

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz>

*ResearchSpace@Auckland*

### **Copyright Statement**

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage.

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback>

### **General copyright and disclaimer**

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the [Library Thesis Consent Form](#) and [Deposit Licence](#).

**Empowering Parents and Improving Reading:  
Investigating an Intervention for Adolescent Readers**

**David Taylor**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Educational  
Leadership

The University of Auckland, 2014



## Abstract

Home school partnerships focused on recreational reading can improve outcomes for students. There is a body of literature which suggests parental involvement can be beneficial to student outcomes. Similarly there is a great deal of research on the importance of reading to children's learning. This study sits at the nexus between these two discourses. The setting was a decile seven co-educational public secondary school in suburban Auckland. It was a two-phase study which sought to both better understand how schools and parents can work together to achieve common goals, and to find ways to improve students' recreational reading habits.

The first phase of the research surveyed 54 parents of Year 9 students to establish their beliefs, attitudes and current practices concerning their support for their children's reading. Key findings from this survey were that rates of use for strategies to support reading at home were low. There was also a perception that the importance of developing reading skills had increased while the role of parents in supporting that development had decreased.

The second phase was an intervention involving eight families from the same school. The intervention had two important features. Firstly, a framework was developed and used to align reading strategies to the individual requirements of each family. Secondly, participants were involved in co-constructing the intervention they used at home with their child.

The overall research design used a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach, applied to working with families rather than teachers. The first phase collected data from parents via a questionnaire. The second phase collected six different sources of data: pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, research journals, workshop notes, meeting notes, and emails and other correspondence. These were used to form case study narratives which were then coded using a mixture of deductive and inductive analysis.

This intervention was informed by two theoretical frames. The first of these was a parental involvement frame which created bespoke, collaborative and sustained interventions. The second frame used the categories of accessing texts, promoting engagement in texts and modelling of a positive disposition towards reading, to align reading strategies to the needs of individual participants.

There were three central findings of the intervention. Firstly, the results suggest that parents can be empowered to increase the strategies used at home to help support their children's learning. Secondly, reading habits can be developed. All families made progress towards reaching the goals they set for themselves and five of eight families reached their goal by the end of the ten-week intervention period. This included reluctant readers

increasing their volume of, and interest in, reading. All families who completed the intervention intended to continue with their focus on reading at home post-intervention. Thirdly, there were also positive benefits for parent and child relationships reported along with positive effects on siblings who were not the focus of the intervention.

The results provide two important frameworks for helping to align school and home practices. These frameworks offer flexibility to be deployed in a wide range of education settings to help schools achieve their goals.

## **Acknowledgments**

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Woolf Fisher Trust and the Northcote College Board of Trustees for their extremely generous support in providing me with the opportunity to carry out this research.

A very big thank you also to my supervisors, Rebecca Jesson and Aaron Wilson, for their extraordinary help, generosity and faith at every point in this project and for their patience in teaching me so much about the research process. The help of other members of the Woolf Fisher Research Centre team is also greatly appreciated, particularly Stuart McNaughton, Mei Lai and Angela McNicholl. The input of my fellow scholars, Sharon Fuemana, Carol Jarrett and Richard Watkinson was also enormously valuable in completing this study.

Thank you also to the parents who volunteered to be part of this research and whose generosity in sharing their families' lives and willingness to commit to the process is at the heart of this thesis.

I would also like to acknowledge the considerable support of Vicki Barrie, the support and wisdom of Mark Snowden, the generosity of my research assistant, Sam McNaughton, Frances Kluge and her students for the wonderful food, and the assistance and awahi of my extraordinary colleagues in the English Department and library at Northcote College.

## Tables of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Tables of Contents</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Part 1: Parental Involvement.....	5
<i>The involvement of parents: disputed territory</i> .....	5
<i>Synthesis of theoretical frames</i> .....	8
<i>The importance of bespoke interventions</i> .....	15
<i>The importance of collaboration</i> .....	16
<i>The importance of sustained support</i> .....	18
<i>Summary</i> .....	19
Part 2: Why reading? .....	20
<i>The importance of reading engagement</i> .....	20
<i>The importance of recreational reading</i> .....	21
<i>Home factors that support recreational reading</i> .....	22
<i>Access</i> .....	23
<i>Engagement</i> .....	23
<i>Disposition</i> .....	24
<i>The contribution of Summer Learning Effect research</i> .....	25
<i>Social advantages of reading</i> .....	26
<i>Barriers to reading</i> .....	27
<i>The secondary context</i> .....	27
<i>How can parents and schools help this process?</i> .....	28
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	<b>30</b>
Research Setting.....	30
<i>Ensuring an ethical approach</i> .....	31
Participants.....	31

<i>Phase 1</i> .....	31
<i>Phase 2</i> .....	32
Research Design .....	32
Intervention Design.....	36
Measures .....	41
<i>Profiling questionnaire</i> .....	41
<i>Pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires</i> .....	42
<i>Field notes</i> .....	43
<i>Research Journals</i> .....	43
<i>Case study narratives</i> .....	45
Procedures for Data Collection.....	46
<i>Selection of intervention group</i> .....	47
<i>Workshop 1</i> .....	48
<i>One-on-one meetings 1</i> .....	49
<i>On-going support</i> .....	49
<i>Workshop 2</i> .....	49
<i>Workshop 3</i> .....	49
<i>One-on-one meetings 2</i> .....	50
<i>Writing of case study narratives</i> .....	50
Analysis of Data.....	51
<i>Profiling questionnaire</i> .....	51
<i>Pre- and post- intervention questionnaires</i> .....	53
<i>Case study narratives</i> .....	54
<b>Chapter 4: Results</b> .....	<b>58</b>
Introduction .....	58
Profiling Questionnaire .....	58
Pre- and Post-intervention questionnaire .....	65
Intervention Results: The qualitative data .....	76
<i>Issues/Goals</i> .....	77
<i>Strategies overview</i> .....	77
<i>Access</i> .....	78
<i>Engagement</i> .....	80
<i>Modelling</i> .....	85

<i>Unintended consequences: relationships</i> .....	86
<i>Unintended consequences: other siblings</i> .....	88
<i>Unintended consequences: other learning opportunities</i> .....	89
<i>Challenges</i> .....	89
<i>Support from other parents</i> .....	90
<i>Intervention non-completion</i> .....	90
Case study example .....	91
Case study 1 .....	91
<i>Demographic</i> .....	91
<i>Issue</i> .....	91
<i>Strategies</i> .....	92
<i>Process and outcomes</i> .....	92
<i>Next steps</i> .....	94
Summary .....	94
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion</b> .....	<b>95</b>
Introduction .....	95
Developing reading skills .....	96
<i>Schools can successfully intervene to promote reading at home</i> .....	96
<i>The frame developed for supporting recreational reading is a valid intervention tool</i> .....	98
Parental involvement .....	101
<i>How other knowledge is reflected in the new approach</i> .....	101
<i>A transferrable methodological approach</i> .....	104
<i>Interventions need to try to align school and family practices</i> .....	106
<i>Reconceptualising parental involvement</i> .....	106
Implications .....	110
Limitations .....	110
Conclusion .....	112
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>113</b>
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet .....	114
Appendix B: Consent Form .....	116
Appendix C: Profiling Questionnaire .....	118
Appendix D: Workshop booklet .....	120
Appendix E: Research Journal (sample page) .....	128
Appendix F: Pre- and post-intervention questionnaire .....	130

References .....	132
------------------	-----

## List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> The different settings in a student's life (Epstein et al., 2009).....	9
<i>Figure 2.</i> Alignment of parental involvement typographies.....	11
<i>Figure 3.</i> Synthesis of different models of parental involvement processes .....	15
<i>Figure 4.</i> Lueder's parental involvement strategy (2011) .....	17
<i>Figure 5.</i> Overview of main research question and sub-questions .....	30
<i>Figure 6.</i> Outline of how research design aligns to research model .....	36
<i>Figure 7.</i> Range of sources contributing to the development of the case study narratives.	45
<i>Figure 8.</i> At high school continuing to develop reading skills is: .....	60
<i>Figure 9.</i> At high school parental involvement in children's reading is:.....	61
<i>Figure 10.</i> At high school parental involvement in a child's school work:.....	62
<i>Figure 11.</i> I have the skills and knowledge to help support my child's reading development .....	63
<i>Figure 12.</i> I know how to get help to support my child's reading development.....	64
<i>Figure 13.</i> I am confident that I can help support my child's reading development .....	64
<i>Figure 14.</i> At high school continuing to develop reading skills is: .....	67
<i>Figure 15.</i> At high school parental involvement in children's reading is:.....	68
<i>Figure 16.</i> At high school parental involvement in a child's school work:.....	69
<i>Figure 17.</i> I have the skills and knowledge to help support my child's reading development .....	71
<i>Figure 18.</i> I know how to get help to support my child's reading development.....	71
<i>Figure 19.</i> I am confident that I can help support my child's reading development .....	72
<i>Figure 20.</i> Family 1 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires .....	74
<i>Figure 21.</i> Family 2 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires .....	74
<i>Figure 22.</i> Family 3 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires .....	75
<i>Figure 23.</i> Family 4 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires .....	75
<i>Figure 24.</i> Family 5 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires .....	76
<i>Figure 25.</i> Family 6 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires .....	76
<i>Figure 26.</i> How the access, engagement and modelling frame functions as an inquiry process .....	99
<i>Figure 27:</i> Alignment of DBR methodology and theoretical frames .....	102

## List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Methods for assessing legitimization</i> .....	38
Table 2 <i>Types of reading support</i> .....	52
Table 3 <i>Narrative case study codes</i> .....	55
Table 4 <i>Types of reading support offered</i> .....	60
Table 5 <i>Types of reading support offered</i> .....	65
Table 6 <i>Statements from the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires</i> .....	72



## Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that schools could improve students' reading habits by fostering more collaborative relationships with parents focused on joint problem-solving. There is a body of literature which supports the importance parental involvement as well as a great deal of research on the importance of recreational reading to children's learning. This study sits at the nexus between these two discourses. The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007) has strong messages about the importance of community engagement and the importance of recreational reading. The NZC has 'community engagement' as one of its eight principles. Specifically it requires schools to engage 'the support of [students'] families, whānau, and communities' in their delivery of the curriculum (p.9). Therefore, it is important for schools to establish relationships with families which can allow the educational practices and beliefs of home and school to be more closely aligned. If schools are not productively working with communities in the education process it will be harder for students to succeed: negotiating the different educational understandings of home and school may be difficult or even constitute barriers to success.

In the English learning area the NZC requires that a student 'selects and reads texts for enjoyment and personal fulfilment' (Ministry of Education, 2014). This is an achievement objective indicator at all eight levels of the curriculum, from the start of primary school through to the end of secondary school. This study brought the parental involvement and recreational reading aspects of the NZC together to try and improve reading habits for students.

Parental involvement may be more important and more challenging in a context of rapid change. Education has changed a great deal in recent decades and the pace of change is accelerating. Since the turn of the century, secondary education in Aotearoa New Zealand has seen the introduction of a new curriculum, a new assessment system based on a very different ideology to the previous one, and subsequent significant changes to that assessment system. Teachers who enact many of these changes can often feel uncertain as to their implications so it would be easy for those not working directly within the education system to feel alienated from the education process. It is often argued that communities and parents need to be directly involved in helping their children successfully navigate the education system but this is a challenge if parents are not supported to keep pace with the rate of change. A further risk from this rapid change is that the significance of well-established and important academic activities, such as recreational reading, may be overlooked as schools and families grapple with understanding what is new.

The research was initiated because of concerns I had as a teacher at my own school. From my own experience as a teacher as well as what other teachers have reported to me I know there is a great deal of variability in the range and level of contact that parents have with schools. Many schools have parents they have little or no interaction with and for most schools, outside of school events, interaction with parents happens on an ad hoc basis as issues arise. There is little sense that schools are approaching the inclusion of families into their curriculum delivery in a systematic way.

For considering recreational, or personal, reading the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) definition is a useful one:

The personal category relates to texts that are intended to satisfy an individual's personal interests, both practical and intellectual. This category also includes texts that are intended to maintain or develop personal connections with other people. It includes personal letters, fiction, biography, and informational texts that are intended to be read to satisfy curiosity, as a part of leisure or recreational activities. In the electronic medium it includes personal e-mails, instant messages, social media/networking sites and diary-style blogs. (2013, pp.12-13)

The terms 'book' and 'text' are both used in this research. All the participants in the intervention phase chose to focus on books as their preferred mode of text. This included printed books as well as e-books so 'book' is an accurate descriptor. The use of the term 'book' is therefore not intended to invalidate the other inclusions in the PISA definition but to provide specificity.

As an English teacher I see many student struggling to engage with, and enjoy, recreational reading. In the digital age reading has stiff competition in gaining the attention of adolescents. In the context of our school, recreational reading is regularly encouraged by English teachers but this encouragement does not appear to have a significant effect on students' at-home reading habits. The first phase of this research found that rates of use for strategies parents could employ to encourage reading prior to the intervention were low.

Recent longitudinal studies which have demonstrated the importance of recreational reading to cognitive development and academic success reinforce the importance of the role of recreational reading in educational success. Improving reading habits is therefore not just an important curriculum focus but an important academic development activity. The second phase sought to bring parental involvement and recreational reading together to improve the rates of use. It was hypothesised that a programme to help parents develop their children's reading habits could be mutually beneficial for both concepts. Firstly, the opportunity to improve their children's reading habits could be a way to engage parents in

working with the school. Secondly, the involvement of the parents could help to develop the reading habits of students.

This research was carried out at the school where I have worked for a decade and been a middle-leader in the English learning area for seven years. It was important to me that the research had the opportunity to inform practice in my own school setting as well as contribute to our theoretical knowledge of recreational reading and home-school partnerships more generally. As the intervention developed for this study is the start of what I hope will be an on-going programme, it was important to develop a more nuanced understanding of the characteristics of this setting as well as the strengths and needs of parents in our own community.

The setting for the study was a decile seven co-educational public secondary school in suburban Auckland. The study sought to investigate beliefs and attitudes about supporting reading at home amongst the Year 9 parents at the school and then collaboratively design an intervention to help a group of parents increase their role in developing their children's reading habits. This was to explore whether the school could intervene to empower the parents and to see whether this could have an effect on their children's reading.

Chapter 2 explores the contested nature of the parental involvement literature. It establishes a theoretical frame for use in interventions which takes account of previous models and disputed issues. The key elements of this frame are that the interventions need to be bespoke, collaborative and sustained. The bespoke aspect ensures the intervention is responsive to the needs of participants while the collaboration provides the information sharing necessary to do this effectively. Providing on-going support helps participants to modify and embed the changes they are trying to make. Chapter 2 also explores the importance of recreational reading for cognitive development and promoting academic success. It then develops a second theoretical frame which acts as a typology to classify and deploy successful reading strategies. This typology divides reading strategies into those which increase access to texts (i.e. library visits, recommendations), those which promote engagement in texts (i.e. reading to someone, having set reading routines) and those which model a positive disposition towards reading (being seen to read and talking positively about reading).

The methodological underpinnings are examined in Chapter 3. There were two phases to the research. Phase one used a questionnaire to gather baseline data from the target group and the second phase ran a trial intervention to test the frames identified above. The intervention consisted of workshops with a group of parents who had children in Year 9. From these workshops parents were helped to select strategies to implement over a ten-week period. The measures used to gather data were pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, research journals, field notes, meeting notes, and emails and other correspondence. These were used to develop case study narratives. This study used

Design-Based Research (DBR) methods in a new context to provide the overarching principles of investigation and the reasons for this choice, along with the specific intervention design, data collection and analytical approach are detailed in Chapter 3.

The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4. The key findings from phase one of the research were that there was a gap between parents' beliefs about the importance of developing reading at high school and their own role in supporting that development. There was also a low rate and range of reading strategies reported as being used in homes. Phase two found that aligning strategies to individual circumstances could help families reach the reading goals they established. There were also positive benefits recorded for parent and child relationships. The results section also covers changes to the parents' beliefs and attitudes about supporting reading as well as the impact of the intervention on their children. It also looks at unintended consequences from the intervention.

Finally, the implications of this research for schools and how they seek to achieve their goals are discussed in Chapter 5. The potential of the two frames tested in the intervention to improve reading habits is considered along with the possibility that they could be used more widely in other contexts.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review is in two parts. Part 1 looks at the literature on parental involvement in education. Specifically it addresses the conflict between researchers as to whether parental involvement in education is an idea schools should pursue, before looking at how some of the different theoretical frames which have been suggested for understanding parental involvement can be synthesised to help understand the differences in the literature and the relevance of the current research. Finally it isolates three elements which may contribute to more successful parental involvement interventions. Part 2 addresses the literature on reading: its importance and key factors in developing reading skills. From each of these parts a guiding theoretical frame emerges and it is these two frames which are the theoretical focus of this research project.

### Part 1: Parental Involvement

#### *The involvement of parents: disputed territory*

There is much debate about the efficacy of school programmes which seek the involvement of parents. There are many who find a good deal of promise in the research on parental involvement but there are also some who are sceptical as to whether this involvement actually translates into measurable benefits for students and even some advocates of parental involvement acknowledge that there is a lack of evidence for its efficacy. It is not the intention of this literature review to sit in judgement over these two positions but rather to summarise their respective arguments and then turn to the literature that can help understand this disparity. What is important is to determine whether there is a basis in previous research to suggest a trial of a parental involvement intervention is justified. To do this it is more useful to isolate key aspects of interventions which might reasonably be expected to improve the chance of positive outcomes rather than seeking to settle a binary determination of 'good' or 'bad' upon the concept of parental involvement.

Parental involvement in supporting children's learning has long been considered a positive element in helping students reach their potential (Jeynes, 2011). It is therefore not surprising that there is a plethora of theories, research and initiatives aimed at finding ways for schools to successfully incorporate parental involvement in the process of education (Jeynes, 2011). In recent years this is an area of education which has received more scrutiny in some jurisdictions as governments have incorporated a belief in the power of parental involvement into policy development (Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003; Brooking & Roberts, 2007; Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008; Epstein, Sanders, & Sheldon, 2007; Gorinski, 2005; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007; Timperley & Robinson,

2002). This is not an unreasonable belief given the judgments of many researchers in this area.

There is a great deal of very positive rhetoric about the benefits of parental involvement in education. In their report to the Ministry of Education (MOE), Bull, Brooking and Campbell (2008) found “[t]he research literature is unequivocal in showing that parental involvement makes a significant difference to educational achievement” (p.1). Brooking and Roberts’ (2007) evaluation of the Home-School Partnership: Literacy Programme was similarly positive. Their evaluation of the programme, which involved 105 New Zealand primary schools found that “[e]ighty percent of schools reported parental involvement had a positive impact on children’s opportunity to learn” (p.ix). A further evaluation, the Parent Mentoring Initiative Evaluation (Gorinski, 2005), reports that “initial analysis of literacy data gathered via observation surveys, and anecdotal evidence gained through the primary data collection, suggests that student achievement has been improved” (p.23). Gorinski also notes that students involved consistently showed higher achievement than those who did not take part, however the report does not provide the data on which these observations were made. An evaluation of The Flaxmere Project, an initiative to develop partnerships between five Flaxmere schools and their community, noted that involvement developed parents’ skills and helped them provide greater support to their children (Clinton, Hattie, & Dixon, 2007). All these reports draw a clear link between school initiatives to involve parents in learning and improved outcomes for students.

This connection is also widely evident in research from beyond Aotearoa New Zealand. Joyce Epstein (2005) is clear that “[t]hrough high school, family involvement contributed to positive results for students, including **higher achievement, better attendance, more course credits earned, more responsible preparation for class, and other indicators of success in school**” (p.2 bold in original). In making this assertion she draws on the independent research of Catsambis (2001) and Simon (2004) who both use National Educational Longitudinal Study data to establish benefits over time from parental involvement but this does not address the impact of parental involvement programmes. Similarly, Jeynes (2011) independent meta-analysis of fifty-two quantitative studies focused on parental involvement and student achievement in urban secondary schools in the United States finds that research into parental involvement such as high expectations, checking homework and communicating about school “clearly demonstrates that parental engagement aids considerably in youth reaching their full academic potential” (p.162). This was based on student progress on test scores with an overall effect size on standardised tests of 0.47. He notes specifically that “programmes meant to ensure parental support in their child’s schooling are positively related to achievement for youth” (p.115). Furthermore he says findings suggest that programmes of parental involvement can help address discrepancies between “dominant cultures and minorities” (p.115) with an overall effect size for minority students of 0.26. This is a notion supported by Desforges and Abouchar (2003)

and Epstein (2005). Among many benefits from Family/School partnerships Lueder (2011) includes “increased achievement” (p.28) while Cox (2005) also agrees that home-school collaboration has a positive role in effecting “changes in academic performance and school-related behaviour” (p.491). These sentiments are echoed consistently throughout the literature (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Domina, 2005; Epstein, 2005; Epstein et al., 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hancock, Kaiser, & Delaney, 2002; Harris & Goodall, 2007; Lewis, Kim, & Bey, 2011; Stelmack, 2005; Van Voorhis, 2001). Indeed, in the words of Desforges and Abouchar as they argue for how significant the parental effect is, “[t]his inference from research cannot be said too often” (p.87).

And yet the broad consensus in the seemingly obvious conclusions that parental involvement can improve student achievement, and that schools and families working together will further help this progress, belies some problematic aspects of the research evidence. Bull et al. (2008), despite their assertion that the literature shows parental involvement makes a “significant difference” (p.1), explain in a footnote that their definition of ‘successful’ has been modified because of a lack – in both the national and international literature as well as in their case studies – of “robust data linking home-school partnerships to improved outcomes for students” (p.1). A lack of empirical evidence demonstrating a link between parental involvement and improved achievement is noted by Lueder (2011), Desforges and Abouchar (2003), Stelmack (2005), Finn (1998), Simon (2001), Katyal and Evers (2007) as well as Cox who notes “the evidence base for the efficacy of such interventions remains uncertain” (2005, p.477). While these researchers insist parental involvement is still important, Domina (2005) provides a more sustained analysis of the lack of empirical evidence as well as the evidence that parental involvement can be counterproductive. Her review of studies into parental involvement reveals many ambiguities with both positive and negative effects being recorded (2005). This ambiguity is consistent between different methodological approaches (2005). She uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979) to explore the relationship between six different types of parental involvement and the effect they have on cognitive achievement and addressing behavioural concerns. When evaluating the effectiveness of parents attending a one-on-one meeting, attending a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, volunteering in the classroom, outside the classroom, frequency of homework checking and helping with homework she found that several of the activities were “significantly related to high academic achievement” (2005, p.240). However when she controlled for socioeconomic background and students’ previous scores she found the coefficients became negative, statistically insignificant or were greatly reduced. She found that all parental involvement activities which were significantly associated with academic achievement became negatively associated using a model which allowed for reciprocal causality. She concluded that the link between parental involvement and improved cognitive outcomes is “tenuous” (2005, p.242). Her work highlights that as well as a lack of empirical evidence to support a positive relationship between parental involvement and

improved outcomes for students there is a lack of consensus amongst researchers as to whether this is an area of school reform worth pursuing.

In their 2001 meta-analysis Fan and Chen take these “thorny issues related to research on parental involvement” (p.2) as their starting point, noting that there are empirical studies which show both positive and negative outcomes from such involvement. They characterise this research area as “fragmented” (p.2) and attribute this to the fact that the “limited empirical research has been conducted without the benefits of a guiding theoretical framework” (p.2). They also consider a lack of a clear and consistent definition for ‘parental involvement’ and ‘academic achievement’ as further barriers to developing a stronger consensus in, and robust theoretical framework for, this area. They note that parental involvement has been used to encompass a very wide range of behaviours and activities including “parental aspirations for their children’s academic achievement and their conveyance of such aspirations... parents’ communication with children about school... parents’ participation in school activities... parents’ communication with teachers about their children... and parental rules imposed at home that are considered to be education-related” (p.3). In their view, “[t]his somewhat chaotic state in the definition of the main construct not only makes it difficult to draw any general conclusion across the studies, but it may also have contributed to the inconsistent findings in this area” (p.3). Similarly, they claim the variations in measures used to assess ‘academic achievement’ have also contributed to the erratic findings in this area.

#### *Synthesis of theoretical frames*

To account for these divergent views it is useful to examine some of the theoretical frameworks which have been offered in order to try and contextualise these disparate findings. It is by examining how the various frameworks might align that we can start to understand the complexity of the process of parental involvement and why this complexity has given rise to the competing views outlined above. From this synthesis of theoretical approaches it is possible to isolate factors of parental involvement which are worth testing further.

At the first conceptual level we have Epstein’s (2009) overlapping spheres of influence as illustrated in Figure 1. It is the space shared by ‘family’, ‘school’ and ‘community’ which is occupied by the student and the more common ground there is, the easier it will be for a student to move successfully between those different environments. These spheres provide more or less support for a child as overlaps increase or decrease respectively, or as Robinson (2011) says: “although the worlds of school and home may differ greatly, students will thrive if there are enough bridges between them to make the crossing a walk into familiar rather than foreign territory” (p.133). It is these bridges which parental involvement initiatives try to establish. This model could also be seen to draw on the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998).

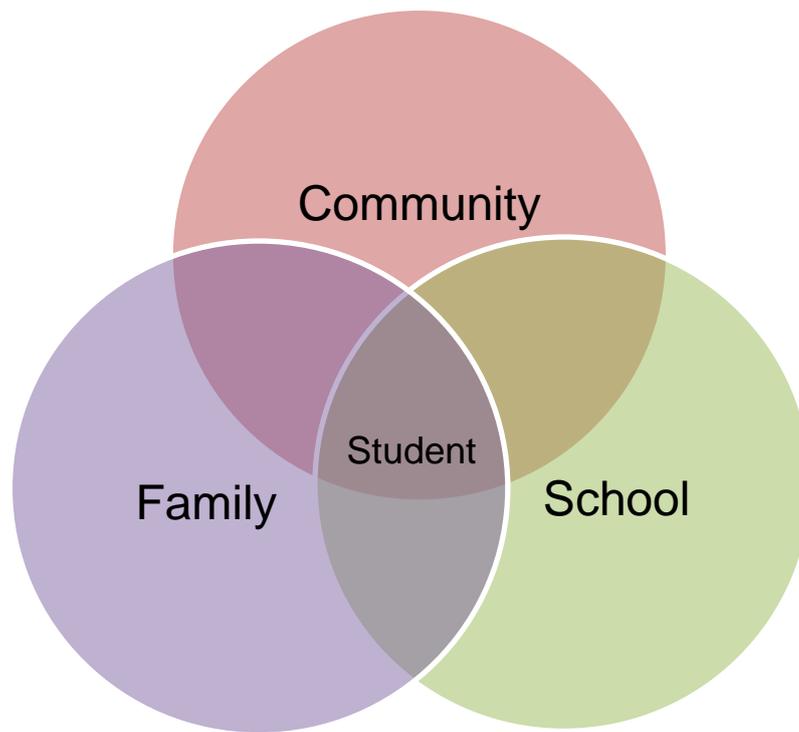


Figure 1. The different settings in a student's life (Epstein et al., 2009)

At this point it is useful to start differentiating between the *what*, *why* and *how* of parental involvement. That is, what types of activities parents might be involved in, the influences on why they do or do not become involved and how they carry out a particular activity or process. When assessing the outcomes of any type of parental involvement it is important to remember that each of these three factors will contribute significantly to the outcome. Each one of these factors is complex in its own right so when they are all considered together we can perhaps start to appreciate why there might be a great deal of unevenness in views on the use of parental involvement as a strategy. However, by considering the variables each presents it is possible to start asking questions about parental involvement in a more purposeful way.

