give the following kinds of help by placing an X in one of the boxes beside each activity.

	Weekly	Monthly	Twice a year	Once a year	
A) help on getting started or coming up with ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) help on revising or making it more clear to the reader	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) help on proofreading (checking the correctness of spelling and punctuation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. a) How often does your child bring home a written assignment which has already received a mark from a teacher to show you?

1. regularly
2. occasionally
3. seldom
4. never

- b) Again, place an X in one of the boxes beside each activity listed below to show how often you do that activity. When your child shows you a written assignment which has already received a mark from a teacher, how often do you:

	Regularly	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	
A) read through the paper yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) contact the teacher to discuss the assignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Please think back to the time before your child had learned to read for himself/herself. Which of the phrases below best describes the amount of reading aloud you did to him/her then?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. one or more times each day | 4. once every few weeks |
| 2. once every few days | 5. rarely |
| 3. once a week | 6. never |

Please do not
mark in this
column.

14. Since your child has learned to read for herself/himself, how often do you read aloud to her/him?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. one or more times
each day | 4. once every few weeks |
| 2. once every few days | 5. rarely |
| 3. once a week | 6. never |

BACKGROUND

A) GENERAL INFORMATION

15. Please indicate which of the phrases below best describes a chalkboard of any size in your home.

1. We do not have a chalkboard of any size in our home.
2. it is a large one- free standing or attached to a wall
3. it is a small one- carried by children and used on the lap

16. How many books for children would you estimate that you have in your home?

1. more than fifty
2. between twenty-one and fifty
3. between eleven and twenty
4. ten or fewer

17. If you have ever worked outside the home at any time since your child was born, please answer the following questions. If you have not worked outside the home since he/she was born, please go on to question number eighteen after putting an X in this box. ☐

- a) How much did you work, on the average, before your child started to attend school?

1. less than two hours per day
2. between two and four hours per day
3. between four and six hours per day
4. between six and eight hours per day
5. eight hours per day or more

Please do not
mark in this
column.

b) Describe the amount you work at the present time.

1. I do not work outside the home at the present time.
2. I finish work before 3:00 pm.
3. I finish work between 3:00 and 4:30 pm.
4. I finish work between 4:30 and 6:00 pm.
5. I finish work after 6:00 pm.

18. If either of your child's natural parents are not currently in the home, please answer the following questions. If both of his/her natural parents are in the home, go on to question number nineteen after putting an X in this box. ☐

a) How old was your child when one parent left the family?

_____ years.

b) If a new parent entered the family, (for example the remarriage of the parent with the child) how old was your child when this happened?

_____ years

E) INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

19. What was the highest grade in school which you attained?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. some senior secondary school | 4. technical training |
| 2. grade twelve graduate | 5. some university |
| 3. community college | 6. university graduate |

20. What was the highest grade in school which your husband attained?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. some senior secondary school | 4. technical training |
| 2. grade twelve graduate | 5. some university |
| 3. community college | 6. university graduate |

21. What is the present occupation of the male parent or guardian?

22. What is your current occupation?

LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES OF YOUR CHILD

23. About how much television viewing does your child do each week?

1. no television viewing whatsoever
2. five or fewer hours per week
3. six to ten hours per week
4. eleven to fifteen hours per week
5. more than fifteen hours per week

Please explain any restrictions which you place on your child's television viewing.

24. When your child has no playmates (such as brothers, sisters, or friends) and has to occupy himself, indicate the frequency with which he/she chooses to do each of the activities below by placing an X in one of the boxes beside each activity.

	Regularly	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
A) looks at books or magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B) watches television	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C) participates in active, outdoor games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D) makes things with his/her hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E) plays quiet, indoor games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. How often does your child play alone?

1. regularly
2. sometimes
3. rarely

Please do not mark in this column.

☐
☐
☐
☐
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☐
☐
☐

26. From which of the sources listed below would you say your child gets most of her/his information about current events such as elections, world happenings, and Canadian affairs?

1. reading about them in newspapers and magazines
2. family discussions
3. listening to radio newscasts
4. seeing and listening to television newscasts
5. discussions at school

YOUR OPINIONS

27. Indicate the amount of interest your child shows in school.

1. extremely interested
2. adequately interested
3. sometimes he/she likes it; sometimes he/she doesn't
4. not at all interested

28. a) How satisfied are you with the way reading is being taught in the schools?

1. very satisfied
2. satisfied
3. dissatisfied
4. very dissatisfied

- b) How satisfied are you with the way writing is being taught in the schools? (how to write sentences and paragraphs)

1. very satisfied
2. satisfied
3. dissatisfied
4. very dissatisfied

29. Tell how much you agree or disagree with each statement below by placing an X in one of the boxes beside each statement.

The ideal parent should:

A) check his child's homework regularly

B) volunteer to help with school activities

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please do not mark in this column.

☐
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☐

29. Continue to tell how much you agree or disagree with each statement below by placing an X in one of the boxes beside each statement.

The ideal parent should:

C) help his/her child learn to read and write

D) not go to the school unless asked to

E) be aware of new teaching methods

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please do not mark in this column.

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

30. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the statements below? Continue to show your opinion by placing an X beside each statement in one of the boxes.

Nowadays, children such as my child should:

A) be read to regularly when they are small

B) help pay for the bills at home

C) receive parental help on schoolwork when needed

D) help to do the family grocery shopping

E) be able to make most of their own choices about books to read and programs to watch

F) clean up their rooms without being reminded

G) help at home by doing regular chores

H) not always be asking their parents how to do their homework

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

APPENDIX B

Covering Letter to Parents

May 1983

Dear Mothers,

Thank you for taking time to answer this questionnaire.

I am a graduate student at the University of British Columbia who resides permanently and works in Kamloops and I intend to use the information gathered through this questionnaire in my Master's degree thesis. I am taking every precaution to make your answers to this questionnaire anonymous so that neither you nor your child will be identified by name. You are not, of course, required to answer the questionnaire or any of the questions in it but your help would be most appreciated. If you do not wish to answer the questionnaire, please return it, unanswered, using the procedures described below.

The purpose of this study is to examine how some factors in a student's environment influence the way he/she writes. An example of such a factor would be the number of books he/she reads. Such information may enable us to better improve the writing skills of students. To ensure that your questionnaire will be anonymous, would you please insert it in the unmarked smaller

envelope after you have completed it? Then write your name on the larger envelope and insert the completed questionnaire in its smaller envelope into the larger one. The school secretary will check the names off a list as the questionnaires are returned and throw away the larger envelopes. I will be given the completed questionnaires in their unmarked smaller envelopes only. I will attempt to contact those whose questionnaires are not returned but will not know which questionnaire you completed.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Completing it assumes your consent to use the data.

Please take as long as you like to complete the questionnaire. People who completed it during an earlier study found it took them twenty to thirty minutes.

Sincerely,

P.S. My phone number is , and I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have about the questionnaire. Please turn over for directions.

APPENDIX C

Interviewee Letters

June 1983

Dear Mothers,

Within the last few weeks a questionnaire was brought home by your son/daughter in grade six/seven and you were requested to respond to it and return it to your child's school. The questionnaire was part of a study being conducted by a University of British Columbia student who lives in Kamloops and who is completing a Master's degree thesis.

As an additional part of that same study ten people who received questionnaires are being asked to provide further information about their children's home environment by agreeing to a short interview on the subject. You are one of those with whom I would like to meet in order to talk over some additional questions about your child's experiences over the years as they have related to his development of writing skills. All of the questions will be different ones that, of course, were not on the questionnaire which you have already seen and the total time we would need for such a discussion would be approximately twenty minutes.

I will be telephoning you within the next week to arrange a time that we could meet, undisturbed, to have

such a discussion. If you would carefully consider this request between now and then and let me know when I call what times would be most appropriate for you I would greatly appreciate it. I can come to your home whenever it is convenient for you.

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

P.S. Please don't hesitate to call me at if
you have any questions.

APPENDIX D

Interview Agenda

1. a) Please tell how often, if at all, _____ shows you written work that is to be handed in before he/she hands it in at school. Does this happen often?
b) Does _____ talk to you about ideas for writing?
c) How many times would you say _____ has read you a draft of an assignment?
d) Does _____ ever ask you to check spelling, punctuation, and sentence sense of an assignment? How often does this happen?
e) What other kinds of help can you remember giving _____ on writing assignments?
2. a) Do you remember ever helping _____ at home specifically in learning to read before he/she attended grade one?
b) How did _____ show interest in learning to read?
c) Could you describe the kind of help which you gave?
d) How did _____ feel about the help he/she was receiving?
e) What was your attitude toward giving this type of help?
f) Why did you decide to help (or not to help) _____ learn to read at home?