Firstly, there are the different types of activities which can be understood as 'parental involvement'. As noted above, research has often included a wide range of activities under this term and unless we are considering similar types of activities it will be a challenge to say with any degree of certainty that a particular activity is more or less successful. This is an issue particularly for meta-analyses which can be indiscriminate in their selection and comparison of parental involvement activities.

The work of Epstein in developing a typology to categorise different aspects of parental involvement is very useful here. Based on her theory of school, family and community

being three overlapping spheres (1995), she developed six categories to account for the range of parental involvement in education she had observed. These were: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community (1995). Epstein's inclusion of a wide range of sample practices into her framework helps to reinforce Fan and Chen's (2001) argument that parental involvement should be viewed as "multifaceted in nature" rather than "uni dimensional" (p.3). Epstein's model can help us start to understand some of the inconsistencies in the parental involvement literature. She herself notes that there is a "widespread misperception that any practice that involves families will raise children's achievement test scores" (1995, p.707). For instance better communication between schools and parents may result in students making more informed choices about course selection and parents volunteering at school may improve the parents' specific skills and experience (1995). While both of these would be positive outcomes from parental involvement neither could be expected to specifically result in a higher test score for a student. This reinforces both the limitations of grades as the measure of success for parental involvement and the need for specificity about the *type* of interaction when evaluating any involvement.

Following Epstein's early work Finn (1998) explored the idea of 'at home' engagement as separate from 'at school' engagement, declaring that they were "not equally important in children's learning" (p.20). He reported "little or no relationship" (p.23) between 'at school' engagement and student achievement but found active organisation, helping with homework, and discussing school matters consistently aided performance. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) agreed stating that "[o]f the many forms of parental involvement, it is the 'at-home' relationships and modelling of aspirations which play the major part in impact on school outcomes" (p86).

More recently Lueder (2011), focussing on creating partnerships with hard-to-reach parents, has developed his 'Self Renewing Partnership Model' which draws on Epstein's work and which he describes as a way to implement her framework. Whereas Epstein's model focuses on activities from a schools perspective, Lueder approached this issue from the parents' perspective. The Lueder model incorporates eight different 'Parent Partner Roles' which provide a way of classifying different types of parental involvement in education: nurturer, communicator, teacher, supporter, learner, advisor, advocator and collaborator. Lueder sees these roles as "hierarchical and progressive" shifting from more instinctive with 'nurturing' and 'communicating' to more "specialised" in 'advocating' and 'collaborating' (p.11). He argues that these roles can be learnt and developed through the four alliterative stages of school and parents connecting, communicating, coordinating and coaching. These stages are discussed in more detail below.

These three different ways of categorising parental involvement are synthesised in Figure 2. Again, it is not the purpose of this literature review to decide which frame is 'best'. All frames have their own advantages and disadvantages (Lunenburg & Irby, 2002). As can

be seen in Figure 2, aligning these three different models has two important purposes. Collectively they demonstrate the need for specificity when discussing parental involvement and offer ways to approach doing this. It is clearly important to discriminate between different types of parental involvement in order to assess their efficacy. These frames also demonstrate that this first aspect of parental involvement, the 'what', is wide-ranging and complex.

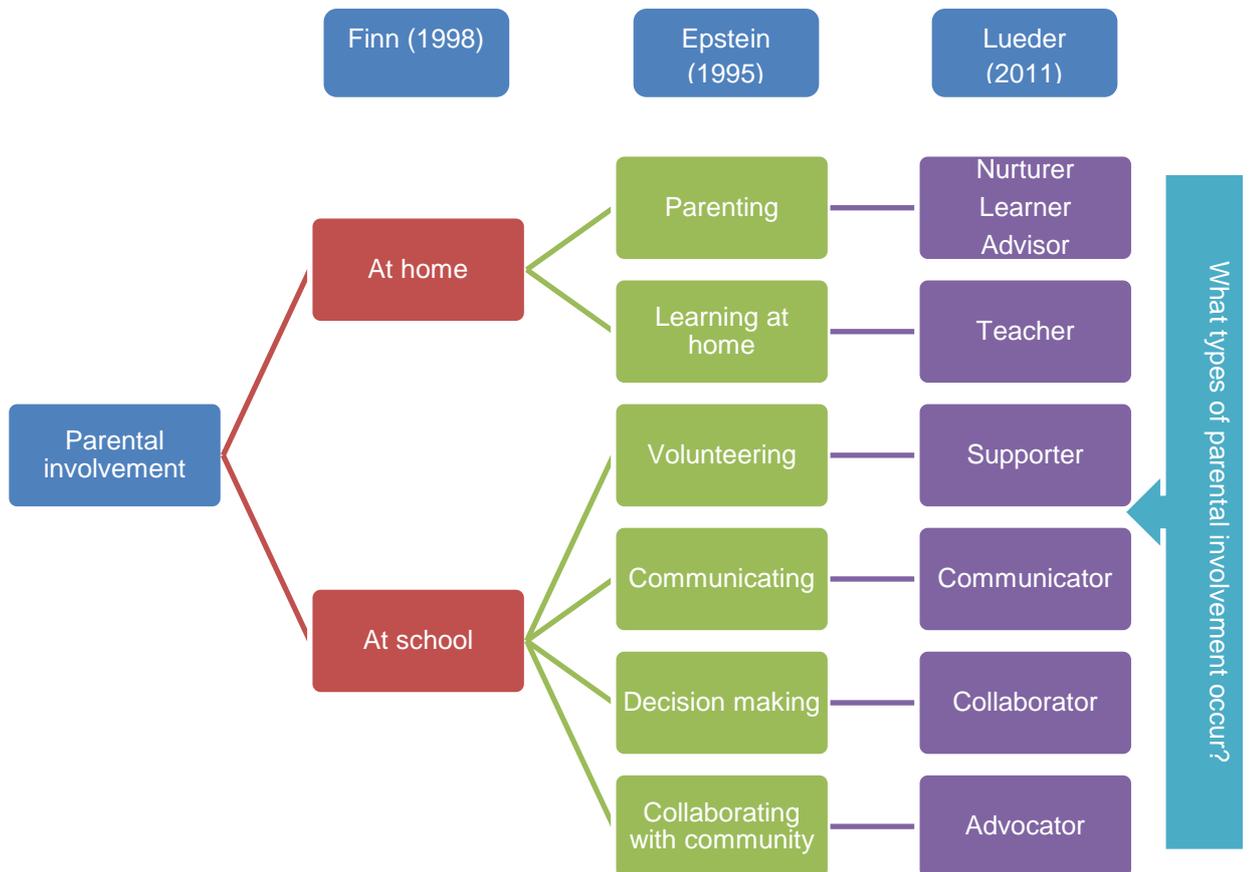


Figure 2. Alignment of parental involvement typographies

The second important factor, the process of involvement, has also attracted a number of theories which detail important components. Rather than the activity based typology of Epstein, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) focus more on understanding parents' motivations, the nature of parents' involvement and considering why this might be successful. In this model (Figure 3, p.15) the factors which lead to a parent's decision to be involved (e.g. a parent's construction of the parental role) lead to their choice of the form of involvement (e.g. influenced by employment constraints), selection of a mechanism (e.g. modelling), and after mediating variables are taken into account (e.g. fit between parent' actions and school expectations) there is some outcome for the student. It is useful to have a framework which can account for motivations as well as actions and this framework

reminds us that any actions parents take to be involved will be part of a more complex process influenced by many factors in their lives. These differences will mean that the same input (or type of involvement) will manifest differently for different families as *why* they engage in the process of involvement will vary.

In looking to empirically test this theory, Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007) also found that psychological factors needed to be taken into account. This leads to the third factor of *how* a parent uses a strategy. This study reports that the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler theoretical model for exploring parental involvement allows an understanding of the “relative contributions of three major psychological constructs (parents’ motivational beliefs, perceptions of invitations to involvement from others, and perceived life context)” (p.540) to be used in predicting the decisions parents make around their involvement with their children’s education. This psychological approach is important when considering the variation in research results relating to parental involvement. If parents are bringing different motivations, beliefs, and attitudes about their role, their child and their child’s education to their involvement then a variation in behaviours and, importantly, outcomes, can be anticipated. This consideration of parental motivations and understandings allows for one type of parental involvement to be adjudged successful in some circumstances but unsuccessful in others. The observed positive or negative effects of a parental involvement activity may sometimes have more to do with the complexities of the parent than the activity itself.

Further contributions to parental involvement also explore how parenting styles or personality might impact upon parental involvement. Pomerantz et al. (2007) consider how home-based involvement can be divided into ‘skill development’ and ‘motivational development’ (p.376). Skill development incorporates providing resources to improve cognitive (e.g. reading and listening) and metacognitive (e.g. planning and monitoring) skills. Motivational development provides resources which encourage and model academic engagement. They explain that both of these types of involvement can be present at once and that one can lead to another: improving skills can lead to improved motivation and motivation can lead to the development of skills. While this further model can show another way of considering and categorising parental involvement the real significance in the work of Pomerantz et al. is drawing on this model to explore not just *what* parents are doing but *how* they are doing it. This means taking account of the methods and style parents bring to their involvement rather than just the type of activities and extent of their involvement. Turning to theories of parenting they suggest four binaries reflecting ‘qualities of style’ with which to consider the nature of parents’ involvement (p.381). These binaries demonstrate the extent of the complexity of this third factor in parental involvement and as such it is worth considering each in turn. While each of the four is referenced in terms of empirical studies in the field of parenting research, in terms of parental involvement in educational settings several aspects of this framework remain theoretical.

The first is 'Controlling versus Autonomy-Supportive Involvement' which tries to describe the extent to which parents make decisions for children as opposed to supporting children to make their own. It is a binary in which 'control', defined as "...the exertion of pressure by parents to channel children towards particular outcomes... by regulating children through such methods as commands, directives or love withdrawal" (p.381) is contrasted with 'autonomy support' which allows "...children to explore their own environment, initiate their own behaviour, and take an active role in solving their own problems" (p.381). Drawing on studies which suggest an autonomy-supportive parenting style increases children's ability to independently complete school tasks, they argue that an autonomy-supportive environment can improve skills by giving children the opportunity to solve challenges and improve motivation by making children feel that they have a sense of agency. It is the difference between a parent asking a child what they need to put in their bag for their school day and packing the bag for them.

'Process versus Person-Focused Involvement' draws on the work of Dweck and Lennon (2001) to highlight whether parents are focusing on the processes a child is engaged in or on the child's innate ability. These differences are characterised by Pomerantz et al. as a 'process' approach which is based on "the importance and pleasure of effort and learning" (p.384) and 'person' approach which is focussed on intelligence and outcomes. They cite a number of studies, such as those by Dweck and Lennon, to support the assertion that an approach which focusses on process is more likely to encourage persevering and problem solving than an approach that sees ease or difficulty simply reflecting the innate ability of the student. In this way a 'process' approach can be used by a parent at home to help build both skill and motivation.

Largely derived from studies of parents working alongside their children in a school situation, the third area identified is 'Involvement Characterized by Positive Versus Negative Affect'. This addresses the emotional orientation that parents bring to their interactions when involving themselves with their children's schoolwork. This emotional approach can be positive: "enjoyable, loving, and supportive" (p.385). However 'negative affect' can occur because children themselves are having a negative educational experience or because parents are suffering under the pressure of competing responsibilities. This negative affect can express itself as parents becoming "irritated and annoyed or even hostile and critical" (p.386). A 'positive-affect' parental approach is more likely to be conducive to the development of both skills and motivation. Pomerantz et al. argue that "by keeping their involvement enjoyable and loving parents may convey to children that although schoolwork can be frustrating, it is an enjoyable endeavour..." (p.386). Whereas a 'negative-affect' approach can give the impression that schoolwork is not enjoyable. There is a clear logic to this reasoning but at this point it appears there is a limited body of evidence to support it.

The final binary they identify is 'Involvement Characterised by Positive Versus Negative Beliefs About Children's Potential'. Where parents perceive their child's potential positively they can improve achievement through skill and motivational development. With a positive perception parents are more likely to become "involved in a way that challenges children...providing advanced explanations, choosing difficult tasks, providing assistance only when the work is hard..." (p.387). When there is a negative perception of the child's potential the parental involvement "may occur at a lower level that provides only the basics in terms of skill development" (p.387). Pomerantz et al. conclude that while getting parents involved is important for raising achievement *how* parent are involved is also important. They suggest that an understanding of how these different characteristics of parental involvement can affect the skill development and motivation of students is important for understanding the inconsistent conclusions drawn from the research in this area.

While the suitability of these particular measures, both in terms of providing a comprehensive account of the nature of parents' involvement and as a way to measure involvement, are open to debate, they nevertheless show that parental involvement in a child's education is enormously complex. Though these pairings may well be better expressed as continuums, their contribution to our understanding of parental involvement is substantial. There are, of course, other possibilities for configuring the process of involvement and the factors which influence how parents are involved. Again, it is not the purpose of this literature review to determine that one is better than another. The models outlined here serve the purpose of demonstrating how multifaceted parental involvement is (see Figure 3) (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001). Whatever models for the process of involvement or effects of different types of parenting were used they would provide a similar result in this regard. When we take this idea that *how* parents are involved is multifaceted, and add Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's notions of parental motivation and *why* parents involve themselves, and then overlay the contributions on *what* types of involvement there are, it becomes clear that the idea of parental involvement in improving outcomes for students is not just a complex, but an extremely complicated, nexus of discourses.

Despite the complicated factors pertaining to parental involvement and its measurement and the paucity of useful empirical evidence, there are still themes which emerge to inform and guide a process for approaching parental involvement which can negotiate the disparities and help provide positive outcomes. These are the use of bespoke interventions, the requirement for a collaborative approach and the need for it to be sustained.

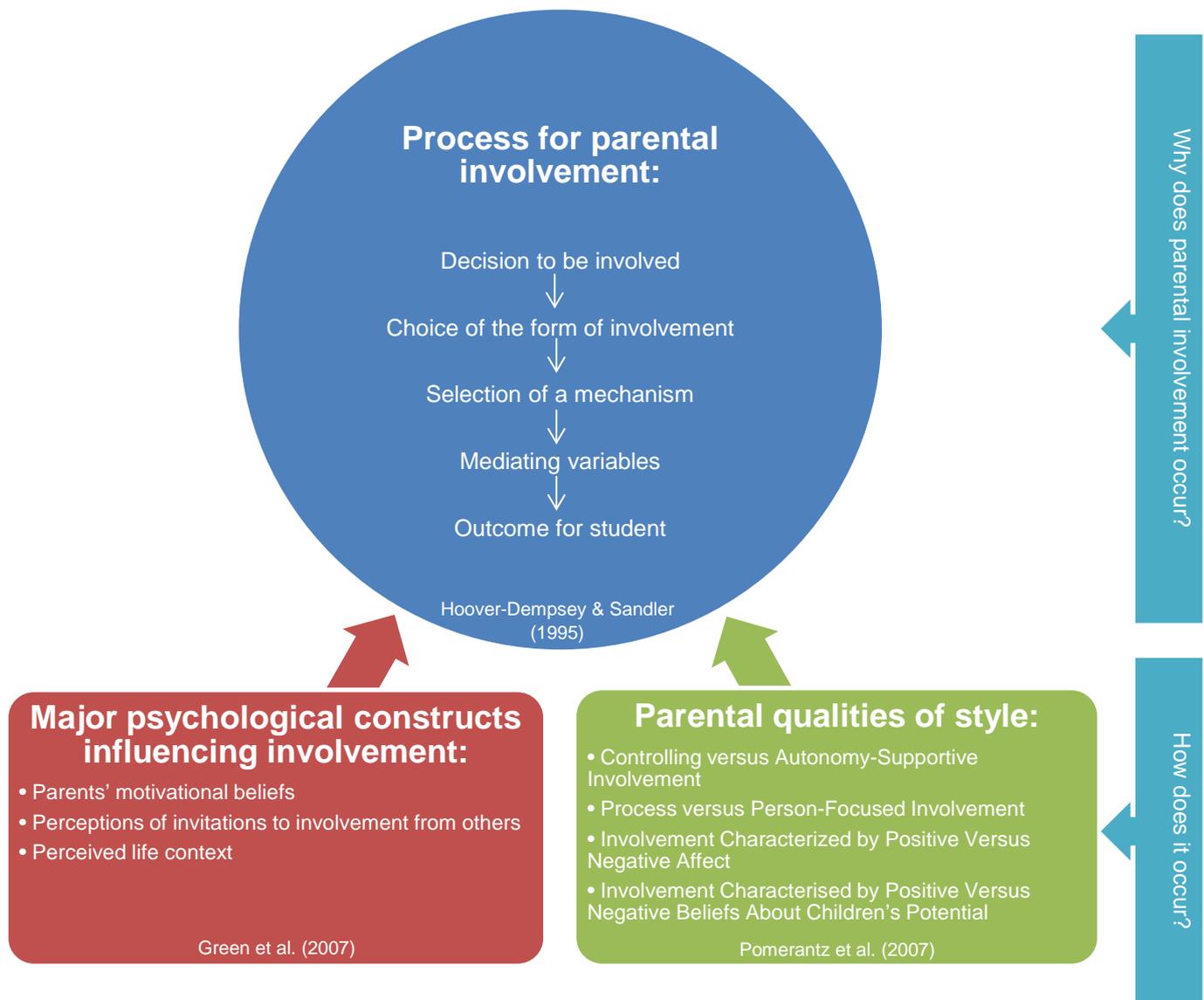


Figure 3. Synthesis of different models of parental involvement processes

*The importance of bespoke interventions*

Given the great complexity it is perhaps not surprising that interventions which try to have all parents carry out the same type of activity will often meet with mixed results. There is little evidence of research on how this complexity and diversity could become part of a solution to promoting better parental involvement rather than something to be battled with. Stelmack (2005) has promoted the idea of interventions being responsive to communities. She sees the explicit intervention approach of providing concrete strategies to parents as beneficial but cautions that schools need to “gauge their contexts” (p.4) to make sure their intervention is relevant. Epstein (1995) remarks on this that “[g]ood programs will look different in each site, as individual schools tailor their practices to meet the needs and interests, time and talents, ages and grade levels of students and their families” (p.704).

Lueder (2011) also sees the need to establish family characteristics before selecting strategies. These ideas need to be tested. It would seem that there is a gap in what we know about parental involvement in this respect. If interventions were designed to take into account the specific circumstances of a family it may be possible to not only improve outcomes from parental involvement but to more usefully evaluate the success of such interventions. Despite some of the contradictory results from the parental involvement literature, when consideration is given to the complexity generated by the combination of the wide range of parent involvement practices with the wide range of attitudes and beliefs parents can bring to these different practices, it is clear that further research which specifically addresses this complexity is merited.

#### *The importance of collaboration*

It is clear that to be able to factor in the specific circumstances of a family a high level of collaboration would be needed (Cox, 2005). A problem with some of the conclusions drawn by Domina (2005) is that they look at parental involvement that was already happening and assess the academic improvements for those children. This does not directly measure the outcomes from interventions to raise the level or change the type of parental involvement. What would also be useful to know is whether engaging parents who currently do not participate in those activities would make a difference. This would not be possible without a school reaching out in some way to those families.

To understand that process, Lueder (2011) has developed the framework mentioned above with four stages for building relationships between schools and families (Figure 4). The first of these stages, 'connecting' addresses ways to begin approaching families, 'communicating' is about developing two-way dialogue, 'coordinating' is ensuring families have the resources they need and 'coaching' addresses increasing families' capacity to carry out their 'parent partner roles' (p.5). Lueder, like Epstein (1995) and Stelmack (2005), acknowledges the importance of recognising a family's specific needs rather than trying to instigate a programme to cover all eight parent partner roles and all four stages. What appeals about this process is that it can incorporate all the different possibilities which are thrown up by parental involvement into a framework which can be used to assess needs and provide potential solutions. While Lueder is interested in the practical application of these ideas as a theoretical approach it again serves to highlight the complexity of parental involvement and the complexity of the research findings. The 'connecting' stage may have little impact on student academic progress compared to the 'coaching', yet it is an essential stage in trying to develop a partnership that could improve academic progress (Graham-Clay, 2005). Viewing the development of successful parental involvement as a sequential process which has greater student benefits the further it is shifted from simple communication to building capacity provides several important insights. Firstly, it shows there is a clear place for a number of simple strategies such as home/school communication without the need to try and ascribe improved test scores to demonstrate

their worth. Secondly, it makes clear that these simple strategies are not enough on their own – the bigger goal of developing families’ capacity to help improve learning needs to be acknowledged. Finally this highlights the importance of recognising the individual situations of families in relation to the process and responding to individual needs – not all will need a home visit, not all will be ready to run a parenting workshop. Lueder makes a compelling case but this is a theory which needs to be tested to establish whether it can deliver the benefits it proposes.



*Figure 4.* Lueder's parental involvement strategy (2011)

The need to move parental involvement interactions from lower to higher level activities is consistent with Stelmack's (2005) observations and is reinforced by her conclusion that "programs that provide resources and assistance that parents may use with their children at home are more likely to have an effect on students' academic progress" (p.3). This is in comparison with programmes which seek to involve parents in governance structures or school activities. This reinforces the need for a collaborative approach because schools would need to work closely with parents to know what the right programmes and resources were. Stelmack acknowledges that while parental involvement is generally accepted by practitioners to be an a priori good, "how to meaningfully engage parents... is less well understood" (p.1).

As part of this schools and parents need to negotiate their own understanding of 'meaningful parental involvement' (Stelmack, 2005). She suggests that every year schools need to "provide parents with the opportunity to learn how to support, encourage and help their student at home" (p.5). This is supported by Williams (2005) who notes that "[m]any

parent programs fall short because they are social, rather than educational...” (p.4). As we have seen these ‘social’ programmes may be a good first step for parental involvement but need to be developed further if they are to lead to improved outcomes for students. While interventions to improve parental involvement may be complex, Stelmack believes it is possible for schools to position themselves to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes for students’ academic achievement.

The important role for schools in initiating interventions to improve the quantity and quality of parental involvement is highlighted by Lewis, Kim and Bey (2011). They advocate a shift from seeing the “deficiencies of parents to increasing parental involvement through school leadership” (p.221). Their study of the practices of two teachers who were involved in a programme to increase parent involvement found that teachers and schools can “influence [the parents’] level of involvement” (p.221) and this can happen because the programme makes the school more welcoming to parents. They also found, based on the experience of parents in the two cases studies, that specific invitations to be involved from teachers was a much more accurate indicator of parents’ involvement than general school invitations: “parents are more involved at home when they perceive teachers’ efforts to reach out to them” (p.221). This would indicate that some parents are not involved with schools because they have not been approached in a way that encourages them to participate. As a way to try and reach parents who have limited involvement with schools, this further suggests that exploring ways to collaborate with parents more in the education of their children is a worthwhile undertaking for schools.

#### *The importance of sustained support*

Parental roles do not remain static and the needs of children change over time. As students move through adolescence the form that parental involvement takes may need to change. Along with this, many attempts to change parental involvement in education will require on-going support rather than a one-off intervention if they are to be successful (Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004). Though much of the research into parental involvement is based on primary level schools, there are some notable observations of secondary level parental involvement which reflect this need for sustained involvement. It is generally accepted that parental involvement declines as students get older (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Domina, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Finn, 1998; Simon, 2001; Stelmack, 2005) but as with so many aspects of parental involvement, empirical evidence is thin. Finn (1998) attributes this decline to peers becoming a bigger influence though he does not provide data to support this. There could be other explanations which remain unexplored. For instance, as the levels of subject specific literacy and prior knowledge needed to be successful increase, parents may become more alienated and less confident in their ability to be involved in helping with schoolwork. In line with Finn’s supposition the adolescent phase typically involves a shift away from a reliance on parents to more independent modes and this may be reflected in the decline in parental involvement. The reasons for

the decline in involvement may well warrant further research to test these different assumptions. Despite this observed reduction in parental involvement, Epstein (1995) maintains that “[p]artnerships tend to decline across the grades, *unless* schools and teachers work to develop and implement appropriate practices of partnership at each grade level” (p.703 italics in original). Henderson and Berla (1994) note in their introduction that “high school graduates with parents who were “highly involved” during the high school years were much more likely to complete a 4-year college education” (p.6) and Catsambis (2001) found that “[i]ndicators of parents’ efforts to enhance students’ learning opportunities ([Epstein’s] Type 4 involvement) show quite significant associations with students’ course credits” (p.160). Furthermore she observed that “[d]uring high school, the types of parental involvement that are most important for teens’ academic success are not those geared towards behavioral supervision, but rather they are those geared towards advising or guiding teens’ academic decisions” (p.168). Overall she concludes that “[t]he results support the contention that maintaining high levels of parental involvement in students’ education from the middle grades to the last year of high school does ‘make a difference’” (p.170). Desforges and Abouchaar’s (2003) research concurs with this idea that parental involvement changes but remains important: “[p]arental involvement continues to have a significant effect through the age range although the impact for older children becomes more evident in staying on rates and educational aspirations than as measured achievement” (p.86). As already noted, Epstein (2005) goes further and also attributes higher academic achievement to successful parental involvement through high school. All of these observations suggest that while the nature of the partnerships between schools, parents and students may be changing during the secondary school years, there is still an important role for parents to play in supporting their children at home and an important, on-going role for schools to play in supporting parents to do this effectively.

### *Summary*

Decisive interpretations in the field of parental involvement literature are problematic. The difficulties of measuring the impact of parental involvement on student outcomes means that much of the work is more theoretically, than empirically, based. Where there are empirical studies these often consider a wide range of disparate activities with a lack of theoretical focus to allow for the differences (Fan & Chen, 2001). On the other hand there are a number of theoretical approaches suggested which do not necessarily have a robust body evidence at this stage to support them. By overlaying some of these theories we can start to make sense of some of the disparities and focus more purposefully on particular aspects of parental involvement in order to test their usefulness. This may help to move past some of the pitfalls facing previous studies.

## **Part 2: Why reading?**

Reading literacy is a central skill not just for success and progress in the language arts but also in other curriculum areas through the cognitive development promoted by reading. When considering ways to promote reading it would be useful to have a typology for doing so. The framework proposed here is to consider strategies to promote reading as falling into the following categories: access, engagement and modelling. The use of this framework helps to understand how different strategies can promote personal reading and subsequently to identify which strategies a child might benefit from.

### *The importance of reading engagement*

Reading literacy is widely acknowledged as critical for success in education (Kirsch et al., 2003; PISA, 2013) and as a pre-requisite for many post-secondary school educational and vocational pathways (PISA, 2013). Reading literacy is seen as a powerful skill and knowledge base which can both open up opportunities for those who become proficient in it and close down opportunities for those who do not. In this way reading can become an instrument of social mobility (PISA, 2013; Sullivan & Brown, 2013). The widely held belief that developing reading literacy is an essential role for an education system is reflected in the high priority measures of reading and reading progress are given in international comparisons such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). It is also reflected in policy developments in Aotearoa New Zealand such as the introduction of National Standards and overseas in programmes like the United States' 'No Child Left Behind' reforms and more recently in aspects of 'The Race to the Top'.

This critical nature of reading literacy has led to a number of investigations into the variables which can influence it. A number of these studies have found reading engagement to have a strong correlation with achievement in reading. PISA introduced a new framework for assessing reading literacy in 2000 which gathered data not just from testing reading proficiency but also surveying student reading habits. While the survey of reading habits data relies on the self-reporting of students, the high correlation in patterns found between countries suggests that these data are reliable enough to contribute to the profile of student success in reading literacy. As such it is important to note that these "results show unequivocally that improvement in reading literacy performance relies not just on improving student cognitive skills but also on increasing their engagement in reading" (Kirsch et al., 2003). More recently PISA data have shown that a student's reading engagement (defined as attitudes, interests and practices) had a stronger relationship to proficiency than socio-economic status (PISA, 2013). Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) found that reading engagement was second only to previous achievement in accounting for variance in achievement. In fact they note that "[a]s students become engaged readers, they provide themselves with self-generated learning opportunities that are equivalent to

several years of education” (p.404). While it may seem obvious that students more engaged with reading will tend to do better in assessments of reading literacy, these studies make clear that understanding and increasing student engagement in reading could reasonably be expected to improve students’ proficiency in this important area. Furthermore, as well as exploring ways to help specifically develop reading skills, it would be prudent to consider the question of how to increase reading engagement.

#### *The importance of recreational reading*

While a link between reading engagement and proficiency may seem fairly intuitive, what may be less obvious is the role *recreational* reading can play in student success. Personal reading has been found to have a strong correlation with success at school (Chamberlin, 2013; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008; Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker, 2012; PISA, 2013; Sullivan & Brown, 2013; Wylie, Hodgen, Hipkins, & Vaughan, 2008). This is not limited to the most likely areas such as comprehension, vocabulary and spelling but is also linked to other curriculum areas (Moje et al., 2008; Mullis et al., 2012; Sullivan & Brown, 2013). Longitudinal studies are particularly instructive here as reading gains can take a long time to become evident (Allington et al., 2010). In drawing on longitudinal data from the 1970 British Cohort Study, Sullivan and Brown (2013) have found that reading for pleasure has a “powerful influence on cognitive development” (p.2). After controlling for socioeconomic status (SES) and parents’ reading behaviour, they found reading regularly for pleasure between the ages of 10 and 16 led to an advantage of 9.9 percentage points in maths. Claiming to be the first study to consider reading and cognitive development over time, it is the influence of the former over the later which they see as the explanation for why reading promotes success beyond language related curriculum areas. When previous test scores going back to age five are standardised, it shows “that the positive link between leisure reading and cognitive outcomes is not purely due to more able children being more likely to read a lot, but that reading is actually linked to increased cognitive progress over time” (p.37). This is supported in the Aotearoa New Zealand secondary context by a more recent longitudinal study funded by the Ministry of Education. The Competent Learners on the Edge of Adulthood report, based on data collected from the cohort at 16 years old, reveals that enjoyment of reading is an indicator that a young person is doing well at school (Wylie et al., 2008). Enjoyment of reading was also identified as an indicator of whether a student would remain at school. More specifically they found students who enjoyed reading between 8 and 14 years old had more success in NCEA than those who did not. These findings suggest that the cognitive gains recreational reading can bring for students will allow them to access the literacy advantages that follow this engagement as well as improving their engagement and performance in a wider range of academic school settings. It is of particular note that the effects of recreational reading have been shown in these studies to continue to be important into adolescence.

As promising as these results are it is important to note that there is not a large body of research which specifically documents the recreational reading habits of adolescents. As the work of Moje (2002) attests, little is known in many cases of the personal reading lives of secondary students. In considering the wide range of texts which students in a low SES area of a large urban American city accessed and read (as determined on student surveys and interviews) Moje, Overby, Tysvaer and Morris (2008) found that there were correlations between the amount of time spent reading for pleasure and English grades, science grades and cumulative grade point average (GPA). Despite the wide range of texts being read they did conclude that only reading novels regularly outside of school could be shown to have a positive impact on achievement as measured by school grades. This inconsistency with other findings can be explained in two ways. Firstly, their survey of students' reading gives a very accurate 'snapshot' of reading practices at a particular point in time but unlike the longitudinal studies it is difficult to draw conclusions about how those reading practices will affect achievement over time. Secondly, as Moje et al. (2008) point out, for some students the reading may happen too infrequently to be beneficial to school achievement. They raise an important question as to whether some texts are too different from texts found in schools to help student achievement but the longitudinal data (Chamberlin, 2013; Mullis et al., 2012; Sullivan & Brown, 2013) would suggest that even reading texts with little resemblance to school texts could promote cognitive development in a way that would, ultimately, have a positive effect on student achievement.

A connection between reading frequency, fluency and reading progress, often referred to as reading 'mileage', has often been posited (Allington et al., 2010; Kim & White, 2008; Twist, Schagen, & Hodgson, 2007). This has been seen in experimental data (Kim & White, 2008; Kuhn, 2005; Kuhn et al., 2006) as well as correlational data (Allington et al., 2010; Kim, 2004). While there is a reliable connection between reading mileage and reading attainment there is often a lack of clear evidence of causality (Sullivan & Brown, 2013). It is the use of longitudinal data that enables a directional correlation to be established. Again, it may appear obvious that reading more improves reading, however it is important to know whether interventions to promote reading frequency are likely to also promote reading development.

#### *Home factors that support recreational reading*

Given that recreational reading, through reading mileage and engagement, can increase student achievement, it is important to consider the conditions which promote or restrict this type of activity. Three cycles of PIRLS testing over 20 years have found a continued strong positive association between reading achievement and 'home experiences that foster literacy learning' (Mullis et al., 2012). Home factors are crucial here as it is beyond the school gates that the sites of recreational reading will often be found. To understand these home factors which are attributed with successfully promoting an environment for personal reading and reading engagement we can frame this at-home reading support as having

three distinct components: access to reading resources, parental engagement with reading activities and parental disposition towards reading, including positive attitudes to, and modelling of, reading.

#### *Access*

The provision of a text-rich environment, through the use of libraries, the purchasing books and the provision of newspapers and magazines, has been linked strongly to student engagement in reading (Heyns, 1978; Jesson, McNaughton, & Kolose, 2014; Mullis et al., 2012). Access to texts, often measured by the number of books in a home, is a key commonality amongst many students who achieve well in measures of reading proficiency (Chamberlin, 2013; Kirsch et al., 2003; Mullis et al., 2012; Sullivan & Brown, 2013).

Conversely early school leavers in Aotearoa New Zealand are more likely to come from homes with fewer than 100 books (Wylie et al., 2008). There are a number of ways that students can access texts but if they, or their family, are unaware of these sources or not utilising them, it will lessen the range of reading material from which a student might find texts appropriate to their interests and reading level. This may, particularly over time, have a negative effect on their engagement in reading.

#### *Engagement*

The provision of a text-rich environment is a relatively passive support. When it comes to parental engagement with reading activities it is the active interaction between parent and child which supports personal reading. This can cover a range of activities including, but not limited to: reading to a child, asking questions about a text, encouraging the formulation of questions about a text, having the child summarise a text and re-reading for understanding (Chamberlin, 2013; Cook-Cottone, 2004; Janiak, 2003; Kim, 2009; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Sullivan & Brown, 2013; Wigfield et al., 2008). The 2010/11 PIRLS cycle found that 90% of parents of high-achieving students in Aotearoa New Zealand said that they read to their child while only 55% of parents of low-achieving students said they read to their child (Chamberlin, 2013). This differential of 35% was amongst the highest in the world (2013). As the average age of students in this testing regime was ten years old, it cannot be assumed that reading to a child will continue to have the same level of impact into adolescence. However, it does demonstrate a significant link between active parental engagement in reading and student achievement. These active forms of engagement are very important. As Jesson et al. (2014) report, when literacy practices, aligned to school practices, are supported in the home and community their continuation is predictive of effective learning from texts. It may be that alignment between home and school practices, and/or the support from family and community, are factors in Moje et al.'s (2008) finding of limited effective learning from personal reading for some of the students in their study.

### *Disposition*

The third important aspect which contributes to successfully promoting personal reading is the disposition or attitude towards reading exhibited by parents, families and communities. Data from the last PIRLS cycle (Mullis et al., 2012) highlight the importance of these attitudes. Using seven items to collect parents' attitudes to reading they determined that parents who agreed with four statements, registered 'agreed a little' for the other three and read daily for enjoyment were deemed to 'like reading'. Those who 'disagreed a little' with four statements and read monthly for enjoyment were categorised as 'do not like reading'. Parents in between these positions were placed in a 'somewhat like reading' category. When student achievement data was overlaid it revealed that the average for students who have parents who like reading was significantly higher than those whose parents do not like reading (535 as opposed to 487). In fact, when looking at the individual data from all 43 countries in the PIRLS 2010/2011 cycle, the children of parents who 'like reading' outperform those who 'somewhat like reading', who in turn out perform those who 'do not like reading' in each of the 43 participating countries. With such a clear pattern it is hard to ignore the case for parental disposition, as expressed by liking reading, being a reliable indicator of student engagement and performance.

In understanding why this link exists the PIRLS analysis suggests that the majority of children learn effective literary practices from the modelling as well as the direct engagement that occurs in the home (Mullis et al., 2012). This parental and family disposition is a powerful osmotic process: "[y]oung children who see adults and older children reading or using texts in different ways are learning to appreciate and use printed materials" (p.116). This supports the findings of Kloostermann, Notten, Tolsma and Kraaykamp (2011) in their longitudinal study of parental practices and student academic performance that if 'socialised' into reading students have an advantage over those who have not. Baker (2003) concurs suggesting that positive parental disposition is a "critical mechanism" (p.90) in promoting children's reading. Finally, the PIRLS report suggests that "[b]eyond modelling, parents or other caregivers can directly support reading development by expressing positive opinions about reading and literacy. Promoting reading as a valuable and meaningful activity can motivate children to read" (p.116).

In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, the Ministry report on the PIRLS data notes that while the pattern of higher-achieving students having parents/caregivers who like reading is followed here, Aotearoa New Zealand has biggest differential. The average reading score for those whose parents liked reading was 571 as opposed to an average of 509 for those whose parents did not like reading (Chamberlin, 2013). This is consistent with the 2004 findings of Martin, Mullis and Gonzalez (2004), who studied home environments which fostered literacy, in which they conclude parental attitudes to reading are a significant factor in the difference between high and low achieving students, including in Aotearoa New Zealand. Therefore, in considering the key factors which contribute to the promotion of

recreational reading, parental disposition towards reading, as evidenced by modelling reading and expressing positive values and beliefs about reading is crucial.

#### *The contribution of Summer Learning Effect research*

Further to these strong indicators of how access, engagement and modelling can function to promote personal reading and its attendant benefits, the conclusions which can be drawn from research into Summer Learning Effect (SLE) provide compelling evidence for the importance of at-home reading practices. Summer Learning Effect is a well-documented phenomenon that refers to the gains or losses in reading level students experience over the summer holidays when they are not at school (Allington et al., 2010; Heyns, 1978). In early research into SLE Heyns (1978) established that the level of change over summer in a student's reading, as measured on standardised tests, could be indicated by the volume of reading they did over this time: '[a]ccording to her calculations, for every four books read over summer one month's achievement gain occurred' (Jesson et al., 2014, p.46). The results make a compelling case for the advantages of reading at home:

[She]found that reading activity was the only factor that was consistently correlated to reading gains during the summer. She gathered a variety of data on children's experiences during the summer vacation period but found that the number of books read, the amount of daily leisure reading, and the frequency of library use explained a larger proportion of the variation on a standardized test of word recognition than other recreational and enrichment summer activities. (Allington et al., 2010, p.414)

More recently interventions to address SLE have continued to support these findings. Allington et.al (2010) found that when 9 to 14 year olds from "high-poverty elementary schools" (p.416) were given the opportunity to self-select books to take home over three summers the SLE was limited by comparison with the control group (effect overall size .14 and .21 for economically disadvantaged students). This is a particularly interesting study as the length of the intervention allows us to see that the reading gains during these holiday periods were not only sustained beyond the conclusion of each summer intervention but were compounded over time.

The substantial and measurable progress that summer reading can have is very instructive for understanding the powerful role that parents might play in supporting reading. In relation to SLE one idea which has been posited is that of the 'faucet theory': the idea that when school is in the 'tap' is on and all students have access to the learning but when it is out, the tap is off and they are reliant on the social, cultural and economic resources of their families (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2001). In other words there is a level playing field during the school year and family differentials only come into play over the summer as families try to make up for the 'tap' being off. However this is a very problematic

representation of the research evidence into SLE. If the school effects on reading are viewed as an independent variable the SLE research allows us measure the dependent variable of the home effects on reading. Viewed from this perspective the SLE literature is not only telling us the effect of the home environment on reading over summer but its effect as a constant in a child's life all year round. By seeing school as equalising the level of support students have, the 'faucet' theory suggests that home environment is not a factor in student progress in reading during the academic year. There is, however, no evidence that positive benefits from reading support measured during the summer would not continue during school time. Rather than home and school effects on reading being an 'either/or', during the academic year they are both present. The home effects revealed by SLE data allow us to assess how influential a role they might play all year round.

### *Social advantages of reading*

While many of the studies considered here use student grades and test results to explore links between reading and positive student outcomes, it should also be acknowledged that there may be advantages from reading which these measures do not recognise: reading may well have benefits beyond the academic. The opportunities afforded by academic success are significant but adolescents have more than just an academic life. They have social, familial, psychological and cultural lives which can also be supported by reading. In their in-depth look at the reading and writing practices of adolescents Moje et al. (2008) determined that these practices had social and psychological benefits for young people. The researchers list "self-expression... work[ing] through problems... seek[ing] information or models to help live in their homes, schools and communities" as some of the drivers for adolescent literacy practices (p.131). In their analysis they demonstrate that reading is situated in social networks and can also generate social capital:

The qualitative data we present demonstrate that youth read and write for social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual purposes. Their reading and writing practices foster communication, relationships, and self-expression among peers and family members; support their economic and psychological health; and allow them to construct subjectivities and enact identities that offer them power in their everyday lives (p.149)

These other advantages to adolescents from engaging in personal reading cannot be overstated. Academic results provide readily accessible data which allow progress, between individuals or groups, over time to be easily compared and monitored. The relative paucity of research aimed at understanding the role of youth literacies (Moje, 2002) may have led to the social benefits of personal reading being overshadowed by the academic but it is important to keep in mind all the possible benefits of personal reading to adolescents.

### *Barriers to reading*

Understanding the advantages to adolescents of personal reading is important, as is knowledge of the roles access, engagement and modelling play in the promotion of personal reading. At this juncture it is worth considering how this knowledge of supporting reading might help address some of the barriers to adolescent personal reading. Trying to avoid or mitigate these barriers is important for any intervention which seeks to promote personal reading. A decline in reading as students reach high school has often been observed (Guthrie, Alao, & Rinehart, 1997; Sullivan & Brown, 2013). Often this is not due to a lack of ability but a lack of desire to read, something Alvermann (2003) refers to as 'aliteracy'. She interprets this as the result of a lack of engagement brought about by low self-efficacy. This problem is likely to become cyclic as students' lack of reading further undermines their identities as readers, lowering engagement even further and as Guthrie et al. (1997) note, eroding their sense of confidence.

The school based responses considered by both Alvermann and Guthrie involve trying to improve motivation for reading, often through access to a wider range of texts and text types than has traditionally been the case and through giving the reading more of a specific purpose (Alvermann, 2003; Guthrie, Lutz Klauda, & Ho, 2013; Wigfield et al., 2008). While they suggest how these might be offered in a classroom situation there is a strong association with the approaches suggested here for helping reading at home, particularly encouraging motivation through access to a diverse range of texts and the promotion of engagement through specific and explicit interactive strategies. Parents who endeavour to promote reading through providing access, engagement and offering a positive disposition to reading are therefore able to help support the best-practice strategies of teachers in trying to combat aliteracy.

### *The secondary context*

There is a plethora of research into parental involvement to support reading in the early year of a child's life (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Resetar, Noell, & Pellegrin, 2006; Sénéchal, 1998; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). There are numerous programmes available such as 'Pause, Prompt, Praise', 'HIPPI', 'Parents as First Teachers', 'Reading Together' and 'Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi' which aim to help parents support reading. These programmes are often focussed on a specific, prescribed set of strategies or exercises for parents to work through and therefore do not take into account the complexities for parental involvement outlined above but rather have a one-size-fits all approach. They are also all designed for early childhood or primary level stages and so are untried in a secondary context. While they all contain elements of promoting access, engagement and modelling a more holistic view of supporting reading is required, particularly to understand how the strategies used in these various programmes might work at secondary level.

### *How can parents and schools help this process?*

It is clear that there is a range of strategies that can help promote reading engagement and it is important to consider what role parents can play in developing their children's reading habits. Considering the strategies which have been shown to benefit students' engagement with reading is useful for building up a picture of a positive home-reading culture. The range of reading material available at home can be linked to reading progress (Jesson et al., 2014; Kim & Quinn, 2013; Mullis et al., 2012) as can library visits (Chamberlin, 2013; Heyns, 1978). Engaging children through active involvement such as encouragement (Moje, 2008; PISA, 2013), reading with children (Chamberlin, 2013; Sullivan & Brown, 2013), talking about texts with them (Kim, 2009) and giving specific support and guidance (Jesson et al., 2014) have been identified as beneficial. Displaying a positive attitude or disposition towards reading has also been found to have a significant impact on students' own attitudes (Chamberlin, 2013; Mullis et al., 2012).

Parents can play an important role in trying to ensure that these opportunities and strategies are available in the home but this may not always happen independent of some type of collaboration with a school. Parents can bring a strong knowledge of their child to the process of encouraging reading but may need further guidance to make the most of this knowledge. For instance parents are in a strong position, with their knowledge of their child's interests, to help them find texts that are likely to be engaging but they may not be fully cognisant of all the sources of texts available to choose from. For parents to be able to confidently and successfully employ the strategies noted here, they will need to have some knowledge of them and access to support to implement them. Jesson et al. (2014) suggest that '[c]ontinued engagement in school-like literacy practices supported by family and neighbourhood contexts' (p.46) is advantageous to making the most of reading opportunities at home. As they note, the provision of texts does not, on its own, ensure that effective learning will take place. While it is important to recognise and acknowledge that families will have their own literacy practices these may or may not align to those of their children's school. Indeed the results of the research conducted by Jesson et al. (2014) show that access to texts and forms of reading guidance can vary.

Schools could play a significant role in helping parents to develop their children's reading habits. A collaborative approach to improving reading would help to increase the synchronicity between home and school and increase the chances that for students moving from one setting to another will not be an unnecessary challenge (Robinson, 2011). Jesson et al. (2014) note that "increasing the complementarity of the activities between settings such as access to, guidance for, and engagement in high-interest texts appropriate for literacy development at school is predicted to contribute to the developmental potential of both settings" (pp.45-46). This could be expected to be particularly the case for young people transitioning into high school as they encounter significant shifts in instruction, school structures, and controls (Moje, 2008).

It is not enough for schools to expect that parents will be providing the access to texts, promotion of engagement and modelling that will support a positive home-reading culture and encourage beneficial reading habits. As the range of support parents offer can be varied, it is necessary for schools to provide specific support and guidance to parents as, in the case of SLE, this has been shown to make a qualitative difference in the effectiveness of the parental involvement (Jesson et al., 2014). Different families will have different resources and strengths, and different students will have different reading needs. To know what strategies are likely to improve reading habits in a given situation requires discussion between the parents and the school in order that they successfully identify home-based strategies which are likely to be successful in promoting personal reading.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research setting, participants, the overall research design and the intervention design. The measures and procedures for collecting data, and the subsequent analysis of the data, are then discussed. The central research question was: can schools empower parents to help develop their children's recreational reading habits? Exploring this question required three sub-questions. It was necessary to know what parents' beliefs and experiences of supporting their Year 9 children's recreational reading habits were in this particular research setting to determine if there was a need for an intervention and to inform what that intervention might look like. Answering this sub-question was phase one of the research. With this baseline data established, two further sub-questions were able to be explored: how can school interventions empower parents? And: how can reading habits be developed? This was phase two of the research. An overview of the research questions is provided in Figure 5.

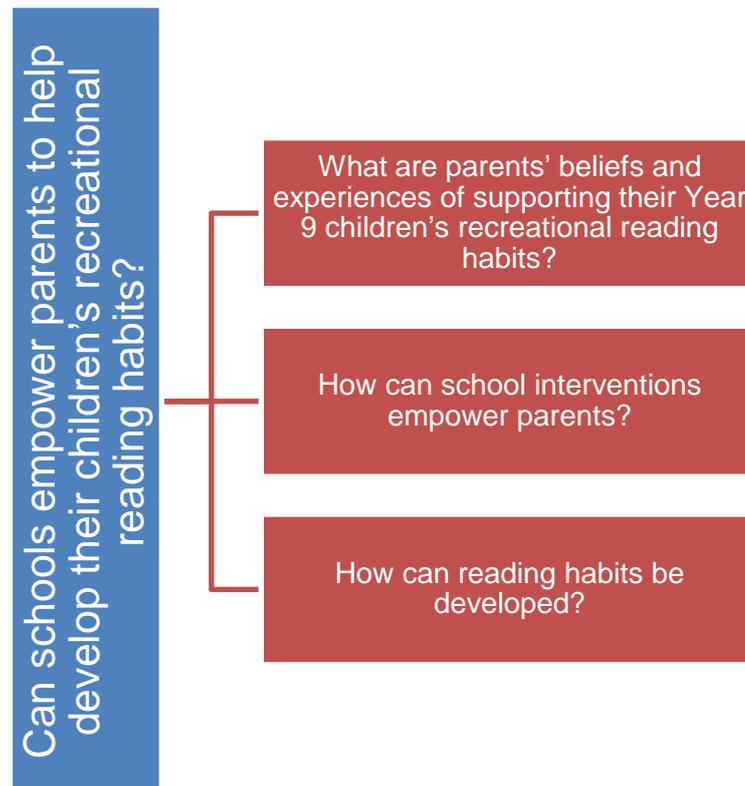


Figure 5. Overview of main research question and sub-questions

### Research Setting

The school was a decile seven, co-educational public secondary school located in a suburban area of Auckland. There were approximately 1200 students attending the school. This school was selected because the researcher was a teacher at the school and this

provided benefits to establishing collaborative relationships with members of the school community.

### *Ensuring an ethical approach*

While this close association also had the potential to create a conflict of interest this risk was mitigated in a number of ways. As the research was focussed on parents, rather than students or colleagues, any potential for this conflict to influence or affect participants was greatly mitigated. Furthermore, the research was designed in such a way as to make participation at all stages voluntary. The relationship of the researcher to the school was made clear in the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (Appendix A) for both research phases and if this disclosure presented a problem to potential participants they could just ignore the opportunity. As the project was aiming to work with around six – ten families from a cohort of 230 there was little risk that parents would feel pressured to be involved or need to provide any explanation for declining to be involved. Given the intended positive benefits for participants and that the research sought to test the researcher's own hypotheses on empowering parents and developing reading habits, rather than judge parents' efforts or students' progress, risk that this conflict could have negative consequences was further diminished. Indeed the researcher's familiarity with the setting and the school community can be viewed as advantageous in certain respects, particularly when it comes to ensuring cultural sensitivity, providing a safe environment for all participants and responding appropriately if any risks arose in the course of the research.

## **Participants**

### *Phase 1*

There were 54 participants who completed an anonymous profiling questionnaire to provide baseline data and help answer the first sub-question (what are parents' beliefs and experiences of supporting their Year 9 children's recreational reading habits?). Each was a parent or caregiver of a student in Year 9 at the participating school and attended a parent/teacher evening at the school. While parental support of reading at pre-secondary school levels is well researched, this research was specifically interested in improving the recreational reading habits of secondary school students. The Year 9 group was selected because the children were in a transition phase. As such, both the children and their parents would have a heightened awareness of changing routines, so this could be considered an opportune point at which to try and positively influence the habits of both children and parents. As was noted in Chapter 2, parental support in children's education is often observed to decline as children get older. Therefore an intervention aimed at changing parental involvement might be presumed to be more opportune earlier in the child's secondary schooling.

## *Phase 2*

Seven parents and one grandparent volunteered to be part of the intervention group. There were six mothers, one father and one grandmother in the group. Between them they were working with six boys and three girls in Year 9 (one participant was responsible for two children).

### **Research Design**

The central question the research was exploring was: can schools empower parents to help develop their children's recreational reading habits? There were two aspects to this question which needed to be addressed: how can school interventions empower parents? And: how can reading habits be developed? Answering these questions necessitated establishing some baseline data by asking what parents' beliefs and experiences of supporting their Year 9 children's recreational reading habits currently were in this setting before collaboratively designing an intervention.

The research was underpinned by the theory that a school can collaborate with parents and caregivers to design bespoke interventions to help achieve common goals. This is predicated on two assumptions: firstly, that parents and caregivers, while almost always having the desire to support learning, are not necessarily aware of strategies for doing this effectively. Secondly, that schools and teachers do not necessarily have much knowledge of what strategies are being used at home or of the constraints that individual families may have in providing support. It is these respective sets of expertise which, if brought together, could create a stronger alignment between these two important locations in a child's life and make the moving between the world of home and school "a walk into familiar rather than foreign territory" (Robinson, 2011).

There were two main phases to the research: the profiling questionnaire and the intervention. The overall research design draws on the principles of design-based research (DBR). The research design shares features of all eight dimensions of design-based research as outlined by Anderson and Shattuck (2012).

Firstly, by being based in a school and working with parents and caregivers of the school's students the research was situated in a real educational context. According to Anderson and Shattuck this "provides a sense of validity to the research and ensures that the results can be effectively used to assess, inform, and improve practice in at least this one (and likely other) contexts" (2012).

The research also focused on the design and testing of a significant intervention. While design-based research often refers to the collaboration between researchers and practitioners, in this instance it is the collaboration between the researcher and the parents

which meets this criterion. By using the profiling questionnaire the research began “with an accurate assessment of the local context; is informed by relevant literature, theory, and practice from other contexts; and is designed specifically to overcome some problem or create an improvement in local practice” (2012). The bespoke approach of aligning the intervention to individual family’s needs and constraints demonstrates a strong adherence to understanding, and improving, local practice.