3. a) Approximately how much of _____'s out of school time is spent devoted exclusively to homework assignments?
- b) About how often would you say _____ shares an activity with one of his parents (with no other family member involved) such as going to a movie together? daily, two or three times a week, once weekly, twice or three times a month, monthly, less often than monthly
4. a) Did _____ know how to read when she/he began grade one?
- b) How much did he/she know? Try to recall when he/she began to read.
- c) What sort of things did _____ do?
- d) Did she/he do a lot of scribbling?
- e) Did she/he draw people and objects?
- f) Did she/he copy letters of the alphabet?
- g) Did she/he ask questions about spelling?
- h) Other kinds of behavior?
- i) What sort of questions did _____ ask about reading?
- j) Can you give an example?
5. a) Do you remember going to the school over the years at all and talking about teaching with _____'s teacher?

5. b)When was this?
c)How often did it happen?
d)What did the teacher say?
e)What did you say?
f)What sparked your interest?
g)If you have never gone to see a teacher in such a way, why have you chosen not to?
h)Have you always been interested in reading and writing?
i)Why did you go to see the teacher (if you did go)?
j)Were you satisfied with the outcome of your visit?
6. a)If _____ were to have difficulties with his schoolwork, what steps would you take to overcome these difficulties?
b)What resources are available for parents to use in helping their children? Here are some options you might choose to answer part one of this question with: supervise his/her homework time, help him/her with the homework, provide extra materials, check the homework, hire a tutor, other
7. a)Does _____ watch any certain television programs regularly?
b)Can you name one or two of them?
c)Do you ever discuss with _____ what she/he has watched?

7. d) If not, why not?
- e) If you do discuss television programs which have been watched, what topics do you usually discuss?
- f) ie. does _____ ask questions about what he/she saw?
- g) Do you ask questions to see how _____ has responded, etc.?
- h) Do you ever discuss things _____ reads with him/her?
- i) What do you usually discuss? (see above questions)
8. In today's society, what is the purpose of education?
- ie. to help children prepare for what lies ahead.
9. a) How would you describe _____ in a few words?
- (see if any of the following descriptors come up)
- self sufficient, persevering, self-controlled, fastidious, individualistic
- b) If _____ were asked to do some repetitive task such as unloading a pick-up load of wood, or taking out the garbage, or practice playing a musical instrument, or cleaning up his room, how might _____ typically react?
10. a) What can the schools do to inform you better about what is going on in _____'s school?
- b) What else would you like to know about what is happening at _____'s school?
- c) What can the school do better than it is doing now?

APPENDIX E

The Home and Work Writing Habits of Mothers

Reported types of writing done at home by Mothers of More Effective Writers
Messages

grocery lists

things to do lists

messages (three respondents)

Working with figures

bookkeeping

record keeping

Educationally related writing

marking exams

taking minutes at meetings

completing course assignments

o lesson preparation (three respondents)

preparing public talks (two respondents)

making notes from reference material

Bible study lesson completion (two respondents)

Creative writing

writing poems (eight respondents)

writing newspaper and magazine articles (two respondents)

daily journal writing

diary (seven respondents)

short stories (four respondents)

essays for English 100

essays (three respondents)

original songs

Other types of writing done at home

schedules

secretary for community group - type minutes

calligraphy

writing newsletters

professional reports

resumes

information wanted

crossword puzzles

computer programs

answering surveys

Reported types of writing done at work by Mothers of More Effective Writers

Orders and forms

instructions

contracts

Formal writing

memos

briefs

Reports

programs

assessments

life/death claims

daybook planning

Other types of writing done at work

notes to parents

newsletters

ads

procedure manuals

Reported types of writing done at home by Mothers of Less Effective WritersRecipe Copying

reported by one respondent

Messages

instructions for children's duties

some church work

Working with figures

billings and statements

cheque writing

bookkeeping

Educationally related writing

notebook writing

prayerbook writing

notes on talks at church

completing course assignments

preparing public talks

studying

Creative writing

writing poems

writing newspaper and magazine articles

daily journal writing

books of remembrance

diary

cookbook

hobby books

short stories

Other types of writing done at home

bookwork

cards

work reports

help child with assignments

Reported types of writing done at work by Mothers of
Less Effective Writers

Orders and forms

ordering

accounts receivable

schedules (three respondents)

banking information

log books

accounting invoices

purchase orders

staff reviews

Reports

reporting on residents

nursing charting (two respondents)

schoolwork

directives

Other types of writing done at work

numbers etc.