In line with DBR methodology the research used mixed methods to collect and assess data. As discussed below, the use of questionnaires to garner quantitative data and multiple case studies to gather qualitative data was appropriate for making comparisons between the group who completed the profiling questionnaire and the intervention group (to answer the first research sub-question), as well as understanding for the intervention group changes between time points and how the use of strategies affected these changes (to answer the other research questions). The flexibility of this mixed methods approach allowed appropriate research tools to be used for each stage.

Referring to the need for a DBR approach to involve multiple iterations, Anderson and Shattuck comment that all design practice “usually evolves through the creation and testing of prototypes, iterative refinement, and continuous evolution of the design, as it is tested in authentic practice” (2012). In this instance a certain amount of evolution and iteration can be traced through the case studies. As participant involvement in the design of their own intervention is central to the theory being tested, it is possible to see how their use of strategies was shaped over time by their experiences. While this is certainly the testing of the design in authentic practice, in the wider sense this research fails to reflect this aspect of DBR because it is itself the prototype. However, further testing in the future may well see investigations into this type of intervention start to reflect this aspect of design-based methodology.

A further important factor for DBR is that it involves a collaborative partnership between researchers and practitioners. In this instance the practitioners are the parents and grandparent who were involved in the intervention rather than teachers. This reflects that the site of research is actually in homes rather than classrooms. Anderson and Shattuck emphasise the importance of the expertise that researchers and practitioners each bring to a collaborative research process. This holds true in this research: the researcher still provides expertise in the issues under investigation and the parents and caregivers provided expert knowledge on the adolescent, family setting and the home resources available for the project. Having a unique plan for each family demonstrates the importance of bringing these sets of expertise together in a collaborative partnership.

This approach to designing a bespoke intervention for each participant also reflects the need for DBR to “evolve from and lead to the development of practical design principles, patterns, and/or grounded theorizing” (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). The refinement of the

intervention by participants and the on-going access to the researcher and other participants throughout the intervention period to get new ideas to try means that the design principles can, and do, change frequently. Not having a single, prescriptive set of strategies aligns with this aspect of DBR because the research is “not designed to create decontextualized principles or grand theories that function with equal effect in all contexts. Rather, design principles reflect the conditions in which they operate” (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). Again, it is this acknowledgement of the conditions in which the participants are operating which underpins the theory of intervention. From this approach it becomes possible to understand better both the intervention and research setting because “[t]hese tools and conceptual models function to help us understand and adjust both the context and the intervention so as to maximize learning” (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012).

This research was aimed at testing the two theoretical frames (including the access, engagement and modelling framework for improving reading habits) as well as trying to help participants in a very practical sense and as such it is situated much more closely to DBR than action research because “the design is conceived not just to meet local needs, but to advance a theoretical agenda, to uncover, explore, and confirm theoretical relationships” (Barab & Squire, 2004). As well as this theoretical impulse, this research is intended to have a practical effect on learning. That is, to change or develop children’s recreational reading habits and thereby, over time, allow them to access the educational benefits the longitudinal studies discussed in Chapter 2 identify. It is this potential for impact in an authentic educational setting which helps to demonstrate the value of the theory.

This design-based approach was used because it allowed, and validated, essential aspects of the approach taken to answering the research questions. The research could be carried out in an authentic educational setting, it could be based around collaboration between researcher and parents which acknowledged and valued the expertise each brought to the process, the interventions could be unique as well as change and evolve in the course of the research. Finally, this DBR methodology allowed for both the practical element of proving reading habits, and the two theoretical frameworks relating to successful parental involvement and improving reading habits to be tested.

A criticism of DBR is that the closeness of the researcher to all parts of the research process can undermine the credibility of the findings (Barab & Squire, 2004). Anderson and Shattuck “argue that this inside knowledge adds as much as it detracts from the research validity” (2012). In this instance the researcher’s knowledge of the school and its community is an advantage in establishing collaborative relationships with parents. However, this does raise the bar for establishing the validity of the research design and it is an issue which is important to address in relation to this research. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) suggest addressing issues of validity in a qualitative study “does not lead to a dichotomous outcome (i.e., valid vs. invalid), but represents an issue of level or degree”

(p.239). To evaluate the level of validity for the qualitative aspects of this research the Onwuegbuzie and Leech typology of methods for assessing or increasing legitimacy is used. This is discussed in the intervention design section.

Within the overall research design, the phase one profiling questionnaire was used to describe the population being worked with and establish general patterns (Tymms, 2012). The profiling questionnaire was used to establish baseline data about what parents and caregivers of students in the Year 9 cohort were doing to support recreational reading at home, their beliefs about reading development and parental involvement, and their own skills and confidence in this regard. It was directly aimed at answering the first research sub-question: what are parents' beliefs and experiences of supporting their Year 9 children's recreational reading habits? To do this it drew on elements of Jaeger's 'Survey Research Methods in Education' (1988) as well as the suggested purposes of questionnaires as described by Tymms (2012).

The design of the second phase of the research, the intervention, involved a quasi-experimental mixed-methods case studies approach which is discussed below.

The structure of the research design is summarised in Figure 6.

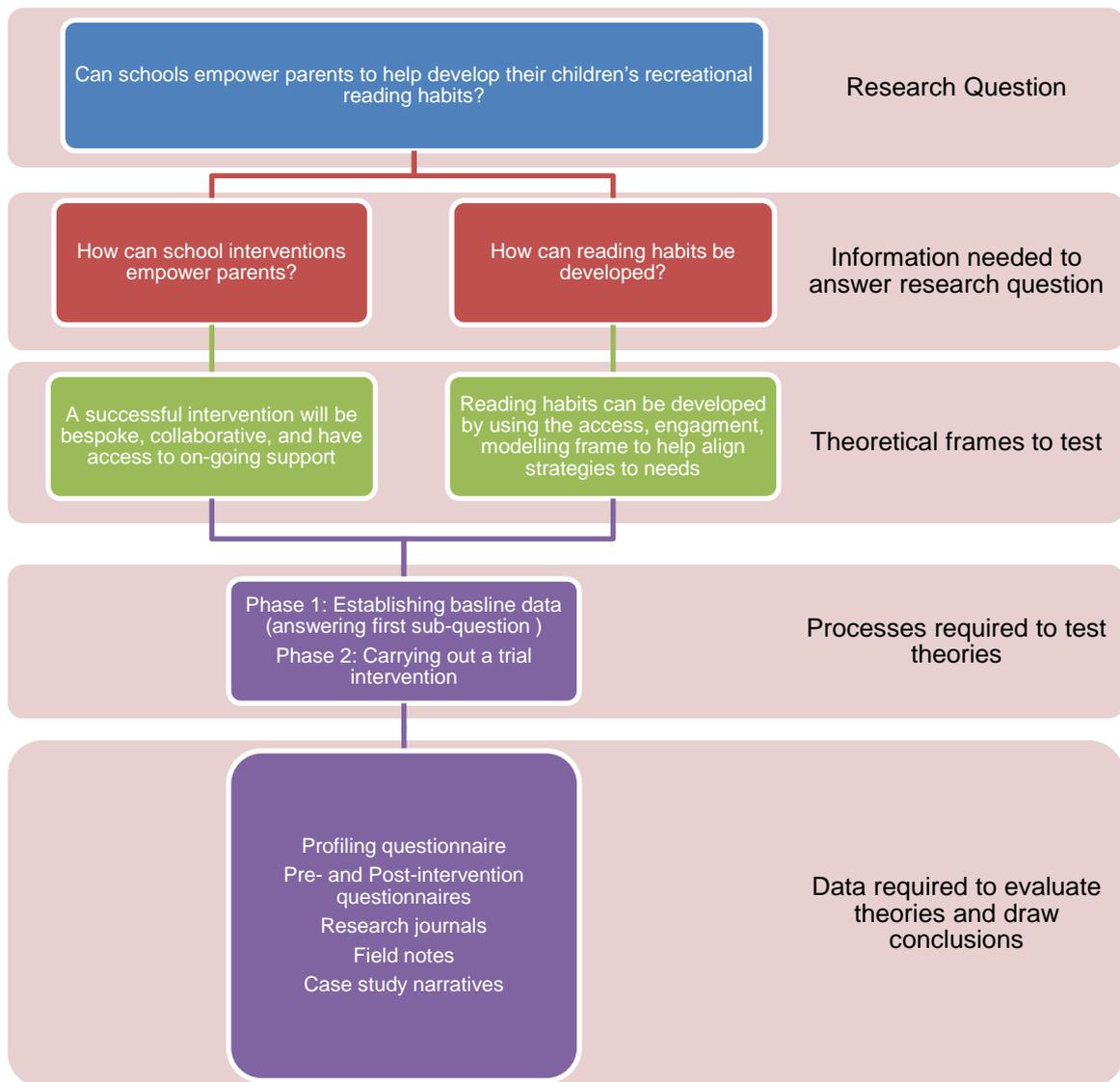


Figure 6. Outline of how research design aligns to research model

### Intervention Design

The intervention phase of the research was an attempt to intervene for a small number of people in a way that was responsive to the different contexts for each family. It was designed to test the theory that parental involvement interventions could be successful if they adhered to three guiding principles: that they be collaborative, bespoke and provide on-going support.

The research literature on parental involvement shows that collaboration and on-going support can be important factors in determining the success of parental involvement interventions as measured by positive outcomes from students (Cox, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2009; Lueder, 2011). This stage of the research tried to increase success further by providing a bespoke intervention for each participant. While a particular strategy

may identifiable in research as being successful, the large number of variables a parent will have to negotiate may mean that the efficacy of even a well-proven strategy may be limited. There are the factors pertaining to the adolescent they are working with. In this case these are reading ability, enjoyment of reading, past reading experiences, independence as a reader, time to read and so on. For the parent their own available time, confidence, resources, responsibilities and knowledge will have an effect on the success of the strategy they are endeavouring to deploy. The intervention phase was therefore testing the outcomes from this theoretical approach of diversifying the range of interventions, rather than looking to see if one type of intervention should be preferable to another.

In terms of specifically promoting the development of recreational reading habits, the 'parental involvement frame' was coupled with the 'improving reading' frame. That is, the use of the categories of accessing texts, promoting engagement in texts and modelling a positive disposition towards reading. It was the range of strategies encompassed by the 'improving reading frame' which allowed for a range of possibilities to be offered for participants to choose from.

As the 'intervention' for each family was different, a more qualitative approach to understanding the effects of the intervention was necessary. Thus a case study 'logic' was applied to understanding the role of the intervention on the change in reading attitudes, reading engagement and outcomes for the participants and the adolescents they were working with. The very fact of testing bespoke approaches necessitates that this be observed with a range of participants and hence, a multiple case study approach was used. As such the design drew on elements of case study methodology presented by Yin (2009) as well the multiple case study methodology outlined by Stake (2006).

Participation was voluntary and the opportunity was offered to all families of Year 9 students. This selection process ensured that each case was relevant to the issue being studied, provided diversity from a range of cases, and provided good opportunities to understand the nature and complexities of the cases (Stake, 2006). Eight families volunteered to be involved and as such this enhanced the benefits, according to Stake, of multicase analysis. Stake argues that fewer than four cases "do not show enough of the interactivity between programs and their situations" and that more than ten can provide "more uniqueness and interactivity than the research team or readers can come to understand" (Stake, 2006). In this instance a range of case studies was also an important way to try and test the identified theories and progress the research question. A qualitative approach to gathering and analysing the data is appropriate here as it is "the interactivity of functions and contexts described as well as possible" (Stake, 2006) which allows judgements to be made about how the two theoretical frames operated in each situation and across the group.

To be able to accurately describe what had occurred in each case study a range of data sources were used. These are described more fully below but included questionnaires, research journals, field notes and case study narratives. This provided the opportunity for triangulation between sources – both within and between case studies. A number of steps were taken to increase the degree of validity for the case study results and these are summarised in Table 1.

The bespoke nature of the interventions also drew on some aspects of the naturalistic enquiry advanced by Lincoln and Guba (1985), in that the specific details of each intervention were not known beforehand but rather emerged out of the interaction between the researchers and the participants in the initial workshop and meetings. Due to the individual and evolving nature of each intervention, the measures of success were also individual and evolving. The only measure each had in common for evaluation was outcomes measured against goals. These goals were different for each participant and in some cases changed as the intervention progressed. This does not prevent comparisons being made across the studies but does highlight the need for understanding the differing circumstances of participants when making judgements about the success or otherwise of the strategies they chose to use. This potential to be able to understand how the ‘freedom’ given to participants worked in their individual contexts further reinforces the suitability of a qualitative multi-case study approach.

Table 1

*Methods for assessing legitimisation<sup>a b</sup>*

Method	Actions taken
Prolonged engagement	The intervention took place over a ten week period to provide a wide scope for the collection of data
Persistent observation	Participants documented their experience weekly to give depth to the data
Triangulation	Multiple case studies used Multiple data sources used (questionnaires, research journals, field notes, case study narratives) Multiple observers in workshops University faculty members and other students used to provide multiple perspectives on results

	interpretation
Leaving an audit trail	All data relating to each case study from each data source dated, collected and stored in the same place
Member checking/informant feedback	Case study narratives were verified by participants before being finalised
Weighting the evidence	Data collected after prolonged and persistent observation Observations and reports made first hand Research journal data collected in informal settings Narrative case studies checked for disconfirming evidence
Checking for representativeness	Multiple case studies used Voluntary nature of intervention provided random sample
Checking for researcher effects/clarifying researcher bias	Data collected after prolonged and persistent observation Unobtrusive collection measures Research intentions made clear to participants Voluntary nature of intervention provided random sample Volunteers included a range of different sorts of participants Researcher not directly involved at site of intervention Parental involvement and improving reading conceptual frameworks maintained throughout Triangulation of data sources Interrater checks for both questionnaire and narrative case study coding
Making contrast/comparisons	Multiple case studies allowed comparisons and questionnaires can be compared to baseline group
Theoretical sampling	The inductive phase of the coding of case study

	narratives and subsequent interrater check of this coding allowed for theories to emerge from the data
Checking the meaning of outliers	All case study narratives were included in the analysis, including outlier cases Data from individual case studies which ran counter to the experience of others were included for analysis
Using extreme cases	The most extreme case is included for analysis as it suggests some limitations of the other findings
Ruling out spurious relations	Multiple case studies used Multiple data sources used (questionnaires, research journals, field notes, case study narratives) University faculty members and other students used to provide multiple perspectives on results interpretation
Replicating a finding	Multiple case studies allows for the observation of phenomena to be repeated across a range of settings
Referential adequacy	As per the ethics approval for the research project, raw data collected will be kept for six years
Following up surprises	Unintended consequences arising from the research are analysed and presented in Chapter 4
Structural relationships	Multiple case studies allowed data sets to be compared for consistency
Peer debriefing	Researcher and research assistant had a debriefing session after workshops University faculty members and other students used to help provide external evaluation of the research process
Rich and thick description	Research journals and email correspondence were used to collect thorough and complete

	descriptions
The Modus Operandi approach	University faculty members and other students used to help identify threats to validity
Assessing rival explanations	Not carried out
Negative case analysis	Case studies with negative results are included in analysis and results
Confirmatory data analyses	As this was a prototype intervention no replication is available for confirmatory data analyses
Effect sizes	Not applicable

---

<sup>a</sup> From Onwuegbuzie and Leech ((2007).

<sup>b</sup> This table relates specifically to the intervention phase of the research. Details of steps taken to ensure the validity of results from the profiling questionnaire are given below.

## Measures

A number of measures were used to collect data. The baseline data from parents of the Year 9 cohort were collected using the profiling questionnaire (see Appendix C). Data for the intervention group were collected using pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires, field notes, participant research journals and case study summaries.

### *Profiling questionnaire*

The profiling questionnaire (Appendix C) was anonymous and designed to provide baseline data about attitudes to reading and reading strategies being used in homes of the Year 9 cohort. The purpose of this was twofold. Firstly it generated data which could be used to directly answer the research sub-question: what are parents' beliefs and experiences of supporting their Year 9 children's recreational reading habits? Secondly, by establishing a profile of what the parents and caregivers of Year 9 students in this community were doing to support reading at home, and their attitudes to supporting reading at home, the questionnaire provided important contextual information about the research setting. This information was necessary for evaluating whether or not an intervention to help parents develop their children's reading habits was needed at this site and hence whether this was an appropriate setting to test this intervention.

The profiling questionnaire contained three sections. The first of these was to determine what activities participants were using at home to support their child's reading. They were asked to list activities in one column and to estimate how much time they spent on each

activity in a second column. They were given the following prompts for listing activities: listening to them read, reading to them, talking to them about books/reading, encouraging them to read, helping them access reading materials, advice, modelling.

The second section was exploring attitudes to the development of reading at secondary school, parents' role in reading development at secondary school and the effect of parental involvement in school work on the development of children's independence. These ideas were presented as three sentence starters and participants were asked to select an ordinal indicator from a five-point Likert scale in each instance. The five-point scale was chosen because the neutral mid-point was important. Participants needed to be able to indicate that their attitudes had not changed as their children moved into secondary school. Also, five-points allowed for more subtlety in differentiating the strength of the responses at each end of the scale.

The final section was ascertaining participants' evaluations of their own skills, knowledge, confidence and ability to find help to support their child's reading. Again, they were asked to select an ordinal indicator on a five-point Likert scale, this time in response to three statements. In this instance the five points were used to allow a mid-point of 'I'm unsure' to be selected rather than forcing participants to either agree or disagree to some extent with the statement. The validity of the responses would have been undermined if participants were unable to register uncertainty about the statements. Again, the five points also allowed for more subtlety in the responses than would be the case with a shorter scale.

#### *Pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires*

These questionnaires were completed by those participating in the intervention phase of the research (Appendix F). The questionnaires were identical, with the first being administered at the commencement of the intervention and the second at its conclusion. They had four sections. Three were identical to the three sections in the profiling questionnaire detailed above. This was to allow comparisons between the intervention group and the baseline group. Comparisons allow judgments to be made as to whether the intervention group were representative of parents from the Year 9 cohort more generally. It is important to know what the similarities and differences are between the groups in order to know to what extent findings from the intervention might be generalised more widely.

The pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires also contained a fourth section which was designed to provide a more detailed picture of the help that the intervention participants could provide to support reading at home. It was also used to look for patterns in the profiles of the participating families. Due to the bespoke nature of the intervention this information was useful for determining the unique circumstances of each family and to identify what areas they might specifically need help with. It contained ten items which were presented as statements (for a list of these statements, please refer to Table 6). Participants selected an ordinal indicator on a five-point Likert scale. As explained above,

this was to allow for participants to register uncertainty about the statement by providing a mid-point option. The rationale for the employing the subtleties of a five-point scale already discussed apply here too.

### *Field notes*

Field notes were recorded in two ways: by hand during meetings and workshops and electronically for subsequent correspondence. The researcher took notes during workshops and meetings which recorded comments, observations and questions from the participants. In the workshops there was also a research assistant who recorded notes on participants' comments, observations and questions. At the conclusion of the workshops the researcher and research assistance compared notes to check the accuracy of what was recorded and to confirm that comments had been attributed correctly. These notes were typed, dated and ordered by participant into a case studies database (Yin, 2009).

There was also correspondence in the intervening period which was almost exclusively electronic. These emails, and the dates of them, were copied and pasted and added to the workshop and meeting notes for each participant. On the one occasion where the communication was verbal, notes were made of the conversation and subsequently that participant was emailed a summary of comments to ensure their accuracy. These were then added to that participant's record in the case studies database.

These field notes had two important purposes. Firstly, in being able to analyse each case study they helped to provide a fuller picture of the experiences of the participants. The observations, issues, questions and problems which are recorded in these notes provide snapshots at particular points in time which help to understand the process participants were going through. Secondly, with the research journals participants were provided with, it gives the opportunity to triangulate their responses and help ensure the validity of the information supplied through each source.

### *Research Journals*

Each participant was issued with a research journal at the initial workshop or meeting they attended. These were booklets which contained a page to fill in for each of the ten weeks of the intervention. The research journals were used by participants to record a number of important observations as they progressed through the intervention. Each week they were required to document key aspects of using the reading strategies they had chosen (see Appendix E for a research journal sample page).

This included listing strategies they had tried, as well as the frequency and total time spent on these strategies. It was important know what had been tried and how often in order to evaluate the significance of observed outcomes from the strategies. Participants then described what they did in implementing the strategies through an open-ended item. This was to check that the actions taken matched the strategies that had been named.

The qualitative nature of this part of the research required participants to give detail as to how they went about using the strategy and what the outcomes were. For the next section of the journal they completed three items which were: explaining how it had gone, how they felt about it and why, and how they think the adolescent they were working with was feeling about it. All these items were open-ended and they were given a prompt to help start writing. The intervention theory recognised that different families have different constraints but also that each participant would be the expert on the adolescent they were working with. As such this part of the research journal was essential for understanding what happened when a strategy was used and how and why the use of the strategy resulted in a particular outcome. It is possible for different families to use the same strategy and have a variance in outcomes. The information provided here helps to understand those complexities in using reading strategies.

The final section of the weekly research journal asked participants to 'zoom out' from the specific strategies and consider how they were feeling about the intervention overall. The participants' involvement was crucial to the success of the strategies they had chosen. Their motivation and confidence could be expected to influence the intervention process: if they felt their use of strategies was working well, their motivation to continue might reasonably be expected to be higher than someone who did not feel they were having success. The purpose of this part of the journal was to enable an evaluation to be made of whether participants' week-to-week experiences of the intervention had an impact on how they involved themselves in future weeks. This consisted of three items. Firstly, an open-ended item to share their overall impressions of how the intervention was proceeding. Again, this was to help provide rich description to help understand and analyse the process they were going through. Secondly, a three-point Likert scale indicating whether their confidence was lower, the same, or higher than the previous week. A three-point scale was used here because this was to track general trends in confidence and fine gradations were not required. Finally, they were asked to register their motivation to keep going on a continuum from 'low' to 'high'. The continuum was used for this item as motivation could be expected to fluctuate across the ten weeks and this form of response gives a simple way to register motivation between two extreme positions. Also, registering 'motivation to continue' is a relatively simple proposition and having a set number of indicators to choose a position from would be unnecessary.

All the items in the research journal combined to help answer the central research question (can schools empower parents to help develop their children's recreational reading habits?) by providing a means of understanding what parents were doing to support recreational reading, what impacts, if any, they found this to have on the adolescents they were working with, and how their own experience of the intervention contributed to the process they were involved in.

### Case study narratives

The final measure in data collection was to produce case study narratives as recommended by Yin (2009). As outlined here, a range of sources were used to collect data in order to increase the reliability of the findings. According to Yin, using multiple sources of evidence “helps [in] establishing the construct validity and reliability of the case study evidence” because “multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon” (2009). The case study narratives were a way of triangulating the different data sources and avoiding the nonconvergence of conclusions. Figure 7 shows how the range of sources used contributed to the case study narratives (headings are taken from Yin’s ‘Six Sources of Evidence’ (2009)).

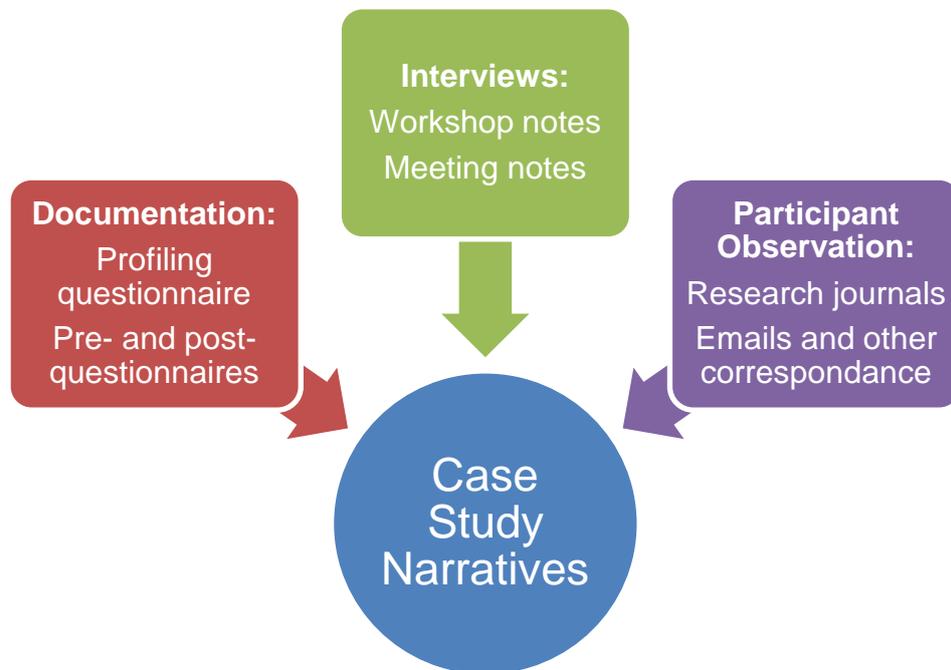


Figure 7. Range of sources contributing to the development of the case study narratives

As discussed below, the case study narratives were important to the case study analysis. To help ensure a high degree of accuracy, once they were written each was emailed to the participant concerned who was invited to correct, delete, alter or rephrase any part they thought did not accurately reflect either their experiences, or observed outcomes, from the intervention. Some identified minor changes to the case study narratives and all these changes were made before each narrative was finalised. An example of one of these case study narratives is included in Chapter 4.

The profiling questionnaire and pre-intervention questionnaires provided data to investigate the research sub-question: what are parents’ beliefs and experiences of supporting their

Year 9 children's recreational reading habits? Data from all of the measures outlined here were used to help answer the central research question (can schools empower parents to help develop their children's recreational reading habits?) by helping to understand the two other sub-questions: how can school interventions empower parents? And: how can reading habits be developed? Yin's 'Three Principles of Data Collection' were used to increase the validity of the case studies which resulted. These were: using multiple sources of evidence, creating a case study database and maintaining a chain of evidence.

### **Procedures for Data Collection**

This section describes how and when the measures of data collection were deployed. Initially approval for carrying out the research was sought from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. Approval was granted on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2014. All measures were carried out in the same school. The school's Board of Trustees (BOT) was sent the relevant PIS and consent form (CF) and asked to grant permission for the research to be conducted at the school. Permission was received on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

#### *Administration of profiling questionnaire*

The profiling questionnaire was issued to parents and caregivers of Year 9 students at the school's Term 1 parent/teacher interview evenings. These occurred over two nights within a six-day period. Parents would typically attend only one evening. Copies of the PIS for the questionnaire and the questionnaire itself were issued to all English teachers of Year 9 classes. These teachers then gave the PIS and questionnaire to parents of Year 9 students at the conclusion of their interview. Completed questionnaires were collected in a box as participants left the school. The researcher was also present to answer any questions or discuss any matters arising from the questionnaire if required. Teachers also gave a very brief comment outlining that it was a questionnaire related to research into reading habits, directed the parents to read the PIS and to seek out the researcher if they had any questions or issue they wanted to discuss. They were also directed to where they could deposit completed questionnaires. There was no separate consent form. It was made clear in the PIS that by completing the questionnaire they were giving their consent for the data to be used in this research project. It was also made clear that once they submitted their responses it would not be possible to remove their questionnaire and data from the research project.

This data collection was carried out this way for several reasons: distributing and collecting at different points reduced the chance that someone might feel compelled to participate as they could easily leave without anyone knowing they had chosen not to participate. It also reduced the chance that either the researcher, or anyone else, would be able to match any

individual questionnaire with a particular person or family, thereby helping to ensure anonymity.

This procedure for collection also meant there could be a higher level of confidence that all Year 9 parents and caregivers were offered the chance to participate. While it needs to be acknowledged that some Year 9 parents and caregivers may not have made an appointment to see their child's English teacher, it would be unusual for Year 9 parents to not to meet with all the teachers of the core subjects their child was taking. The response rate (n=54) was 23.9% of the total cohort (not just those Year 9 parents attending the parent/teacher evenings. Using the total number of appointments made by parents and caregivers of Year 9 students as supplied by the English teachers, approximately 60% of the those parents or caregivers who attended the two evenings completed the questionnaire. This would indicate that the distribution and collection procedure achieved the aim of reaching a wide selection of parents. As well as helping to ensure all of those eligible to complete the questionnaire were given the opportunity to participate, this approach also allowed the possibility that a parent came on both nights, and filled in the questionnaire twice, to be controlled for, as the teachers knew not to issue a questionnaire to the same parent twice.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that while this questionnaire was intended to provide data representative of families for the whole Year 9 cohort, approximately 75% of the families in the cohort did not complete a questionnaire. As such this sample is a portion of those who attended on the two evenings, who were in turn only a portion of the families in the target group. While the implications of this to the research findings are addressed in Chapter 4, it should be noted here that the 54 parents who completed the questionnaire are a large enough representation of the total group of Year 9 parents to allow for generalisations across the whole cohort (Coe, 2012; Tymms, 2012).

#### *Selection of intervention group*

All parents and caregivers of Year 9 students at the participating school were emailed the PIS for the intervention. The PIS outlined the purpose of the intervention, the time commitment and gave details of when, and where, the two workshops would take place. This was sent as an attachment to an email from the school's principal which introduced the researcher, the research topic and encouraged people to volunteer and be part of the intervention group. The researcher's email was included and interested parties invited to email to register their interest. It was decided that while email relied on having accurate details for all parents and caregivers, it was the most direct method for making people aware of the opportunity to be involved. The choice of email in this situation may well have meant that some parents did not receive the information but there is no certainty that postal records would be any more accurate or more likely to reach a greater number of potential participants. Nine potential participants made contact. six attended the first workshop and

two who were unable to be there each had a one-on-one session with the researcher covering the same material as the workshop.

### *Workshop 1*

The workshops took place in the school's library on weekday evenings. Participants were met by the researcher and research assistant. They were given a hard-copy of the PIS (Appendix A) and a CF (Appendix B). Once the CF was completed they were given a pre-intervention questionnaire. When all participants had completed the CF and questionnaire the researcher introduced the research topic and the intended outcome – that participants would select strategies to use at home to support reading and record the experience. There was then a brief outline of why reading was important, including some of the research literature. This background information was important for helping participants to understand what their involvement would require and what the potential benefits might be.

Participants were then invited to share strategies that they currently used or that had worked in the past. As part of the intervention theory involved being part of a collaborative community this was important for showing that their prior knowledge was valued and for giving everyone the opportunity to contribute at an early stage. This also gave an opportunity for other topics of discussion to be raised which participants wanted to hear each other's views on. For instance there was a lengthy discussion about the appropriate age to be reading about a range of more adult topics such as suicide, sex, drugs and violence.

Following the compilation of the parents' strategies the researcher added to the list from a pre-prepared range of strategies, explaining the details of each one. This list can be found in Appendix D. This included contacts for places to get help in finding suitable books. As the intervention would require the changing of habits the research assistant then outlined some research on forming habits and gave some advice on how to make new habits (notes from this can be found in Appendix D). A section had been planned to discuss praising effort rather than ability but for reasons of time this was not covered in the workshop. While this may have had some utility for some participants it was not a critical aspect of the intervention and as such leaving out this discussion had no bearing on the intervention.

The researcher and the research assistant then worked one-on-one with participants to identify constraints (such as time and support from others) and strategies (from those discussed) that participants would try to use over the next ten weeks with their Year 9 child. There was an emphasis on choosing strategies that were realistic given the constraints identified in order to increase the chance of success. The importance of not trying to introduce too many changes at once was stressed. When each had chosen a strategy these were shared with the group.

Participants were then issued with a research journal (see Appendix E) and given instructions on completing it. They were also given a booklet which contained notes on the topics and strategies which had been discussed during the workshop (Appendix D). The researcher and research assistant took down notes at this workshop. At the conclusion of the workshop they compared notes to ensure accuracy of the notes and accuracy of attribution of comments.

#### *One-on-one meetings 1*

The two parents who were unable to make it to the first workshop each met with the researcher one-on-one the following week where the same information was covered and the same resources issued. As with the workshops they discussed what reading strategies they were already using or had tried and were then helped to identify constraints that would impact on using new strategies and to select strategies which they could try and implement. One parent completed a pre-intervention questionnaire and one took a copy away but did not return it.

#### *On-going support*

Each week the researcher emailed participants to remind them to fill in their research journals, to see how they were going and to see if they needed any help or advice. Emails back from participants were responded to and added to the case study database. On the one occasion when there was dialogue between the researcher and a participant, notes were made and verified by the participant when they reviewed their case study narrative.

#### *Workshop 2*

The second workshop was ten weeks after the first. Three participants were able to attend along with the researcher and the research assistant. The workshop started with participants completing the post-intervention questionnaire and submitting their research journals. They were then invited to share their experiences of trying to implement reading strategies at home over the previous ten weeks. They then responded to specific questions about what the challenges had been for them in this process, whether they would continue to have a focus on reading strategies at home, what their next steps would be and what support they would need to keep making progress. Another workshop was scheduled for the following week to give those unable to attend the opportunity to feedback to each other. All three participants from Workshop 2 indicated that they would like to attend the third workshop to hear the stories of the other participants. The researcher and research assistant took down notes at this workshop. At the conclusion of the workshop they compared notes to ensure accuracy of the notes and accuracy of attribution of comments.

#### *Workshop 3*

Five participants attended this workshop including two who were present at Workshop 2. The researcher was present but not the research assistant. Of the six participants at

Workshop 1 all attended either Workshop 2 or 3. Workshop 3 had the same format as Workshop 2 described above, including the completing of post-intervention questionnaires by those who had not previously done this. Research journals were also collected from those who had not been at Workshop 2. The researcher took notes during this workshop which were added to the relevant case study databases.

#### *One-on-one meetings 2*

Neither of the two participants who were unable to come to Workshop 1 were able to make it to Workshops 2 or 3. One participant, who had indicated that they would attend Workshop 2, did not attend and indicated afterwards that there were personal reasons for this. An email was sent inviting them to Workshop 3 or suggesting another one-on-one meeting if that were more suitable. There was no response and communication ceased at this point. It was decided that under the circumstances it would not be suitable to keep making approaches to the participant. This was the only participant not to complete the intervention. A record of the email correspondence was added to the case study database for this participant.

For the final participant, who attended no workshops, a one-on-one meeting was had where the researcher shared some of the experiences of other participants from the workshops and the parent was able to share her own intervention story. This participant was also asked about what the challenges had been for them in this process, whether they would continue to have a focus on reading strategies at home, what their next steps would be and what support they would need to keep making progress. The participant completed a post-intervention questionnaire and provided research journal data. Notes from this meeting were added to the case study database for this participant.

#### *Writing of case study narratives*

At the completion of the intervention all data pertaining to the intervention were organised by participant. This included pre- and post- intervention questionnaires, researcher notes, research assistant notes, research journals and correspondence with participants. These were then used to write a narrative for each participant that incorporated all the information they had given into one document for the purpose of analysis. Each was organised under the following headings: Demographic, Issue, Strategies, Processes and Outcomes, Next Steps. A check was then made as to whether any data collected were not represented under these headings. All data from the sources identified was incorporated into the case study narratives. As discussed above, these were then emailed to the relevant participant who checked for accuracy and clarity and confirmed that the case study was an accurate representation of their intervention experience.

## **Analysis of Data**

The different types of analysis used for the different data sources are explained below.

### *Profiling questionnaire*

The first section of the profiling questionnaire, which asked participants to list the things they did at home to support reading, was coded using an inductive process.

Questionnaires were numbered from 1 – 54. Starting with number 1, a list was made of the different activities mentioned and the number of participants who had mentioned each one. As this process continued some activity types were collapsed into a single category. For example the categories of ‘we buy books for them’ and ‘we make sure there are books around’ became contained under the ‘provide text rich environment’ category. These decisions were made in order to account for the different ways that individuals had expressed the same idea. In the example above it was decided that the one heading of ‘provide text rich environment’ was suitable for the range given because not all parents would be in a position to buy books. Therefore judgment about the number of parents buying books as a strategy might not be valid as it may be limited by the financial resources of a family. In this instance it was felt that having a separate category for ‘provide text rich environment’ captured the intent both of those who specifically reported buying books and those who reported that they made sure there were “plenty of books around” without giving details of their procurement. Once these categories were finalised the strategies reported by each participant were recorded on the list of categories with the number ascribed for each completed questionnaire. A total number for each strategy was then tallied. The process was carried out in this way so that the use of strategies could be traced back to individual questionnaires. This meant that the interrater reliability check (discussed below) could accurately compare the categories the researcher and interrater had ascribed for the questionnaires which were checked.

During this process it became clear that the different strategies could be grouped into three large categories based around the important contributions of accessing texts, promoting engagement in texts, and modelling a good disposition towards reading which had emerged from the literature review. Each category was assigned one of these three groupings and then a check was made that those under each heading did meet the relevant description. Finally, the only category not assigned one of these three headings, ‘Nothing’ (indicating that no strategies were used at home), became its own heading. The final categories and groupings can be seen in Table 2. The final numbers reporting use of each strategy were then converted to percentages.

Table 2

*Types of reading support*

Activity
<i>Accessing Books</i>
Library
Making suggestions
Other families/friends
Online
Text rich environment
<i>Promoting Engagement</i>
Reading routines (set times)
General encouragement
Reading together
Discussing child's reading
Metacognition: strategies
<i>Modelling Positive Reading Habits</i>
Discussing own reading
Modelling reading
Specific genre focus
Reading same books
<i>Nothing</i>
No strategies reported

A selection of six questionnaires, representing 11.1% of the sample, was then chosen from the 54 responses using a random number generator (<http://www.random.org/>). These questionnaires were then given to the interrator with a list of the categories. The interrator coded the responses of these six participants according to the categories and was also asked to identify responses which they felt did not fall within any of the categories supplied. The agreement rate between the researcher and the interrater was 86.4%.

The resultant table provided a way to see the range of strategies being reported, the rate of use of each strategy amongst the sample and to compare rates of use for the different groups of strategies (accessing texts, promoting engagement and modelling positive reading habits).

All items in both the second and third sections of the profiling questionnaire were analysed in the following manner. The number of responses for each indicator on each item were tallied and recorded. These were then converted into percentages. These percentages were then used to generate bar graphs using Microsoft Excel to visually show the spread of

responses across the group sampled. This made it possible to then identify patterns in the responses and make judgements about trends within the sample.

The table created from section one and the bar graphs generated by the six items in sections two and three enabled the first research sub-question (what are parents' beliefs and experiences of supporting their Year 9 children's recreational reading habits?) to be answered. This analysis also provided baseline data to help understand the research setting of the intervention.

#### *Pre- and post- intervention questionnaires*

For the three sections of the pre- and post- intervention questionnaires which were the same as the profiling questionnaire the methods of analyses were identical. This was for the reasons outlined above and also to enable valid comparisons to be made between the three sets of data. The resultant data from section one were added to the 'Types of reading support' table and this meant that similarities and differences could be evaluated between the range of strategies each group reported, the rate of use of each strategy between the groups and to compare the rates of each groups use of the three main classifications of strategies. For the other two common sections, the pre- and post-questionnaire data were added to the bar graphs to again enable a comparison to be made between the profiling group and the attitudes and beliefs about supporting reading at home which the intervention group had at the start of the intervention. For all three sections this method of analysis allowed for evaluation to be made of changes to the number and rate of activities, as well as beliefs and values about supporting reading at home, for the intervention group between the beginning and end of the intervention. It also allowed comparison to be made between the intervention group and the profiling group at both the first and the second time points. However, it should be noted that because percentages have been used in the representation of data from these sections of the questionnaires the results need to be read cautiously. Six participants from the intervention group completed both the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires compared with 54 in the baseline group. As such a change that appears significant may only represent a shift for one participant. Careful consideration needs to be given to this when drawing conclusions about differences between these three sets of data.

The purpose of the section included in the pre- and post- intervention questionnaires, but not in the profiling questionnaire, 'the help I can offer', was to help generate a fuller profile of those who participated in the intervention. This included whether they felt they knew what their child's reading age was, their reading strengths and weakness, reading interests and the parents' own sharing of their reading. This provided a more in-depth view on what they knew about their child's reading and were doing at home than the items common to all the questionnaires concerning parents' knowledge and confidence of supporting reading at home. As such it provided a level of information that was not necessary to have about the

baseline group. A central purpose of the profiling questionnaire was to help answer the first research sub-question and again, the level of detail provided by this section was not necessary to that purpose.

The data generated from this section were necessary for comparing participants to see if their at-home reading situations for the children they were working with were similar or different. As one of the tenets of the intervention theory was that families have unique reading support needs and need unique responses, it was important to know if the situations of participants were in fact unique and in what ways they might be similar or different. To ascertain this, the number of times a participant selected each indicator (for example, 'strongly agree') across the ten items in the section were aggregated. These totals were then used to generate bar graphs as described above. By approaching the data this way it became possible to see patterns for each participant (for example, mainly 'strongly agree' and 'agree', or mainly 'I'm unsure') and to see how each pattern of results was similar to, or different from, other participants. On the completion of the post-intervention questionnaire it became possible to graph and compare changes in this profile which might have occurred for participants in the course of the intervention. Comparison across individual items was not carried out as these would have had limited utility in advancing understanding of the research questions. Making such comparisons was explored as an analytical tool and the variance evident for individual items did not challenge or contradict the variance in pattern observed through the aggregation of indicators for each participant. The primary purpose of this section was to see participant profiles and as such item-by-item analysis has not been included.

#### *Case study narratives*

The case narratives were prepared for analysis as described above. They were then coded using a mixture of deductive and inductive analysis. The case study narratives were read to identify and code demographic information about the participants and references to issues or goals they identified as wanting to address through their participation. This was important as participants' relative success was measured by the progress they made towards resolving the issues or achieving the goals which they identified. Case studies were then read looking specifically for aspects which related to the use of strategies which came under the three headings of accessing texts, promoting engagement in texts and modelling a positive disposition towards reading and texts. This was done in order to isolate those parts of the case studies which related directly to the 'improving reading' theoretical framework being tested. As such there were parts which were 'double coded' because participants were using multiple strategies. For example where a participant and their child discussed both the child's book and their own book this was coded as being both promoting engagement (by showing an interest in what the child was reading) and modelling a positive disposition towards reading (by making the parent's reading visible, showing a value in it and modelling how to talk about books). Separate coding was used to

distinguish reference to strategies in use, or used prior to, the intervention. This was necessary to validate evaluations of the effects of the intervention for each family by isolating strategies which had been used as a result of the intervention from those which would have been used without participation.

An inductive process was then used to review uncoded parts of each case study. Through this six more codes were introduced. As will be seen in Chapter 4, there were a number of unintended consequences from the intervention. These became clear in this stage of the analysis. Codes were created for the two central ones which were the impact of participation on relationships between parents and caregivers and the adolescents they were working with, and the effect of involvement on siblings of the target children. Codes were also introduced for references to being part of a learning community (that is, references to drawing on the experiences of other parents involved), the desire to continue with a reading focus at home, challenges and reflection on their own efficacy and confidence, and general outcomes which were not attributable to a specific strategy but to participation in general. A further check was made for parts of the case study narratives left un-coded to look for other issues of interest or disconfirming evidence. The final list of codes appears in Table 3.

Table 3

*Narrative case study codes*

Coded items
Demographic information
Issue identified
Goal identified
Previous strategies identified
Use of access strategy
Use of engagement strategies
Use of modelling strategies
Effect on relationships
Effect on other siblings
General outcomes

Desire to continue

Being part of a learning community

Reflecting on challenges, own confidence, personal efficacy

---

Extracts were chosen randomly from three randomly chosen case studies. The selection process was carried out using the same random number selector described above. An interrater then coded the sections using the case study codes above. Across the three sections the initial coding identified the presence of five themes. The interrater identified seven. Of these, five were congruent. The overall agreement in the themes identified was 71.4%.

Cross case study analysis was then carried out by grouping information from across the case studies with the same code together. From this it was possible to evaluate the themes from across the case studies. This thematic analysis followed the analytic procedure outlined by Yin (2009) and is here discussed in terms of his five analytic techniques.

Firstly, pattern matching was done to find similarities in the goals, issues, strategies and outcomes from the case studies. For outcomes, all instances informed the analysis. For example, where a strategy used by a number of families successfully was used by another without success, all results were included for discussion. The deductive aspect of the analysis provided patterns around the three groupings of strategies from the 'improving reading' framework. The inductive aspect identified patterns in the unintended outcomes.

Explanation building was used to generate understandings about how each of the deduced and induced themes had operated within and between the cases. This enabled the checking of explanations to see that they accounted for all the experiences (positive, negative and neutral) recorded for each theme. It was also possible to evaluate these explanations against the theoretical frameworks being tested to see if they reinforced or challenged those theories.

The length and nature of the intervention enabled a very simple before and after time-series analysis to also be conducted. In evaluating the progress each participant had made towards reaching their goals, it was possible to look at the final reports in their research journals and information shared in the final workshops and meetings to see what the result of the actions they had taken had been.

The 'improving reading' theoretical frame predicts that by identifying one of the three key dimensions as something that might enable more recreational reading, it is then possible to try and find a strategy within that dimension to specifically advance an adolescent's

reading. The intervention data provide a way for using this logic model for analysis by “matching empirically observed events to theoretically predicted events” (Yin, 2009). In this case seeing how the use of strategies did or did not affect reading habits. We are able to see if the ‘immediate’ outcomes of what parents did and the ‘intermediate’ outcome of the adolescents’ reading behaviours were aligned. In this instance, the ‘ultimate’ outcome of the gains possible from recreational reading as established in the reading research literature remains untested due to the short time frame of the intervention and the length of time it can take for reading gains to be measurable.

Finally, the results are presented as a cross case synthesis for two reasons. Firstly, this was done to show the commonalities in themes and experiences across the range of cases. Secondly, it enables outcomes and experiences of outliers to shed light on the themes by helping to understand how different nuances between both the use of individual strategies and the people involved in using them can affect outcomes.

These different forms of analysis made it possible to use the data to reflect on the two theoretical frames under consideration and hence better respond to the central research question.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The results were collected in a number of different ways. Phase one used a profiling questionnaire issued to parent of Year 9 students. Phase two included pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, research journals, field notes and case study narratives. A thematic analysis of the qualitative data supplied by each of the families was then carried out.

The results of the research indicate that in this instance bespoke interventions which had on-going support and included opportunities to share experiences with others successfully helped parents to provide more home support for reading. This can be seen in experiences of the five out of eight families who achieved their goals in the course of the intervention. This included reluctant readers beginning to read, lapsed readers returning to reading and in the development of positive relationships. It can also be seen that participation in such an intervention can change a parent's views of their own efficacy when it comes to supporting reading at home. There are also potential benefits for other siblings who are not the focus of the intervention. All participants who completed the intervention intended to keep a focus on reading at home and were able to identify their next steps and the supports they would need to keep making progress.

In data collected from the baseline group it was apparent that parents' confidence for helping develop reading skills can be at odds with their self-reported use of strategies for achieving this. It also showed inconsistencies between parents' expectations of reading development at high school and their perception of what they can do to help facilitate this development.

Participation revealed for parents the complexities of encouraging adolescent reading. More specifically their experiences illustrate that knowing where to find texts is not necessarily enough – selecting texts from these sources is a skill that may need to be explicitly taught. Similarly we can see from the case studies that engaging in discussions about reading is its own skill and can be a challenge for parents. The important role routines can play in helping to generate reading engagement became apparent as did the power of parents demonstrating that they value reading.

### Profiling Questionnaire

The profiling questionnaire was used to gather baseline data about the practices and attitudes of parents of the Year 9 2014 cohort. It was distributed at the first parent/teacher interview evening of the year. Completion was voluntary and there were 54 respondents.

The nature of the sampling process meant that it was limited to those Year 9 parents who attended these evenings and therefore the accuracy of the results as representative of all families in the cohort is limited. However, as the parents who both attended the parent/teacher interviews and completed the questionnaire may be assumed to be parents who take a proactive interest in their children's education, it may also be assumed that these results may overstate the involvement of parents across the whole cohort.

The first section of the questionnaire asked for 'anything you do at home that you consider supports your child's reading'. As can be seen in Table 4 the reported activities fell into three broad categories of accessing texts, promoting engagement and modelling positive reading habits. While some of the activities were comparatively common it should be noted that the most popular, 'Discussing child's reading', was a strategy used by less than half of the respondents. Strategies to help access texts were comparatively well supported but again the overall results are low given that parents were specifically prompted to list activities they used to help their children access reading material. 15 of the 54 families used a library and only 19 reported making suggestions to help find texts to read.

The 'Promoting engagement' strategies show that discussing the child's reading and general encouragement are the most popular (though at 29.6% even general encouragement could hardly be said to be widespread) but very few families identified more specific strategies. Parents were given examples of modelling strategies and prompted to list activities they used but only one in five reported that they modelled reading in their homes.

The second section of the questionnaire was designed to ascertain parents' beliefs about the importance of reading and whether this had changed as their children moved into secondary education. The first question was how important it was to continue to develop reading skills at secondary school. As parental involvement in their children's education has been observed to reduce as they progress through the education system (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Domina, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Finn, 1998; Stelmack, 2005) it was necessary to see whether, in this setting, this was due to regarding reading development as less important. Surprisingly, while half the respondents felt there was no change in the level of importance, 43.4% indicated that continuing to develop reading skills was more important at high school than at primary or intermediate school with nearly one in four saying it was *much more* important at secondary school (Figure 8).

Table 4

*Types of reading support offered*

Activity	Number using activity <sup>a</sup>	Percentage using activity
Accessing Texts		
Library	15	27.8%
Making suggestions	19	35.2%
Other families/friends	1	1.9%
Online	13	24.1%
Text rich environment	21	38.9%
Promoting Engagement		
Reading routines (set times)	13	24.1%
General encouragement	16	29.6%
Reading together	10	18.5%
Discussing child's reading	26	48.1%
Metacognition: strategies	1	1.9%
Modelling Positive Reading Habits		
Discussing own reading	3	5.6%
Modelling reading	11	20.4%
Specific genre focus	2	3.7%
Reading same texts	3	5.6%
Nothing		
No strategies reported	4	7.4%

<sup>a</sup> Number of participants = 54

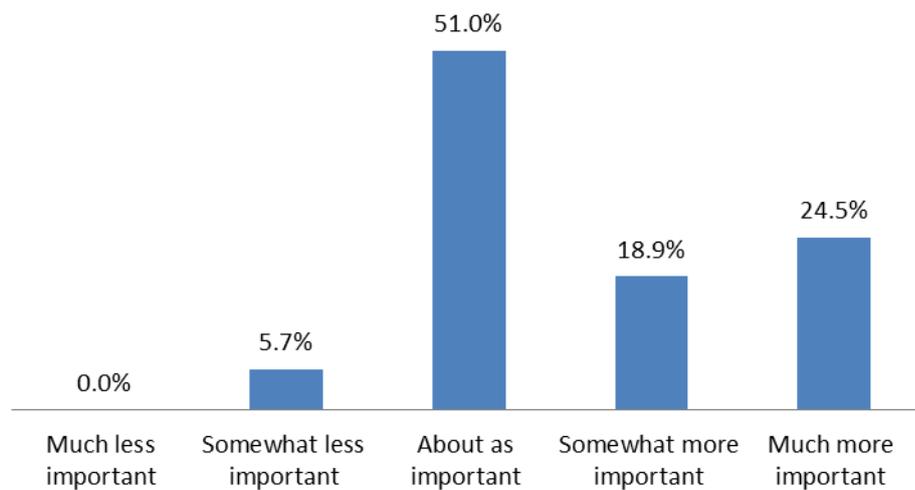


Figure 8. At high school continuing to develop reading skills is:

The next item was used to establish whether parents' perception of their own role in developing reading had changed. Asking parents to compare the importance of parental involvement during primary and intermediate schooling with secondary schooling revealed a very different pattern to the question of whether continuing to develop reading skills was considered important. While 44% of parents rated the importance of their own involvement as similar across the different educational settings, 33.4% believed that their role was now less important than it had been. Given that only 5.7% felt that continuing to developing reading skills was now less important there is a significant gap revealed here between the perceived importance of reading progress and the perceived importance of a parent's role in contributing to that progress (Figure 9). This misalignment is reflected at the other end of the scale where 24.5% reported that reading progress was *much* more important at high school but only 9.3% saw their own role as much more important. These results expose an inconsistency in perceptions where expectations of progress are increasing but expectations of personal involvement decrease. This may also be reflected in the very low rates of reading activities reported as being used in the home.

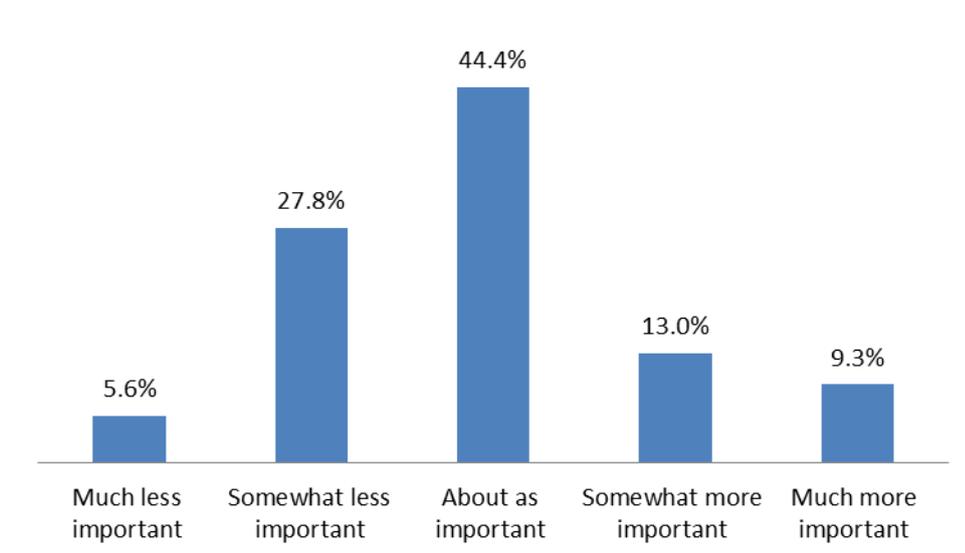


Figure 9. At high school parental involvement in children's reading is:

One possible explanation for this could be a belief that children need to become independent learners and that while learning is still very important they need to be able to make progress without the help of parents or family. The last item in this section was used to test this belief amongst parents when considering all of their child's school work, not just reading related work. It showed clearly that concern at limiting a child's independence through involvement in their schoolwork was not widespread with only 13.2% registering at this end of the scale (Figure 10). Indeed 79.2% of parents indicated that parental involvement was a positive influence on the development of a child's independence.