data, information

APPENDIX F

Parents' Other Attempts to Teach Printing to their
Preschool Children

Activities Reported by the Parents of Students in the
Group of Less Effective Writers

- 1) knew alphabet in any order at $2\frac{1}{2}$ years
- 2) weekly library trips
- 3) my child watched Sesame Street (two respondents)
- 4) I encouraged picture books
- 5) I taught how to print name, alphabet, address,
phone number
- 6) had fun with Fisher-Price school desk (pictures
and written words
- 7) child was in a day-care center
- 8) taught alphabet and letter sounds first, then
words
- 9) painting, playdough for pre-printing; playschool
printed words then sounded them out.
- 10) circled words in magazines as child learned them
as a game
- 11) very little - made sure he could spell his name
- 12) printed words and child copied them. We told
her what they said or she dictated it first
- 13) taught her to spell some words

Activities Reported by the Parents of Students in the
Group of More Effective Writers

- 1) older siblings stimulated interest
- 2) as asked, I correctly demonstrated letters and she copied them
- 3) he was very keen and I showed him whatever he asked
- 4) showed child the alphabet and name in fun
- 5) gave her pencils and paper (two respondents)
- 6) read lots to her
- 7) child uses dictionary a lot
- 8) showed her words in her book as examples
- 9) purchased books on how to begin

APPENDIX G

The Occupations of Mothers and Fathers

Occupations Reported by Parents of Students in the Group of Less Effective Writers

Unskilled occupations

janitor	construction laborer
arena attendant	warehouseman
log loader	letter carrier
domestic help	millworker
salesman	

Semi-skilled occupations

truck driver	food service worker
cashier	floor layer
service representative	clerk
pipefitter	insurance representative
logging contractor	fireman
welder	secretary

Skilled occupations

machine operator	registered nurse
post supervisor	mechanic
policeman	blaster
millwright	rail traffic operator
parts manager	general contractor
government agent	assistant service manager
food floor manager	electrician
carpenter	control systems manager

Business and Managerial Occupations

store owner	assistant bank manager
store manager	engineer
director of personnel	owns own business

Professional Occupations

geologist	teacher
pharmacist	

Other responses

handicapped	unemployed
-------------	------------

Occupations Reported by Parents of Students in the Group of More Effective Writers

Unskilled occupations

switchboard operator	millworker
warehouseman	night manager
janitor	building maintenance

Semi-skilled occupations

teacher-aide	waitress
clerk	railway brakeman
accounts clerk	electronic technician
practical nurse	truck driver
train conductor	engraver
telephone operator	baker
logger	health care worker
trainman	stenographer
lumber grader	meat cutter

cook	secretary
insurance representative	heavy equipment operator
bookkeeper	library aide

Skilled occupations

carpenter	policeman
train engineer	registered nurse
legal surveyor	dental assistant
warehouse manager	logger, skidder driver
musician	physiotherapist
prison chaplain	heavy duty machine operator
electrician	cabinet maker
welder	production superintendent
health care nurse	electrical contractor
lab technician	

Business and Managerial

engineer	owns drilling business
speech therapist	businessman
company manager	operations supervisor
branch manager	small business owner
supermarket manager	

Professional Occupations

school principal	teacher
psychologist	social work (private practice)
chemist	head of college department