Significantly, 43.4% believed that involvement in a child's school work was important for developing independence.

A clear pattern emerged from this section of the questionnaire whereby parents' belief in the importance of developing reading skills increased when their children began high school but their perception of how involved they should be themselves had decreased. This decrease is not due to a sense that their children's development of independence may be hampered by parental involvement as conversely, they believe their involvement in their child's schoolwork is a positive factor in developing independence.

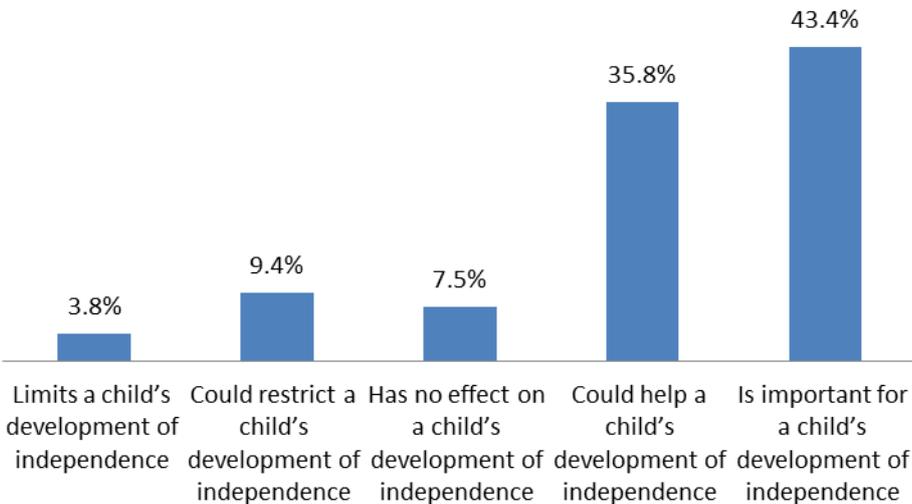


Figure 10. At high school parental involvement in a child's school work:

The final section of the questionnaire explored parents' perceptions of their own skills, knowledge and confidence when it came to helping their children's reading development. As can be seen in Figures 11, 12 and 13, parents rated their skills, knowledge and confidence very highly. The results are fairly emphatic: 88% of parents believed they had the skills and knowledge to help develop their children's reading, 84.9% believed they know how to get help to support this and 90.8% had confidence in their ability to support reading development.

In many regards it was very positive that these parents felt well positioned and well prepared to play a role in reading development. However, when taken with the other results in this questionnaire the responses to this third section become problematic. These results indicate that while the range of practices was high, the rates were low. The only strategies being used by more than a third of parents were discussing reading (48.1%), endeavouring to provide a text rich environment (38.9%) and making reading suggestions

(35.2%). A mismatch became apparent between the high level of confidence for supporting reading and the usage rates of strategies. This suggests that the confidence they had could actually be a barrier to supporting reading progress as they may have seen little reason to alter their current approach. While it could be argued that in some cases there is no need for a parent to do more than they currently are, as will be seen in the intervention results, even if a child has very good reading habits there can be a positive role for parents to play in their reading development. The intervention also shows that sometimes a parent's confidence that everything is going well may be misplaced.

As noted earlier, there is possibly a selection bias created by only taking data from parents already self-identifying as being engaged with their children's education through voluntary engagement with their children's teachers and participation in the questionnaire. This means that if anything, these results provide a generous representation of the range of activities, levels of activity use, and levels of confidence for families across the whole Year 9 cohort.

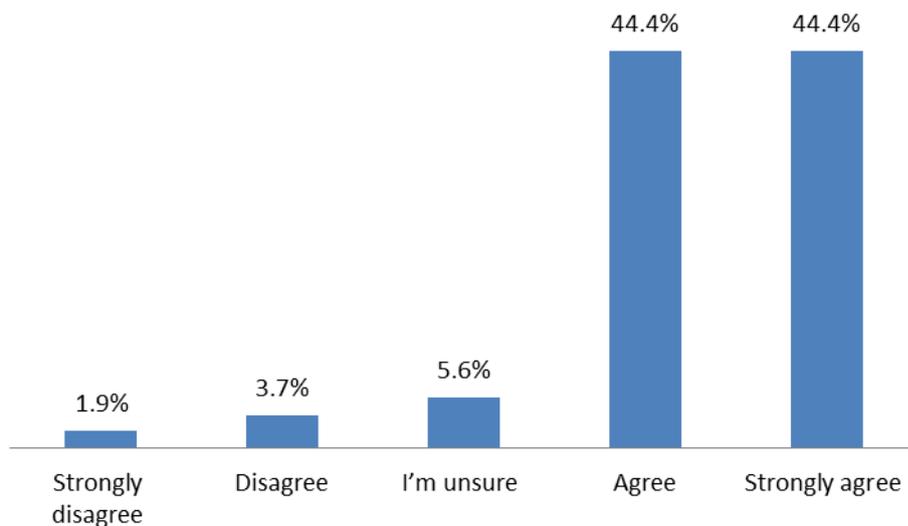


Figure 11. I have the skills and knowledge to help support my child's reading development

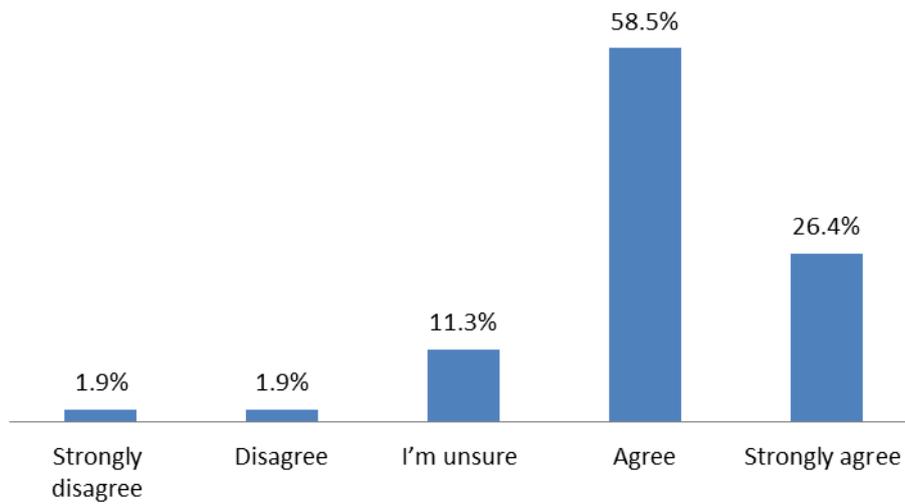


Figure 12. I know how to get help to support my child's reading development

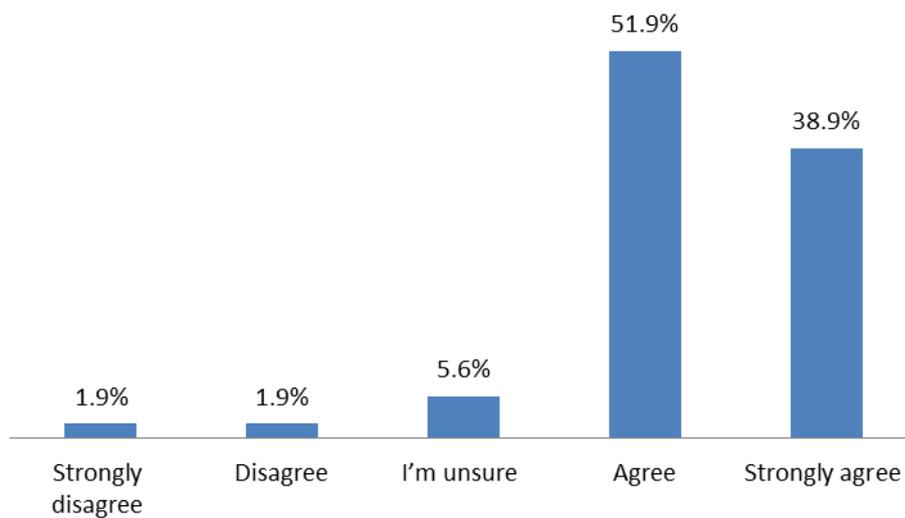


Figure 13. I am confident that I can help support my child's reading development

The questionnaire therefore identified two very important gaps. Firstly, the gap between parents' increasing expectations of their children's reading development and their decreasing expectations of their own role in that development. Secondly, parents had very high confidence in their ability to help with reading development but their self-reported use of strategies to do this was very low. The research intervention was aimed at stepping into these gaps to increase the range of strategies parents were aware of and using, and through this increase their awareness of the role they could play in developing reading habits at home.

## Pre- and Post-intervention questionnaire

Eight parents volunteered to participate in the intervention. Six of these were able to attend the initial workshop and completed both the pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires. Of the two other parents one completed the pre-intervention questionnaire and one other completed the post-intervention questionnaire.

The first section of the questionnaire, detailing reading activities being used at home, along with the activities identified in the research journals, has been used in Table 5 to make a comparison between the range and extent of activities used before and after the intervention. The purpose of this is to give a sense of whether or not the group as a whole were showing an increased awareness and use of strategies to support reading by the second time point. As such it should be noted that all data have been included from this section in Table 5 even though no data were provided by Family 7 in the first instance or Family 8 in the second. There was little in the pre-intervention questionnaire results to suggest that the types or frequency of home reading activities for the intervention group was markedly different from those recorded by the group who provided the baseline data.

Though the small number of parents in the intervention group means changes between the time points need to be treated cautiously, it is clear that the focus on trying new reading activities at home is reflected in these results. At the second point there were nine strategies which were being used by a majority of families across all three main categories. In the 'accessing texts' category, endeavouring to provide a text rich environment had increased substantially. Activities to promote engagement had some notable increases for 'set routines', 'reading together' and 'discussing the child's reading' which was now happening in all families. 'Discussing parent's reading' and 'parents modelling reading' are also up, reflecting a growing awareness of the importance of attitudes towards reading in the home. Overall the number of strategies identified at the end of the intervention is double the number recorded at the beginning.

Table 5  
*Types of reading support offered*

Activity	Pre-intervention use <sup>a</sup>	Pre-intervention use %	Post-intervention use <sup>a</sup>	Post-intervention use %
Accessing Texts				
Library	3	42.9%	4	57.1%
Making suggestions	4	57.1%	5	71.4%
Other families/ friends	1	14.3%	1	14.3%

Online	0	0.0%	3	42.9%
Text rich environment	3	42.9%	6	85.7%

#### Promoting Engagement

Reading routines (set times)	1	14.3%	5	71.4%
General encouragement	4	57.1%	6	85.7%
Reading together	1	14.3%	4	57.1%
Discussing child's reading	4	57.1%	7	100.0%
Metacognition: strategies	0	0.0%	1	14.3%

#### Modelling Positive Reading Habits

Discussing own reading	1	14.3%	4	57.1%
Modelling reading	2	28.6%	4	57.1%
Specific genre focus	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Reading same texts	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Total number of strategies reported	24		50	
-------------------------------------	----	--	----	--

#### Nothing

No strategies reported	1	14.3%	0	0.0%
------------------------	---	-------	---	------

---

<sup>a</sup> Number of participants = 7

Data from the second section of the questionnaire are included to show whether attitudes towards the importance of reading and parental involvement in reading and schoolwork had changed over the course of the intervention. For this section the partial data from Families 7 and 8 has been removed. As these figures are looking for changes between the two points, rather than an accumulation over time as in section one, the available data from these two families is omitted. Including it would be misleading as it would essentially mean

judging change by comparing one family's point one data with another family's point two data.

The patterns in this section were similar to those of the baseline group. A smaller percentage of the intervention group rated parental involvement in developing reading skills as somewhat more, or much more important at high school. As to the relationship between parental involvement with school work and the development of independence the intervention group indicated that they believed this was more important than the baseline group did.

While it is again noted that the sample size is small, it is evident in Figure 14 that there had been an overall shift towards thinking the continuation of reading skills development at high school was important. By the second time point half the group believed it was more important whereas none of them expressed this in the first instance. Four of the six moved their response towards the right-hand end. This suggests that their experience of working with their children in the intervention has changed their views on the importance of reading. The group's responses to this indicator at the second time point show a similar pattern to that established by the baseline group.

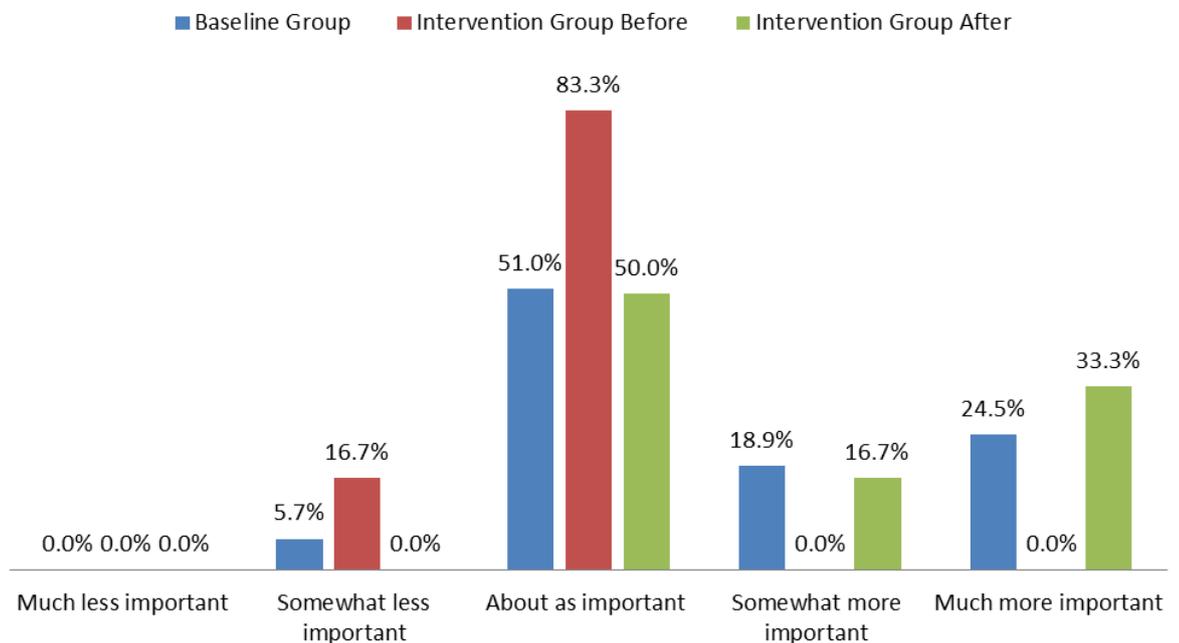


Figure 14. At high school continuing to develop reading skills is:

Similarly, the group's attitude towards the role of parents in developing children's reading at high school had shifted. We see again that where none of the group believed this role was

more important at the first time point, half of them were now of that opinion that it is, with four of the six revising their response in this direction.

Finally for section two, the belief that a parent's involvement with a child's school work could help or be important to the development of independence remains strong and in line with both the pre-intervention data and the data from the profiling questionnaire.

It appears from these results that through the course of the intervention the group has altered its attitude towards both the importance of developing reading skills at high school and the role of parents in helping with that development. By comparing Figures 14 and 15 we see an almost identical pattern in the results. This suggests that the 'gap' identified between these two items in Figures 8 and 9, has been avoided for this group, with their perception of the importance of reading development matching their perception of their own role in helping to make this happen.

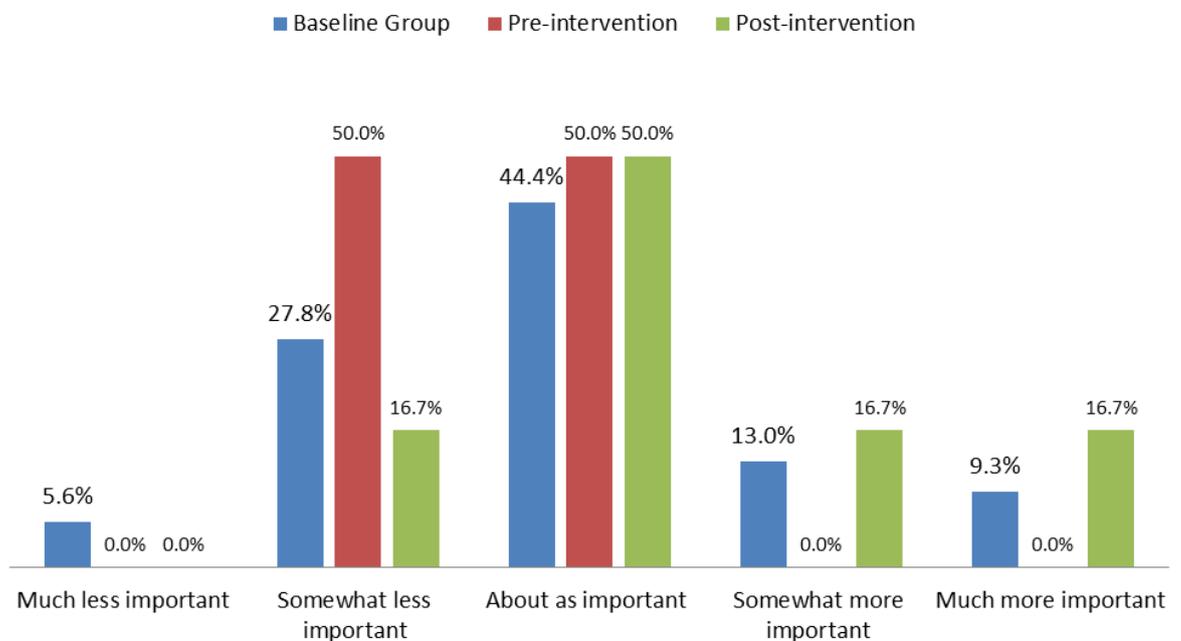


Figure 15. At high school parental involvement in children's reading is:

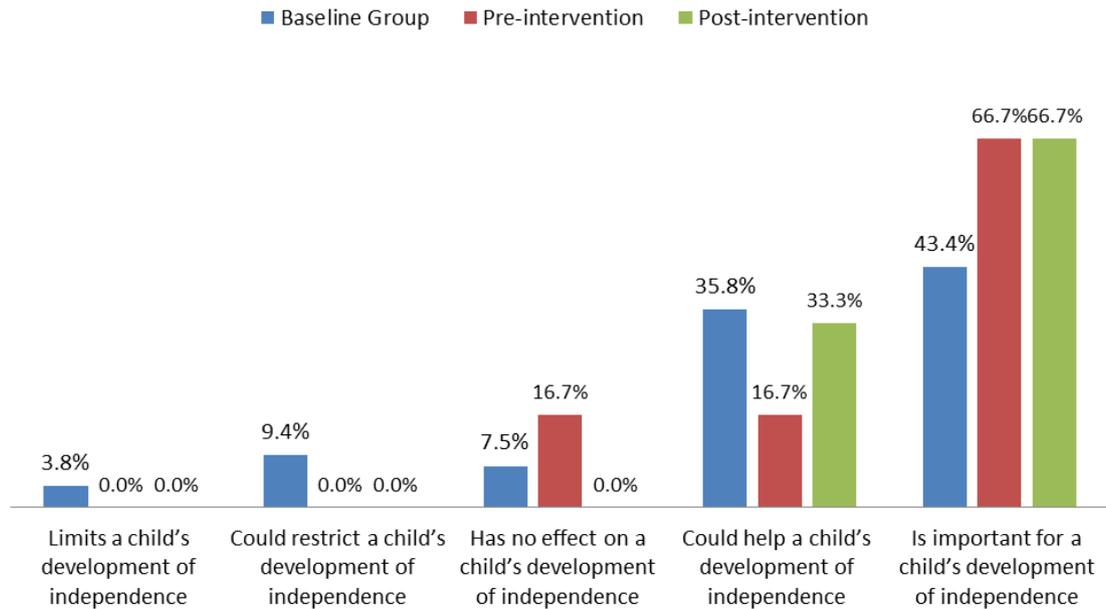


Figure 16. At high school parental involvement in a child's school work:

The results for the section concerning parents' perceptions of their own skills, knowledge and confidence when it came to helping their children's reading development does not include the data from Families 7 and 8 for the reasons identified above. In this section of the questionnaire there are some significant variations between the baseline group and the intervention group at the first time point. Firstly, while a strong majority believed they had the skills to help with reading development (66.6%) a very significant 33.3% were 'unsure' compared with 5.6% from the initial sample. In all only 11.2% from the baseline sample did not 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they had the requisite skills and knowledge. As such the 33.3% 'unsure' here represents a notable difference.

Secondly, for knowing how to help support reading development there is also an important variance. Though the difference in those 'strongly agreeing' they know how to help support reading development was negligible, those who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' in the baseline sample comprised 84.9% whereas for the intervention group at the first time point this was only 33.3% or two out of six respondents. Those who were 'unsure' or 'disagreed' represented 66.6%.

Finally, those 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that they were confident to help support reading development combined to be 50.0% for the intervention group compared with 90.8% in the larger sample. There was a more even distribution across the categories for the intervention group with 50% being 'unsure' or 'disagreeing' that they were confident.

As noted earlier, high confidence could be a potential barrier to seeking further knowledge and skills in a particular area: if we believe we are doing something well we may see no

need to seek out, or relevance in taking up, additional development opportunities. It is therefore very interesting that several of those parents who volunteered to be in the intervention group reported significantly lower self-assurance in their own skills, knowledge and confidence compared with the initial group of respondents, despite using a similar range of reading activities and having very similar attitudes to the importance of reading and the role of parents in reading and schoolwork.

If we turn to a comparison of the intervention group between the two time points, data from this section reveal a change in perception across the period of the intervention. Though two thirds of the group believed they had the skills and knowledge to help support reading development at the beginning, by the end all the participants agreed or strongly agreed with this. The parent who downgraded their response from 'strongly agreed' to 'agreed' was from Family 3 and had discovered in the course of the intervention that her daughter was not as keen a reader as she had thought. She also found it challenging trying to address this. This valuable knowledge is likely the reason for this change in response. It could also be surmised that for all the parents, participation had revealed the complexities of encouraging adolescent reading so while most 'agreed' with all the items in this section their knowledge of the challenges (which are explored in the next section) may have prevented them from selecting 'strongly agree'.

At the start of the intervention two-thirds of the group were unsure or disagreed that they knew how to get help to support their child's reading development. By the end they all agreed or strongly agreed that they knew how to do this. Again, the shift from 'strongly agree' to 'agree' was from Family 3. This shows that regardless of how successful or otherwise participants considered the different strategies they tried to be, they had all become aware of options to look to for support in this endeavour.

Participants' confidence in their ability to support reading development also increased. At the beginning half the group were unsure or disagreed that they were confident in this regard and by the end only one was expressing uncertainty. This was the parent from Family 6 who had been thwarted in a number of attempts to use strategies she had identified. She was still very keen to persevere but her perceived lack of success during the ten week intervention period is likely to be the reason for her uncertainty here. Again, the shift from 'strongly agree' to 'agree' was from Family 3.

Across all three items in this section there is a notable shift in perception which indicates that the intervention positively altered parents' views of their skills, knowledge and confidence in this area.

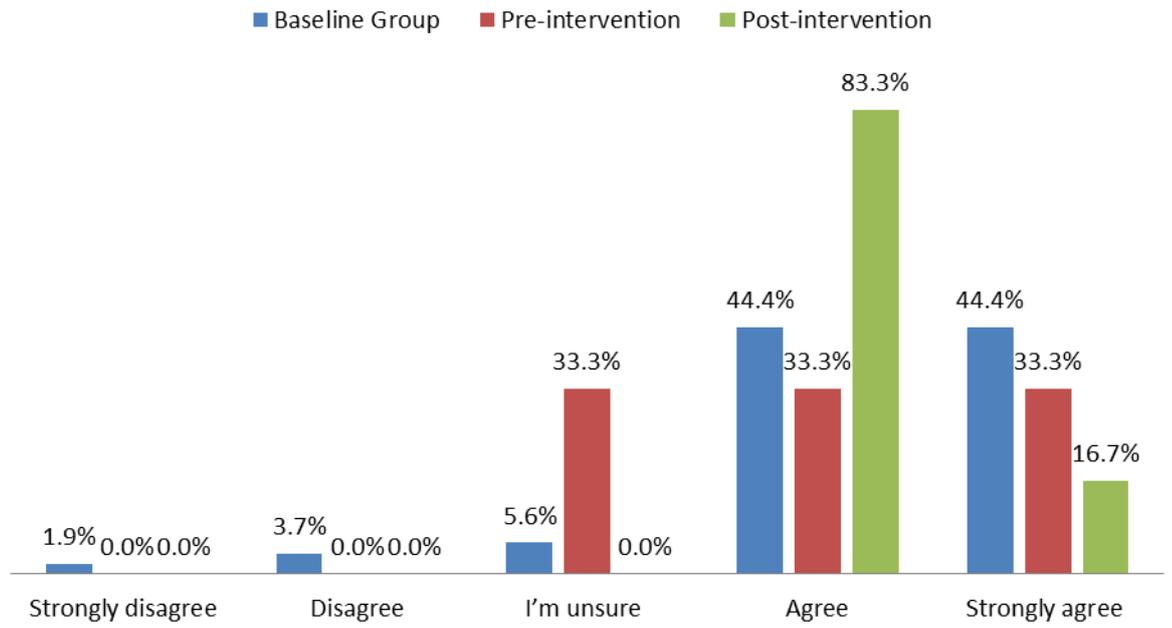


Figure 17. I have the skills and knowledge to help support my child's reading development

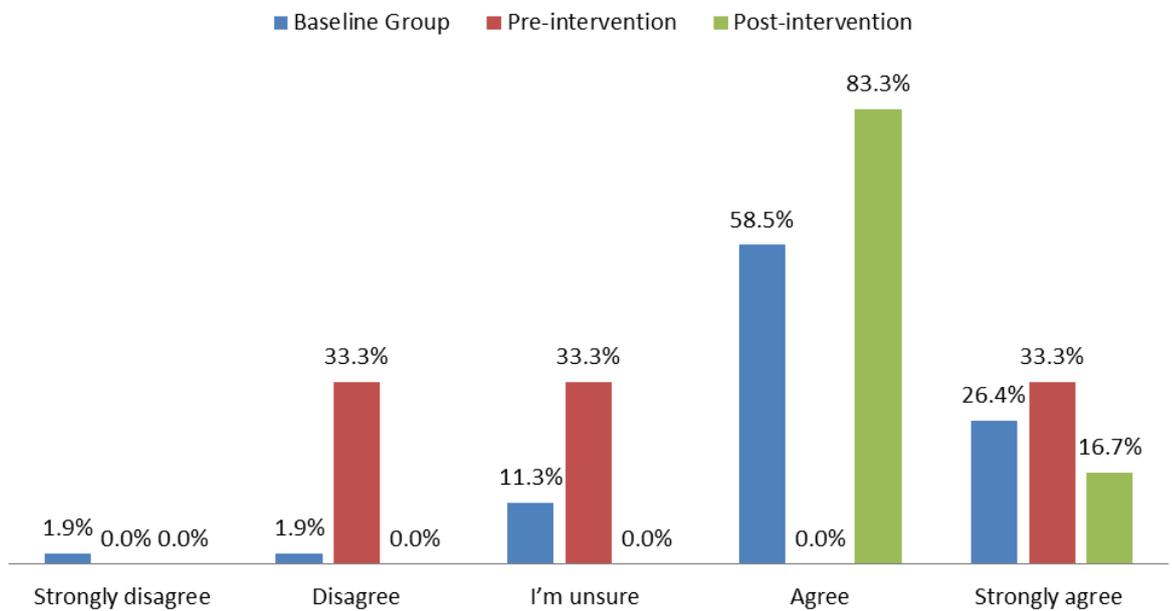


Figure 18. I know how to get help to support my child's reading development

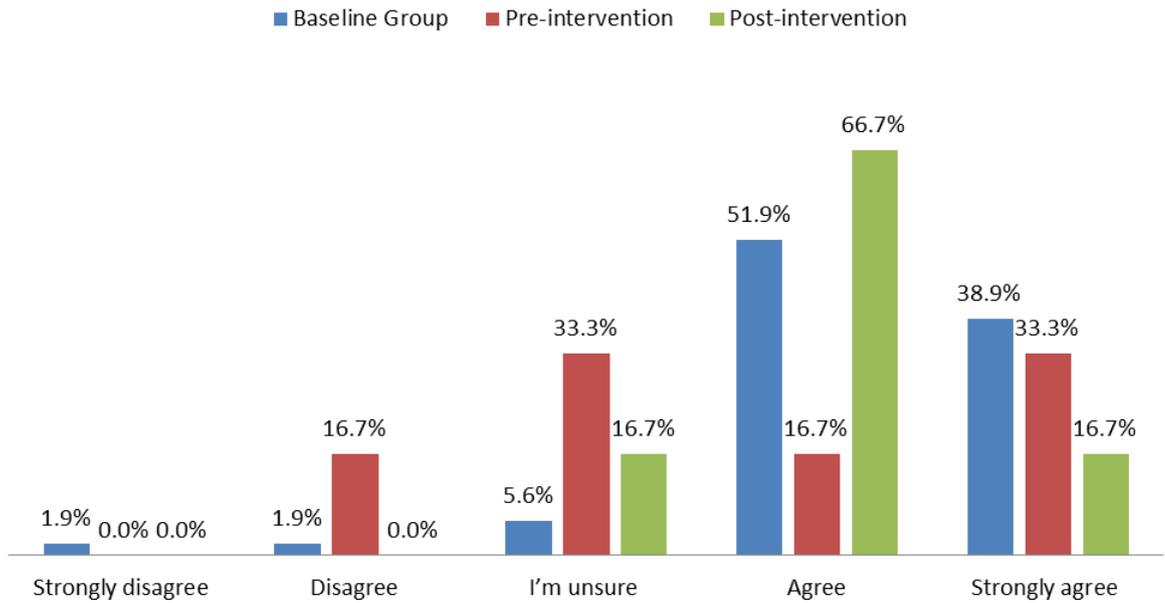


Figure 19. I am confident that I can help support my child's reading development

In the pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires parents completed an additional section in order to provide more detailed data on their knowledge of their children's reading level, reading interests and the reading help utilised in the home. There were ten items in this section which asked participants to select an indicator from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' in response to the following statements:

Table 6

*Statements from the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires*

---

I have a good knowledge of my child's reading ability

I have a good knowledge of their reading strengths

I have a good knowledge of their reading weaknesses

They would ask me for help if they were finding a text difficult

They would ask for help choosing a text

I know what they like to read

I would feel confident selecting a text they would like

We discuss their reading

We discuss my reading

These data are useful in the first instance for illustrating the different profiles of individual case studies. Figures 20 through 25 show the aggregated number of responses recorded for each indicator before and after the intervention. From this we can see that at the first time point participants represented a range of different positions. At this time Families 3 and 5 registered very high levels of agreement across all the items indicating a perception that they have a strong understanding of their children's' reading strengths and weaknesses, that their children actively sought their advice for both reading help and choosing texts, that both the child's and the parent's reading is discussed, and they would feel confident giving advice to other parents.

Of the seven participants who completed the pre-intervention questionnaire four registered 'unsure' or 'disagree' for at least half the items in this section. This indicates a high level of uncertainty about their child's reading practices and reading activities in the home. It should also be noted that even on these brief measures each family presented a very unique profile. For example, between the two very confident families, Family 5 demonstrated a significantly higher level of confidence than Family 3. In terms of the intervention, this indicates that the positions and needs of each family were sui generis and suggests that more bespoke solutions may be more advantageous than prescribing the same course of action for all.

As well as highlighting the individual nature of each family's position the responses to this section also show that most results are fairly similar between the two time points. For instance Family 5, the most confident at the start, registered no change on these measures. The two families, 3 and 6, who discovered that the process was far more difficult than they were expecting both show increased uncertainty while Family 2 showed the biggest positive change. Families 1 and 4 show fairly negligible changes. Given that the items in this section focus on more specific aspects of knowing a child's reading ability and understanding their reading choices it is unsurprising to see this spread of results. This process necessitated that parents move beyond the espoused theories they held at the start of the intervention and engage with these issues on a very practical level. Though they all documented some level of positive progress with their children's reading and were committed to continuing the process, they all noted that there were challenges and barriers which made the process difficult at times. The results in this section may reflect a more informed consideration of the complexity of promoting adolescent reading.

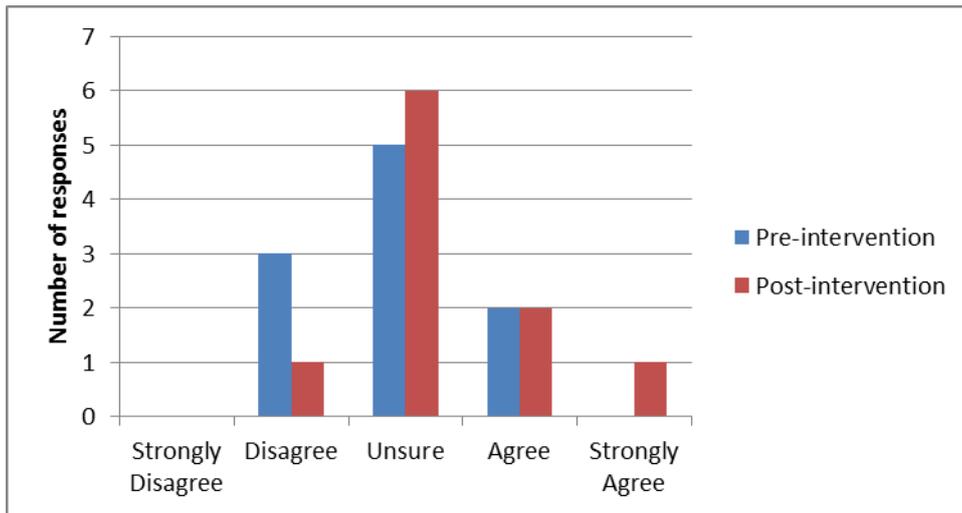


Figure 20. Family 1 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires

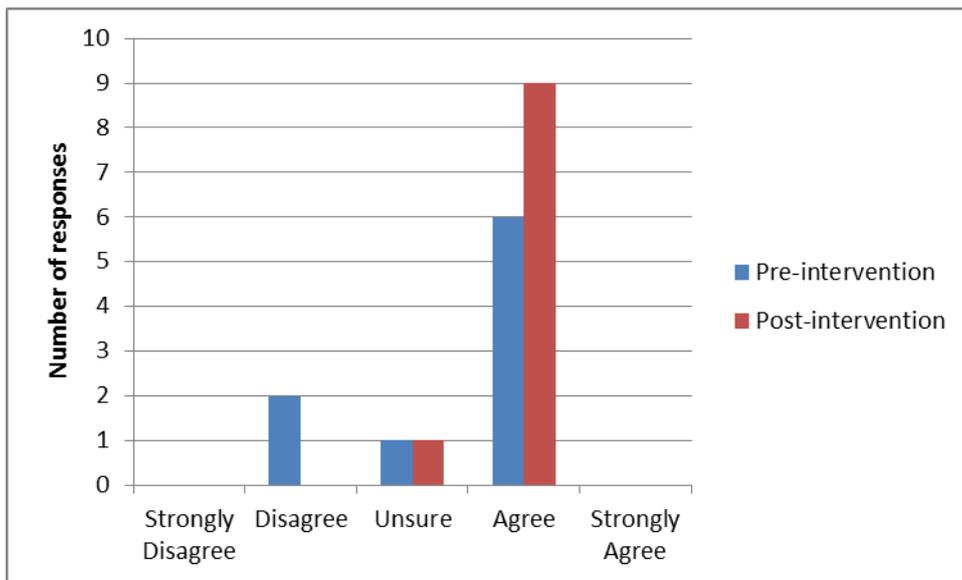


Figure 21. Family 2 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires

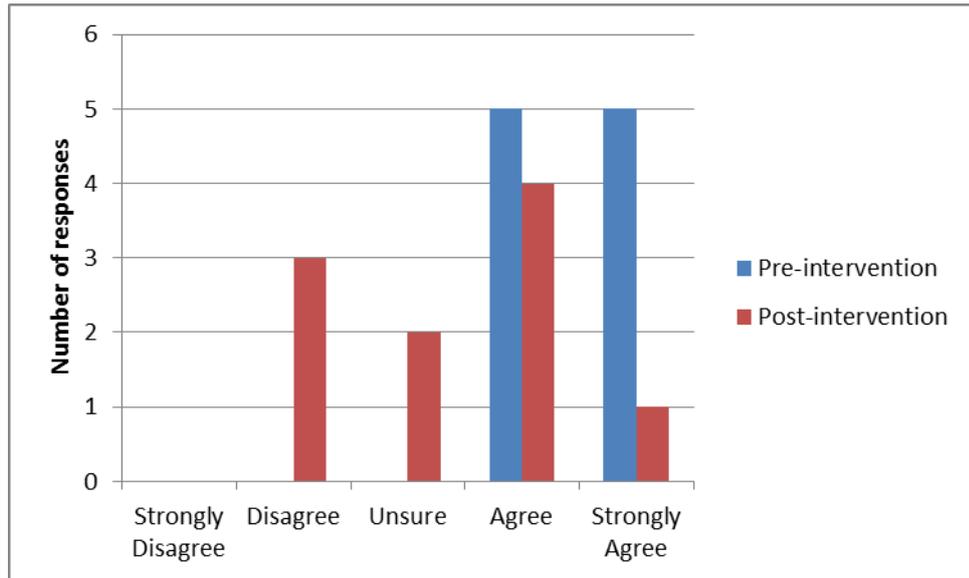


Figure 22. Family 3 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires

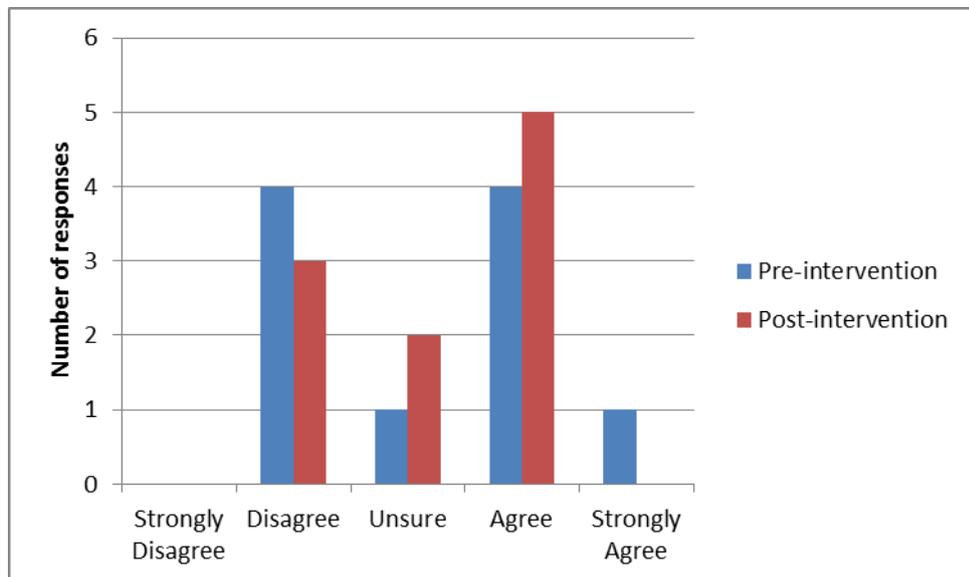


Figure 23. Family 4 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires

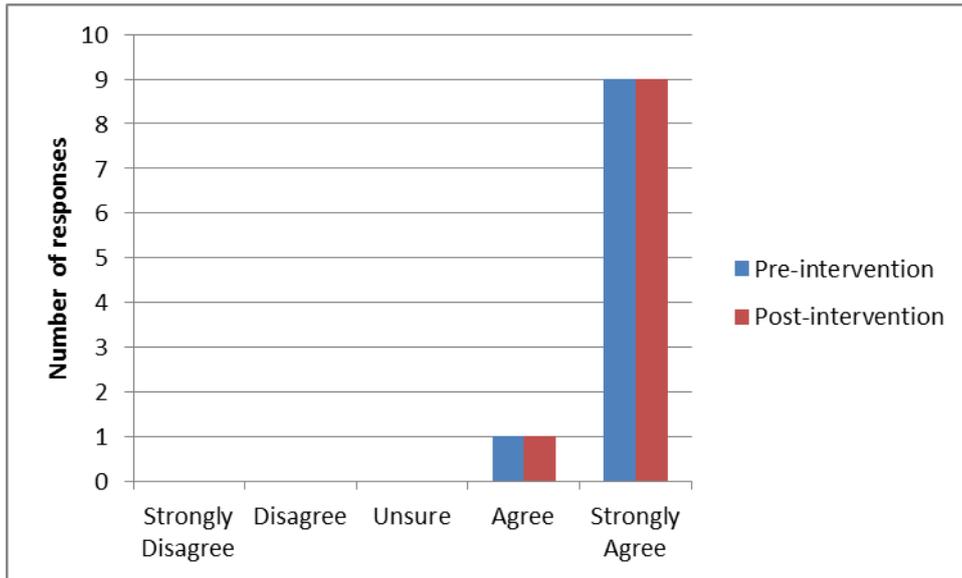


Figure 24. Family 5 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires

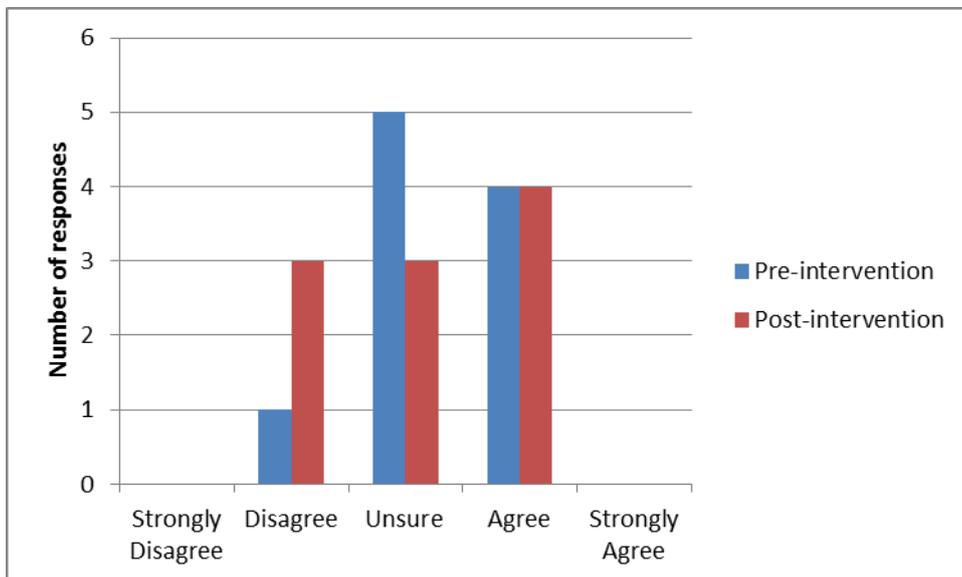


Figure 25. Family 6 Aggregated responses for the 'Help I can offer' section of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires

### Intervention Results: The qualitative data

The purpose of this phase was to see whether an intervention responsive to each family's unique circumstances could increase parental use of strategies in order to help develop the

reading habits of their children. Eight families with a child in Year 9 participated in the intervention. Participants included seven mothers, one father and one grandmother. Between them they were working with three girls and six boys. Two of the participants attended three workshops, four attended two and two were unable to be at the workshops and had separate one-on-one sessions. The intervention ran for ten weeks. Seven of the eight families completed the intervention. At the completion of the intervention all seven families still participating were going to continue with a focus on reading in the home and were able to self-identify their next steps and the support required to keep making progress. The bespoke intervention approach was able to help parents to provide more home support for reading.

#### *Issues/Goals*

Each family attended the workshops with different goals in mind. Key reasons for attending the workshops were of four distinct types. Three participants wanted to find ways to encourage reluctant readers to increase the volume of reading they were doing and in two cases they were successful. Two participants had children who had previously been big readers but who had stopped reading much in recent years and one of them had success over the intervention period in greatly increasing the volume of reading at home. The mother of one student wanted her to begin reading in the mother's first language and made significant progress with this. Two participants were hoping to find ways to improve reading and develop their relationships with their children and one had particular success with this during the intervention.

#### *Strategies overview*

During the first workshop participants devised a list of strategies to promote reading and were also given a list of suggestions by the researcher. These strategies fell into three categories: encouraging reading through increasing access to books; directly engaging with reading or a reading related activity with the child; modelling a positive disposition to reading. For the strategies compiled in the workshop see Appendix D. This research did not seek to isolate either one of these categories or an individual strategy to test its efficacy. As we saw in Chapter 2, a number of the strategies have already been considered by researchers and while more knowledge about these strategies may well be of interest in the future, the bespoke nature of each family's involvement which underpinned the intervention acknowledges that what may work for one family will not necessarily be useful to another. It is therefore the access, engagement and modelling framework which is important for understanding the issues and strategies of each participating family. For this reason the results of participants' use of strategies is considered here under the three categories of interventions from the framework. Nevertheless, it would be unwise to think that any strategy from one of these categories is used without influence from the others – even if the influence is from its absence. For

example finding a high interest book may result from an access strategy but whether a parent demonstrates a positive or negative attitude to reading (modelling) and the level of encouragement they provide (engagement) may still influence the frequency of reading and motivation a child has to read that book. Therefore one of the case studies is also included here as it demonstrates how all three categories can synthesise to improve reading habits and also what happens when they are missing.

### *Access*

The results of the intervention show that access was critical for all participants but was a particularly complex process for some. In some instances knowing where to find texts is not necessarily enough - selecting texts from these sources and actually beginning to access the text within them was a skill that was needed to be explicitly taught. Access was an important consideration across all the case studies.

The three participants who were working with reluctant readers all identified finding a text their child would like as an issue. In two of the cases this was problematized by a low reading level which made finding text which was interesting to a 13 year old but at an appropriate level for their reading ability a real challenge. One of these families did not complete the intervention.

For the two families in this grouping who completed the intervention, while finding texts remained a challenge, progress was made through providing a range of different opportunities to find texts. For Family 1 this meant using the school library, using a book of a popular film and a 'quick grab' strategy at the public library: "She didn't want to get any books and was just going to wait for me. I said, 'Look, let's just get a stack', and in 1 minute grabbed about 8 random books. She is reading one of them about a boy who hates reading!" For Family 7 this meant getting books by the same author as the one being studied in English at school, reading books of popular movies, reading the sports articles in the newspaper, reading news on-line: "Or I'll deliberately leave something up on the screen or leave something lying around." While both of these participants found they had to work hard to provide reading material they both reported success in increasing the amount of reading done at home. Family 1 commented on the 'quick grab' strategy: "Good idea to get heaps of books and will do it next time... she is back to reading." For Family 7, having a text the boy liked made a marked difference to his attitude to reading: "I bought the DVD online, I said to him: 'Do you want to watch it when it turns up?' 'No, no, no I've got to read the book first. Want to read the book'." The mother reported that before the intervention "he'd probably want to watch the DVD and flag the book". These examples show that while finding texts for reluctant readers is not easy, perseverance and having a number of different approaches to try can work. This also highlights that just going to the library itself is not enough for some people. Without a more explicit strategy – grabbing random books, talking to a librarian, going to a particular section – simply being in a library will not actually

provide access to texts for everyone. For some, access needs to be more than a library or a bookshop.

This is revealed in the experiences of the families who were trying to encourage previously enthusiastic readers back to reading. For Family 6, who did not have much success, their biggest barrier was trying to access the books they wanted. It was the mother's intention to revisit books that she had read and enjoyed as an adult and to read these with her children to encourage them to rediscover their interest in reading. She liked the idea of reading the same books but did not want to read young adult fiction so was trying to find books that would be mutually enjoyable. She had books that she was interested in which she ordered from the library but they had not turned up by the end of the intervention period. She had also approached the school's resource room but without luck. As such the efficacy of her approach is untested. However, the inability to make progress which this parent experienced highlights again how debilitating it can be for reading to be unable to gain access to the texts which you are interested in.

For Family 4, who had success in getting their son back into reading, it was the nature of the access rather than just access itself which made the difference. In this family the boy did do some reading but when he finished a book he would be reluctant to get another. The father intended to try and focus on his interests, particularly basketball, as a way to try and find texts that he might engage with. They made regular visits to the library and though the boy would usually get some books out they noticed early on in the intervention that the books sat unread. Their big breakthrough was when the father downloaded the public library application that allows a borrower to take out e-books. He sat with his son who led the process of downloading the application for the library's catalogue and e-books onto his own iPad. The father said this "worked great, he was really engaged with getting the app downloaded and searching through the available online books". As a result of this new way to access the books the boy had returned to being a voracious reader. The father said it was "ballistically good". "Now we can't get the iPad off him – he's reading all the time". What is particularly interesting in this case is that because the boy was going to the library regularly, in practical terms nothing changed here – he had access to exactly the same range of books either way – however, the new process altered the way he was accessing that resource and this in turn resulted in him finding more and more that he wanted to read. It is also interesting that though the initial problem was framed as one which would need engagement strategies from the parents to solve, it proved to be an issue of access which was the barrier for this boy continuing his reading.

As with opportunities to visit the library, having books at home is clearly desirable but not always enough to ensure reading will take place. Family 3 wanted to be more involved in their daughter's reading and use this as a way to strengthen relationships. The mother was disappointed to discover during the intervention that while her daughter was an excellent reader, reading confidently and competently and at a high level, she did not particularly

enjoy reading. There are other things she would rather be doing and though when she started reading something she enjoyed she would love it and read quite intensely, when finished she would often not read anything afterwards for quite a while. She was not driven to always have a book 'on the go'. There were many books in the house and the daughter was able to enthusiastically identify books she wanted to read but often had trouble actually getting started on them. This was not the case with reading which was set as school work: the daughter quickly began and engaged with texts that teachers had instructed her to read. In this instance we see again that having books around, and even knowing what you would like to read, does not necessarily translate into reading. Here it was the purpose afforded by school-related reading which was the driver. For personal reading, while the girl had access on a practical level, it did not mean she was actually accessing the texts. How to do this became the post-intervention focus for this family. At the start of the intervention Family 7 also reported that despite having a high number of books in the house their son was a reluctant reader.

In all, the eight families adopted a range of access strategies. These were a combination of those arising from the first workshop and adaptations and improvisations they made along the way. Though these strategies themselves were not used in isolation, a number of points become clear: firstly, access can be very complex and providing books at home or through a library may only be offering an opportunity to access reading material. It does not guarantee that a person will be able to take advantage of that opportunity. Other strategies may be needed for the opportunity to successfully lead to reading. Secondly, for reluctant readers, one strategy may not be enough to provide a solution and multiple approaches using a range of different types of text may be needed to ensure a constant supply of appropriate reading material. These efforts, as we have seen, will probably need to be on-going to keep up momentum for reading with reluctant readers. Finally, as is evident from the experiences of Families 3 and 4, it may not be immediately obvious that there is an access issue, particularly if there are books at home and/or regular visits to a library, but improving access may well have a significant effect on reading habits. The variance in approaches and range of success experienced by these families underlines the importance of matching strategies to individual cases rather than taking a homogenous approach.

### *Engagement*

Some of the biggest increases in use of strategies over the intervention were in this category. This category includes anything a parent does to promote engagement in a text once one has been found. It can range from reading the text to or with the child to discussing the text and issues which arise from it. Though these families all took their own approach to the intervention two themes came through very strongly from their experiences with trying to promote engagement. These were the power of routines for trying to change habits and the challenge of developing the skills necessary to discuss texts with a child.

At the start of the intervention only one family had specific reading routines being used at home and at the conclusion there were five families using routines to promote reading. In addition one family intended to use routines but abandoned this part way through. Considering these different experiences is useful for seeing how the role of promoting engagement in this way can result in increased reading.

Family 5, who were the only family to be using reading routines at the start of the intervention kept their half-an-hour reading routine each night in place but added a regular time for their intervention goal of learning to read in the family's first language. Though Dutch was spoken in the home the children left Holland at an early age: "they can read simple texts (like 7 year olds) but never learnt to write it". The mother began regularly reading a Dutch novel to her daughter and stopping to address comprehension and issues from the text as they went. They did this five times a week for half-an-hour throughout the intervention and by the end the daughter was reading the text to her mother. The mother reported at the midway point in the intervention that "the reading itself is fabulous, apart from the fact that we talk about the story (we always do, so nothing new here), her Dutch vocabulary is expanding by the day" and in the final week of the project the mother "asked her to read to me in Dutch and regularly checked if she knew what she was reading or I translated certain difficult words/expressions. She started off and I checked a lot. Then I saw she knew most, so I asked her to let me know if she didn't understand it, and she did." In this instance the routine allowed regular engagement and this combined with other engagement strategies – the mother both reading to her daughter and listening to her read, and discussing issues from the text – led to rapid and impressive progress over the ten week period.