Other Responses

on welfare

on compensation

unemployed

mother - lady in waiting

housewife - otherwise known as domestic engineer

APPENDIX H

Table 30

Restrictions on the television viewing of children

Description of Restriction	Frequency	
	Less Effective	More Effective
<u>time restrictions</u>		
not more than two hours Saturdays	0	1
not after 9 pm	4	9
not after 9:30 pm	1	1
not after 10 pm	0	2
not until homework is completed	7	10
limited when child is busy	1	1
not too long at a time	1	0
no longer than one hour at a time	0	2
not during the daytime	1	0
not during daytime if weather is nice	2	0
early evening viewing only	0	1
maximum two hours per day	1	1
not after dinner on weeknights	1	1
8am to 10 am only	1	0
only on Saturday morning	1	0
only after chores completed	2	2
maximum one hour per school day	2	0
little allowed during the week	0	1

type of show restrictions

no sadist shows	0	1
no murder or highly rated crime shows	1	1
no scary shows	1	1
no occult shows	1	0
no violent shows	3	14
no immoral shows	1	0
no pornography, lewd, suggestive shows	2	2
no adult, sex-related or R rated shows	1	10
encouraged watching of educational shows	2	0
no shows depicting sexual behavior	1	0
limited viewing of war shows	1	0
no shows with much swearing or crude speech	0	3
no satanic movies	0	1
no horror shows	0	8
no shows in bad taste	0	1
no garbage	0	1
no sitcoms	0	1
rarely see cartoons	0	1
no soaps	0	1

parental guidance in viewing

previewed by parents in television guide	0	1
only programs we approve of are watched	2	8
inappropriate programs not allowed	0	1
programs are selected as a family	1	1
pleasurable family viewing only	2	3
certain programs not allowed	1	0
pre-screening by parents for violence	1	1
other activities are encouraged	1	0
discuss what is not understood	1	1
any good quality show allowed (not necessarily educational)	1	0
children are instructed to not believe all they see and hear	0	1
discourage watching of silly shows such as Dukes	0	1
no rules but attitude is television watching is a no-no	0	1

other restrictions

we have poor reception so we seldom watch	0	2
he does other things when he has them to do	1	0
child only interested in "Little House" and "Different Strokes"	0	1
television watching has increased in past year	0	1

we have no television	0	1
television doesn't interest her so no restrictions	0	1
child usually chooses news programs	0	1

APPENDIX I

Unsolicited questionnaire comments of parents

Comments by parents of more effective writers

Concerning child's writing in his leisure time

writes about once a month or less, often during the summer (less often in winter)

Concerning child's initial interest in learning to print

showed first interest in learning to print before one year of age.

Concerning child's best type of writing if it wasn't letters, stories, poems, notes, or diaries

novel reports	reports	school assignments
class work	guide work	cartoon dialogues
card verses	songs	descriptive paragraphs
paragraphs		

Concerning the amount of reading aloud done by parents since their children learned to read for themselves

- a) read aloud until about grade three but not anymore
- b) rarely read aloud - frequency has decreased as child has gotten older.

Concerning chalkboards in the home

- a) child lost interest and board was given away
- b) used lots of paper

Concerning whether or not both natural parents of child are in the home

children are adopted

Concerning the educational level attained by fathers

- a) grade 13 graduate
- b) one course short of degree

Concerning activities child participates in when alone

- a) reads
- b) plays with computer

Concerning how often child plays alone

an only child

Concerning the satisfaction of parents with reading instruction in the schools

- a) standards are not high enough
- b) depends on teacher
- c) can't answer, my children read before starting school
- d) varies from satisfied to dissatisfied

Concerning the satisfaction of parents with writing instruction in the schools

- a) spelling less than satisfactory
- b) I'm dissatisfied - unsure if problem is the teaching or the learning
- c) depends on the teacher's initiative

Concerning whether or not the ideal parent should check his child's homework regularly

- a) as an expression of interest only
- b) child has to be responsible

Concerning whether or not the ideal parent should volunteer to help with school activities

- a) where?
- b) as much as is reasonably possible
- c) if time permits

Concerning whether or not the ideal parent should help his child learn to read and write

- a) depends on the circumstances
- b) responsibility is on the teacher
- c) only if the parent is competent to do so

Concerning whether or not the ideal parent should be aware of new teaching methods

parents should be informed of curriculum and of any changes

Concerning whether or not children should help pay for the bills at home

- a) which bills?
- b) depends upon child's income - if any
- c) at what age?
- d) should be aware of the bills

Concerning whether or not children should receive parental help on schoolwork when needed

if the parent can do it

Concerning whether or not children should be able to make most of their own choices about books to read and programs to watch

- a) depends on the child
- b) at what age?

Concerning whether or not children should not always be asking their parents how to do their homework

- a) only when not understood
- b) not as a way of shirking work
- c) depends on how capable the student is

Comments by parents of less effective writers

Concerning child's best type of writing if it wasn't letters, stories, poems, notes, or diaries

essays

short descriptive writing

copying words from hockey cards

making up games such as treasure hunt maps

Concerning amount of homework child does

it depends on the teacher - this years there have been no homework assignments

Concerning the types of help with writing which parents give

willing to help in all areas but it is seldom required.

Concerning the frequency with which children bring home marked assignments for parents to see

teacher doesn't hand them back, but seldom

Concerning the response of parents when they see written assignments which have been marked by a teacher

- a) both parents always read through the paper
- b) the teacher is contacted for a discussion only if
there are problems

Concerning the amount of reading aloud done by parents since their children learned to read for themselves

- a) read aloud for about two years after the child could read for him or herself
- b) usually read aloud something interesting from the newspaper
- c) rarely read aloud - which I had the time

Concerning chalkboards in the home

we have a small one on the wall

Concerning the number of books for children in the home

- a) we have about 200 or so
- b) child brings home books from the library all the time and reads them, there are between 21 and 50 in our home.

Concerning whether or not both natural parents of child are in the home

new parent is gone five days per week

Concerning the educational level attained by fathers

- a) ex-husband illiterate
- b) teachers' college
- c) Bible school

Concerning activities child participates in when alone

- a) loves Archie comics
- b) biking

Concerning the satisfaction of parents with writing instruction in the schools

- a) standards not high enough

- b) construction and more emphasis on English language needed.

Concerning whether or not the ideal parent should check his child's homework regularly

home and school should work together and strive for a quality education

Concerning whether or not children should help pay for the bills at home

- a) child should learn financial discipline from parent's example to pay bills
- b) should understand not physically pay

Concerning whether or not children should be able to make most of their own choices about books to read and programs to watch

- a) with some input from parents
- b) with reservations
- c) depends
- d) must be allowed freedom after being taught your moral judgements for 13 years
- e) with guidance

Concerning whether or not children should not always be asking their parents how to do their homework

- a) depends
- b) they should think, think use the grey cells - if not understood seek our help

Other unsolicited comments

- a) It is difficult to answer the questionnaire because

we are foster parents. The child came when four, returned to natural parents and then back to us from 6½ to 13 years of age (the present)

- b) I feel having his or her own room/desk is very important
- c) This questionnaire brings to the fore my most serious concern about today's educational system. The entire education system is geared to "informing" students as to the facts, how-to's and why's of a variety of subjects. Sadly, they are missing the ONE most vital and valuable responsibility - TO TEACH A STUDENT HOW TO LEARN, FOR HIM/HERSELF.
- d) The only reason I am very satisfied about the way writing is taught to my child is because his class is doing the Process of Writing. If you had asked me this question last year I would have answered very dissatisfied. The Process of Writing has taught my child more in eight months than he has ever learned in his entire schooling!
- e) I feel you are being discriminatory by asking mothers to fill this out. Why not either parent?

APPENDIX J

Guidelines to Teachers for Selecting More Effective

Writers and Less Effective Writers

Teachers of Grade 6 and 7 Students,

- Think of all students in your school (and at a particular grade level) as falling into three groups of ability in written composition: A) top third B) middle third and C) bottom third
- Choose students on the basis of overall ability in written composition.
- Don't only consider the mechanical aspects of writing but also consider content, unity, emphasis, method of presentation, etc.
- Endeavour to consider the student's performance in all subject areas which require written expression.
- For purposes of this study, select virtually no students who fall into the middle third of the students at their grade level.
- Please do not select any students who have severe, rare, and special problems with written expression.
- Additionally, outstandingly good writers who are far superior to all other students at their grade level should not be selected.
- Group size: Choose a group of ten more effective writers and a group of ten less effective writers at each of the specified grade levels using the criteria already described.
- Students shouldn't be selected on the basis of sex. For example boys should not be chosen over girls in order to "even up" the number of students of each sex in a group.
- It would greatly assist me in preparing questionnaires if you could indicate on the student selection sheet which students, if any, come from families with only one parent presently in the home.

Thank You.