The regularity of reading opportunities provided by a routine is important for changing habits. As already noted, with the many distractions in a young person's life, reading may not be a high priority and for reluctant readers the discipline of a routine could well provide opportunities that they would not make for themselves. For Families 1 and 7 who were working with reluctant readers, routines were necessary to promote reading as the low priority reading had for them, combined with the many distractions available, meant that reading would not happen from choice. Family 1 implemented a half-hour of reading time each weekday evening with no technology available. While this was hard to maintain at times they kept returning to it and over time the girl started to read more. At the midway point the mother was said that "she is reading more often, not only at bedtime. It's getting easier and more routine. Still doesn't happened every day but I don't force it." Later she reported "[s]he is going to bed with no tech about 3 times a week on time to read and this week read for a full half-hour each time". This was similar to the experience of Family 7 for whom establishing reading routines was the main focus. Though it could be difficult "just getting him to do something - that's typical of any teenage boy with anything you want to get them to do", the mother kept trying: "It's just persevering. Persevering with him." By

the end of week four she reported that “we have been increasing [his] reading and it’s going really well...” They found the change of routines was not a challenge in terms of time because “you’ve got that downtime and it’s dead time anyway. When he’s on the couch with his phone or on Facebook or doing whatever he does. Instead of doing that he’s actually doing something constructive.” After ten weeks she reported that the routines had been established and were working well. “He’s definitely reading more and it is just habit. You get out of the habit, and it’s so easy to get out of it, now it’s just like, go to bed, read something. He’s not disliking it and not wanting to, which is good. He is actually looking like he’s wanting to now, which is awesome.” In both these cases the reluctant readers and their caregivers struggled at first but as time went on it was less of a struggle to adhere to the routine and after just ten weeks there were signs that the children were starting to not only enjoy reading but read voluntarily at other times.

Routines needn’t be restricted just to reading either. In Family 2 it was the grandmother who was participating and her focus was on developing her relationship with her grandson. As she was not the primary caregiver she had limited time with him but wanted it to be special time. She was concerned about the intensity of some of his views and political opinions and was uncertain as to where they were coming from. She decided to try and use the time she spent with him and his younger brother and sister to discuss books and to talk to him about political issues. To do this they established “a very nice routine”. The two boys “like lighting fires” so they would light an outdoor brazier and all sit around “in blankets, under the stars”. In the first week they “sat and discussed what he was reading and why over a cup of cocoa.” This involved all the grandchildren. The older grandson was reading a series of books and “he explained what it was and what was happening”. The grandmother was reading a biography and shared this with the group. She found that “it was a very positive experience”. Enjoyment was recurrent theme for them throughout the project: “I am enjoying doing this project with [him], very much.” The sitting round the fire strategy was repeated in future weeks with the same positive outcome: “once again a really good discussion”. This routine did not directly involve reading but during this time it did become an important part of the family’s reading culture, enabling the grandmother to achieve her goals for the intervention. As will be discussed later, it can be difficult for caregivers to talk to children about texts and in this instance establishing a regular time and activity provided the opportunity for discussions to develop.

There were two cases where establishing routines did not help families to reach their goals but this was for very different reasons. For Family 4, they intended to have a technology-free family reading time in the evening. They found this difficult initially because the parents sometimes needed to use computers and phones for work they were doing. However, once the boy started checking out e-books on his iPad and began “reading all the time”, they stopped with this routine because the technology was so fundamental to the

upsurge in reading and because the boy was doing so much independent reading the need to have set times seemed redundant.

This provides a contrast to Family 3 who discovered their daughter was not very interested in reading. They tried a number of different routines designed to encourage reading though these were not successful. They already had a family routine of “At 7.30 phone, laptop etc. on to charge so no Facebook or TV in our family through the week. We really encourage her to go and snuggle up and read.” They also tried extending bedtime by 30 minutes for extra reading as this “was very easy to manage” and a good way to work on routines when parents were very busy. However, they felt the “strategy backfired!!” because the daughter “chose to have lights off and go to sleep!!!” and this meant “not much extra reading got done”. The final routine strategy tried at the end of the project was to be allowed to stay in bed on weekend mornings but without access to laptops, tablets, cell phones or other technology. Again, this was a good strategy choice in terms of management but the daughter chose to get up so she could use the technology rather than stay in bed. Also, the daughter “couldn’t really see the point in it”. This is a particularly interesting case. The daughter was a competent reader, had a large range of books available at home and with the distraction-free opportunities to read being provided it would not be unreasonable to expect that she would engage frequently in recreational reading. It would seem that despite all these positive structures and strategies this is not enough in this case.

Developing reading habits here may need to focus on helping her get started on new books – as we know once she is interested she will read voluntarily – or on linking the reading to a wider purpose since work-related reading provided an incentive she responded to. This example highlights two important points: developing reading habits may often need a range of strategies and again, strategies that work for one family will not necessarily be useful to another. That said, if this family were able to help their daughter to begin new books more regularly the routines they have tried may well prove highly effective at that point.

The second important theme to emerge from the engagement strategies is that the skills to engage in conversations about texts with young people need to be learned and developed like any skill. Only one family in the intervention did not report that talking to the children about books was difficult. This was Family 5 who already had this form of engagement established in their daily lives. The mother would spend several hours a week discussing books with them and listening to them read. They found that these skills transferred easily to discussing the Dutch book they were reading. However, all the other six families who completed the intervention found the discussions about their child’s book a challenge.

This difficulty was often experienced as something that seemed quite artificial or interrogative. Family 4 reported that there was a challenge in engaging more but trying to balance questioning and seeming overbearing, with backing off and letting the reading happen naturally. They found there could be a tension between wanting to know about the reading and not interrogating him or turning him off. Once the boy started reading very

frequently they did not pursue the conversations but returned to them in the last two weeks of the intervention as a way of checking that the time spent on the iPad was actually all reading time. They identified engaging in discussions with him about the books as their post-intervention reading focus. Family 3 also found that trying to initiate positive conversations about what was being read proved to be very difficult. Three times in the first week the mother asked “about what she was reading, what was happening in the story.” The mother’s overall impression of how of this strategy was working was, “I think I am putting [her] off reading for life!!!” She identified that her professional skills as an educator were part of the problem: “Note to self – take off my teacher hat and start being ‘Mum’. Couldn’t help doing the teacher interrogation thing!! I found it really hard to stop being a teacher!! She probably felt like she was at school and being questioned by the teacher!!!” The following week they persisted in trying to use conversation as a strategy and asked questions about the reading. This time though “I was very conscious that I had to be more low key with the questions.” However the result from the daughter’s perspective were still not encouraging: “having to explain about what she was reading was pretty dull for her as it was spoiling her enjoyment of what she is reading.” After two weeks they decided not to persist because the mother was finding the conversation “awfully forced” and the daughter found it weird, commenting at one point, “Mum, back off”. In both of these cases it was difficult starting and continuing conversations perhaps because they did not move past a question and answer format to a more organic discussion. This is unsurprising as talking about what is being read may well be new for parent and child. Developing the skills to do this in an unforced and non-interrogative way could be expected to take time and sometimes require extra guidance or support.

Discussing reading was also a challenge for Families 1, 2, and 6, however the circumstances of the conversations were different and this led to different outcomes. For the mother of Family 6 discussions were generated by concern over the content of books that her children might be reading and it is perhaps this purpose which meant the conversations avoided the more awkward question and answer format that others reported. At this first workshop the mother had expressed concern about knowing when the content of a book was appropriate – what age is it okay to read about more adult issues? She said she would not like them reading about suicide, for instance, until they were older. She had home that evening and asked her boys what they were reading. She was surprised one of them was reading a book which had suicide as a central issue. This led to “a really good conversation” about the issue and what they were reading. She was very positive about how worthwhile just asking the question had been. Later in the intervention period she spoke to another parent who told her that there was a book currently popular with students which was quite sexually explicit. She went home and found her boys knew about it and were intending to read it. This led to another good discussion about serious issues and the mother described this as “really valuable”. Though, like Families 3 and 4, they were not in the habit of having these conversations, in this case the concerns of the mother would

appear to have provided a focus that allowed meaningful conversations about the issues in these books to take place. This may be a consequence of taking an issue based approach to the conversations rather than the text based approach of the families who found the conversations more difficult.

The challenge of having discussions about books was also noted by Families 1 and 2. Unlike Families 3 and 4 both the participants from these families were able to start having regular, positive conversations with the children about what they were reading and both believed that this was because they discussed what they were reading themselves. The benefits of this as good role modelling will be discussed in the next section but it is worth pointing out here that this approach places the caregiver in the role of equal sharer with the child, rather than the adult trying to get information from the child which was problematic for others.

The primary strategies tried by participants to promote reading engagement were establishing routines for set reading and reading related activities, and trying to have discussions about what the children were reading. Their experiences show that these strategies can help to promote reading, in some instances very successfully, but they may need to be adapted to a particular family's individual situation. There is the potential, particularly with engaging in conversations, for there to be a negative response from some children so advice and guidance may be needed to increase the chance of this strategy succeeding. Further investigation into how parents can have positive reading conversations with their children may well be merited.

### *Modelling*

This category covers behaviours which demonstrate a positive disposition towards reading and includes a caregiver making their own reading visible to children, discussing their own reading and generally showing that they value reading. No participant specifically chose any modelling strategies to try and address the issue they had chosen to work on with their children. Nevertheless there were some used in the course of the intervention and it is interesting to note that at the conclusion of the intervention all participants who were still involved unanimously agreed that their own modelling of reading was very important to the process of encouraging their children to read.

As mentioned above, some families used discussion of their reading as a way to encourage the children they were working with to discuss their own reading. As well as the conversational benefits already outlined, this has the advantage of demonstrating to children how one might go about talking about a book whilst also implicitly conveying a belief in reading being a valid activity. For the mother from Family 1 this was also an effect of talking about her daughter's books: "by talking about her books it tells her it's worthwhile – valued". She also found that discussing her own reading with her daughter gave increased value to reading. The mother of Family 7 also found that discussing her own

reading was positive for encouraging her son: “I’ve been reading a lot more and talking to him about what I’ve been reading, so that’s good. Sometimes around the dinner table I’ll pipe up and say ‘I read this in my book today...’ and he’ll say [something about his book]”. Both of these families used modelling alongside their other strategies and both had very good success with encouraging their reluctant readers to get into good reading habits. The grandmother from Family 2 also reported that sharing her own reading contributed to making the time spent with her grandchildren “a very positive experience”. As the research literature makes clear, parents liking reading is a strong indicator of student performance in standardised reading tests. In all three of these cases the families reported having regular, positive conversations about reading with the children involved.

It is also worth reflecting on the disposition towards reading demonstrated by the mother of Family 5. By spending two and a half hours a week reading to her daughter in Dutch, listening to her read in Dutch and helping her with comprehension she made it clear that this was a skill she valued. If the family believed their first language was no longer important because they were permanently residing in an English speaking country we could assume it would be far less likely that the daughter would show such a strong interest in learning it. In all of these four cases clear steps were taken by the caregivers to convey the importance of reading and all reported positive responses and outcomes: the two reluctant readers began reading and participating in positive conversations about their reading, the grandson developed a stronger bond with his grandmother and the Dutch girl began to read in her first language. For all these families this meant achieving the goals they set at the beginning of the intervention.

As already noted, this intervention did not seek to isolate any of these factors or test their individual efficacy. Though the importance of disposition as a sole factor is unknown in these cases, all parents from these four families agreed at the conclusion of the intervention that their own enthusiasm for the reading strategies had led to a positive change in attitude towards reading from the children they were working with. This would be consistent with the research literature. The other three participating parents in the final workshop agreed that they now believed modelling reading to be very important and this would form part of their post-intervention focus. Several participants who were working with boys intended to try and have non-reading fathers start to do some modelling of reading.

#### *Unintended consequences: relationships*

The focus of the intervention was very clearly on reading but working with the children on their individual family projects necessarily meant an impact on relationships. For six of the seven families who completed the intervention this was very positive. Both Family 1 and 4 recorded that they used their discretion when it came to using strategies. The mother from Family 1 actively used her knowledge of her relationship with her daughter in decision

making. They would frequently use the ten minute car trip to school to have discussions about books but the mother recognised that this would only be effective if they were both in a good frame of mind so would not force a conversation if the conditions were not right. This was similar for the parents in Family 4 who said asking questions about the book he was reading met with a good response but it was made clear when he no longer wanted to keep talking about it. This level of sensitivity to individual children and judgement is an important part of the contribution that parents make to this type of collaboration.

Through balancing discretion with the desire to make progress the mother from Family 1 found it was “[g]ood to share when talking about books as [it] often leads to other discussions.” It was these ‘other discussions’ which were a very positive aspect of the intervention for Family 6, despite being unable to access the books they wanted and make much progress in this way towards their goal. Having “a really good conversation” about serious issues like suicide and sex is positive for those relationships but it also illustrates the potential power of conversations about books to help families deal with serious issues which arise in adolescence.

Developing relationships was a goal for the grandmother from Family 2. She said she “had really enjoyed” the project and that it had led to quality sharing time which had felt like they were doing something special. She felt she knew more about her grandchildren and the time spent talking had been valued and good for their relationships: “Side benefits have been huge, have had great conversations and interactions...” She now knows more about them as well as their reading. All the grandchildren enjoyed the project and their grandmother said: “This has been so beneficial for my whole family”. The mother from Family 7 also described time spent discussing books as “good bonding time”. She also reported after the intervention that “the boys got together and bought me a book for my birthday :) so something has sunk in!!” In all these five cases participating in the project led to time or activities which the caregivers felt were positive for their relationships with the children they were working with.

In the case of Family 3 the experience was more negative. Discovering, contrary to what they thought, that the daughter was not a particularly keen reader, combined with the unsatisfactory attempts to discuss books, was disappointing for them. However, though the intervention had not resulted in the frequency of positive bonding experiences other participants reported, some positive benefits for the relationship were still identified. Though it had been disappointing to find that her daughter was not as keen a reader as she had thought, the mother believed that going through this process had enabled her to gain valuable knowledge about her daughter and her daughter’s reading habits and beliefs. She now had a better understanding of her as a reader and had a clearer idea of what support her daughter needed to keep developing her reading habits.

From a relationship perspective the use of reading strategies was not all negative though. In week three of the intervention the mother read aloud to her daughter from the daughter's novel and they discussed words and events from the text as they went. This provided a markedly different experience for both of them from the previous two weeks. It was described as "lovely sharing time" with the mother's perspective being that "it felt much more relaxed and natural for us both" and she commented that for her daughter "she could sit back and relax and we could chat informally as we read." Overall this experience was described as "great". They did not repeat this strategy but felt it would be good to revisit as part of their post-intervention focus on reading at home.

So while Family 3 had a different experience the mother agreed with all the other families who completed the intervention that their involvement had positive benefits for their relationships.

#### *Unintended consequences: other siblings*

In five of the participating families there were other siblings in the household. In four of these cases they reported positive outcomes for other siblings. For the grandmother from Family 2 this was in large part because the younger brother and sister were included in their fireside conversations. As well as involving them in the conversations, for her other grandson who is a reluctant reader she also started leaving books on topics he was interested in lying around for him to pick up. The youngest grandchild had started to read *Anne of Green Gables* and would ring up her grandmother and "talk... excitedly about the big words she is using". It is unclear how well she understood some of these words but her enthusiasm reflects an excitement for, and valuing of, language and reading. The grandmother said all the grandchildren had enjoyed the project.

There were also notable benefits recorded for the siblings in Family 7. The change in routines and the focus on reading had positive benefits for the younger brother too: "it's helping too with my little one. He's always been into reading anyway but it's encouraged him a lot more. I've gone back to reading to him at night as well but it used to be he was reading in bed." The younger boy had also become interested in reading his older brother's books because their belonging to his older brother made them "really cool": "this whole process has helped and encouraged his younger brother and communication has increased with discussing reading material". At the end of the intervention she said of the son in Year 9, he "has been reading a lot more after a lot of encouragement (in fact my other boys have too) and he's enjoying talking about what he's been reading too." While disposition of parents has been discussed here and is well documented, these observations would suggest that the effect of other siblings dispositions has the potential to be a strong influence in the home and could well be worth further investigation.

As well as the benefits for these families, Family 5 reported that while the oldest daughter did not take much of an interest in reading in Dutch she did enjoy the extra focus on

reading and took the opportunity to do more reading herself. In Family 1 there was an older brother and the mother said at the end of the intervention “I am now more mindful of their reading and at least make an attempt to help them whereas before I left it up to them more”. In all of these cases the focus on reading in the home led to benefits for other siblings.

#### *Unintended consequences: other learning opportunities*

In the final workshop parents discussed different ways to get children interested in reading and language. They shared ideas for how to create interest in new topics for reading and discussion. Popular suggestions were museum and art gallery visits as well as playing word games such as Scrabble and Bananagrams at home. While some of these may not necessarily have a direct impact on reading, it would seem a very positive development for family life, relationships and children’s cultural lives to have some of these experiences introduced.

Family 7 were also able to develop strategies for improving their son’s vocabulary:

In fact he got a thesaurus for Christmas and it hadn’t been touched and it comes up quite a bit. I’ll say: ‘What’s another name for such and such?’ So off he’ll go and... he’s finding that there are multiple words for one word. If he’s trying to find a word that he doesn’t want to repeat he knows to do that. And he has actually been, ‘what does this word mean?’ So we get the dictionary out and [I say]: ‘You find the word and you tell me what it means’.

It appears in this case that increased reading has led to more of an interest and consideration for language generally.

#### *Challenges*

The most significant challenge that emerged from the intervention was limited time. For Families 3 and 4 this was attributed to the parent being extremely busy themselves. This was an issue for other participants too but for different reasons. For Family 2 the grandmother only saw her grandchildren once or twice a week and sometimes not at all. For Family 5 the daughter’s enthusiasm put a heavy demand on the mother: “[she] LOVES the whole project. It appears, however, that I am the weak factor in it.... :- (“ In response to an offer of further support in relation to the ‘weak factor’ comment, she said:

I don’t feel bad about it, it was just that I noticed that I was actually the ‘weak factor’. Every night [she] almost begs me to read to her (it got to the point that I stand in the bathroom reading to her while she is taking a shower...), and sometimes I don’t have the time because I am on the phone with someone in Holland (time difference gives me a small window to call) or because I want to watch my favourite TV programme ...

Family 1 also had time constraints but utilised commuting time for their conversations. The reasons for time pressure varied between families but all seven families who completed the intervention identified finding time as the biggest barrier to implementing strategies. Again, this reinforces the importance of helping families to find strategies that will work in their situation. The different constraints a family can have will affect their ability to implement a strategy even if it has been successful for others.

As already discussed, conversations about books were also a challenge for a number of parents. This highlights the need for some of these skills to be developed over time. In this sense a ten-week intervention is only exploratory and continued support and guidance would clearly be required for some skills to be developed to a point where they could be efficacious and used with confidence.

#### *Support from other parents*

All seven families who completed the intervention appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues with other parents. The day after the first workshop the mother from Family 6 made contact and said it was “great to talk to other parents”. In the final sessions when participants were identifying what support they required to continue having a focus on reading at home, all seven identified continued contact with the other parents. One participant volunteered to establish a Facebook page for continued sharing of experiences arising from their reading foci. They also saw this as a good way to share text ideas with each other as they were all interested to know what other children were enjoying reading. The value participants saw in this contact with each other can also be seen in the actions of Families 2, 4 and 5 who met with the researcher at the conclusion of the intervention period for a final session and gave up another evening to returned the following week to hear the stories of the families who had not been present. It would appear that caregivers appreciate, and find value in, the opportunity to discuss school and parenting related issues with others.

#### *Intervention non-completion*

As we have seen all seven families who completed the intervention were able to identify success they had through this process, even if it was not what they expected. It is important to also consider briefly the case of Family 8 who did not complete the intervention. The boy in this case was dyslexic and was being tested for ADHD. His reading level was low and he had a very short attention span. He would not willingly read except occasionally comics. The mother recalled that he had also enjoyed looking through the Guinness Book of Records in the past. She had bought some books specifically for dyslexic readers which he read a bit but did not get hooked. She said it was very hard to get him to respond to anything and trying to change this would be a real challenge for both of them. The mother, a solo parent, had indicated that she would attend the final workshop but became ill and stopped responding to emails. In the final weeks she reported that it

“has been a struggle but some progress has been made (I think). I brought [him] The 2014 Guinness Book of Records so that got his attention but slowly does it”. Without more data it is not possible to comment on this, other than to note that her “slowly does it” comment implies that she would still like to make progress with this issue.

By comparison with the other case studies Family 8 clearly has some significant challenges to advancing reading. The high needs nature of the boy would seem too great to be met just with a ten-week intervention of this kind. It would seem that this family may need a coordinated response from the school involving a wider range of support and assistance. Ultimately, being involved with an intervention like this could form part of the support offered but does not seem, in this case, to be enough on its own.

### **Case study example**

As already noted, while the dimensions of access, engagement and modelling are useful for considering barriers to reading and for assessing strategies, they do not occur in isolation. A lack of promoting reading engagement or a poor disposition to reading still contribute to the reading environment a child finds themselves in. The following case study is included to demonstrate how all three dimensions can synthesise to contribute towards a positive outcome. This is particularly evident in this instance because when the girl spends time at her father’s house without any of the strategies being used we are able to see the effect on her reading progress. If we view the reading environment and strategies used by the mother as an independent variable, this case study shows the significant effect on reading of the strategies the mother is using.

### **Case study 1**

#### *Demographic*

This family has a daughter in Year 9 and the mother attended two workshops. The daughter is a reluctant reader who does very little reading. She finds reading boring and doesn’t always like what is popular. Her reading ability is low for her age. There is an older brother who is a good reader. Reading is encouraged at home and there are visits to the library. Books are also given as birthday and Christmas presents.

#### *Issue*

The mother knows reading is important and wants to know how to encourage her daughter to read more. She agreed that when her daughter was at primary school she had strategies to use to help support reading but now found it harder to get involved. She would like her daughter to read more but also to take more enjoyment from her reading.

### *Strategies*

The mother selected strategies to try and improve the volume of reading and more engagement with the texts were to read to her daughter and also to use the time spent in the car to talk about what she was reading and to discuss issues from the texts. Trying to reduce time on the computer and refocus it on reading was also going to be encouraged.

### *Process and outcomes*

In the first week of the project the family turned the computer off at 8 o'clock each weekday evening to have reading time. This led to five hours of reading time across the week. For the first few nights the "book she had was not one she would have chosen herself" so she would start drawing or writing instead but "turning off the computer worked after a few nights". The mother was positive about this and said "I feel this is a good start as even when not working it is making me ask why and think of other ideas." However, she believed it was a mixed experience for her daughter: "initially I recommended she read John Marsden which she couldn't get into either because I suggested it or she said there were big words. She discussed all this with me and a bit about the start of the book. She then started a library book from school which she enjoyed better and could relate to about a girl at school who was a 'nerd'". These conversations were helped by using several ten minute commuting trips to school as opportunities for discussion. It was noted that this strategy only works when both her and her daughter were in a good frame of mind to chat.

These strategies of reading time with no access to computer technology and talking about reading in the car were continued over the following weeks. When she had a book she was enjoying "she read a bit more". She reported taking quite a casual approach and not being concerned if reading time was used for drawing or writing. Sometimes life was very busy so getting to have conversations in the car or getting to bed in time to do reading was not possible, so they felt mixed about the progress. When they weren't rushed, the "talk in car [is] going well". It was "positive because we are talking about the books but she doesn't want me dictating her reading. She enjoys talking about the book which is good".

In the first week the daughter resisted the idea of reading together and had "a negative reaction". However, in week three they did sit and read together "for 15 minutes which was nice". They have only done this a "couple of times" but have both enjoyed it. Following this they had a period where they "seemed to be more in routine". This was partly because the shifts the mother was working meant that the mornings were not so rushed. The daughter began reading 'The Fault in Our Stars' and was enjoying it: she was "keen to read even at other times. She's reading! Loves the book. I'm pleased. The reading is not a chore and by talking about her books it tells her it's worthwhile – valued". During this time the mother noted that "she is reading more often, not only at bedtime. It's getting easier and more routine. Still doesn't happen every day but I don't force it."

There was then a week in which the daughter was staying with her father so the strategies were unable to be pursued. Following this the mother found “she is more difficult as she doesn’t want to finish book. She is doing her hair some nights instead of reading. She has become bored at chapter 18. I have said she has to finish book before she sees the film. Felt like I was pushing it this week. She is over the book and doesn’t seem to want to start another. She finally finished book but I think she missed out bits at the end. Felt I was nagging her to read which I haven’t done before. Can’t seem to find a book to carry on with. A bit of a setback but I plan to keep going.” She recorded lower confidence in her ability to help but a higher motivation to continue at this point.

They persevered and went to the library. “She didn’t want to get any books and was just going to wait for me. I said, “Look, let’s just get a stack and in 1 minute grabbed about 8 random books. She is reading one of them about a boy who hates reading! She is going to bed with no tech about 3 times a week on time to read and this week read for a full half-hour each time. Good idea to get heaps of books and will do it next time. I figure even if she just reads a chapter of each she is reading. In the end [this week was] positive as she is back to reading.” The mother’s feeling of confidence in her ability to help was higher after this experience.

Another week of staying with her father followed and in the last week of the project, while the same strategies of a routine eight o’clock reading time with no technology and car conversations were used it was not as easy as it had been. “She is starting to do her hair not read at night. Not much book talk in car as early [shifts] again and she goes with me to work so really rushed and grumpy. Not as much reading at night but she has a library book from school and she is sometimes reading when I am on my computer. Not long or often - maybe half an hour a week, but her choice which is a big change. Summarising her feelings at the end of the project the mother said “I think she is choosing to read more without my direction. A bit annoyed however, at night she is doing hairstyles not reading! I think she enjoys books more. A good experience. Will continue. Valuing reading. Good to share when talking about books as often leads to other discussions.”

Overall the mother felt that it had not gone as well as it might have. She has found it difficult getting appropriate books as her daughter’s reading level is low and she finds some things too difficult. Though she said her daughter was definitely reading more and she had noticed when they read together that her reading aloud had improved. She says her daughter is talking more about what she is reading and more aware of her reading. Responding to parents who had found having reading conversations difficult she said that sharing what she was reading herself was sometimes a good way into conversations as it was less interrogative and gave increased value to reading. “I am now more mindful of their reading and at least make an attempt to help them whereas before I left it up to them more”.

### *Next steps*

The mother stated that she was keen to continue having a mindful focus on reading habits at home. She has identified her next steps as continuing with the routine of technology-free reading each weekday evening, as well as the conversations in the car and trying to make more opportunities to read together. As part of this she is thinking about making the discussion 'special' sometimes by specifically going somewhere to talk or having specific food and refreshments to accompany the talk such as chocolate.

To help implementing these strategies she would like more support to find good texts. She will investigate the public library catalogue app but would also like a list of book recommendations as finding good texts which meet interest and ability can be difficult. She was also interested in being part of a Facebook group to stay in touch with, and get recommendations from, other parents. She also supported the idea of senior students modelling reading to help inspire other students to read.

### **Summary**

The results of this research show that a partnership between schools and homes can have a positive impact on developing students' reading habits. The collaborative nature of the intervention – drawing on the expertise of both the school and parents – creates the opportunity for an intervention to be tailored to the needs and constraints of individual families. The group nature of the intervention allowed participants to learn from one another in the workshops and also support each other. Some change was not possible across the ten week period of the intervention but there were indicators that given more time and support progress may be made with even quite challenging goals. The progress towards achieving goals reported by the participants is an indicator of success, as is the desire of participants to continue with their reading focus at home. The establishment of the Facebook page suggests that a group of participants may be able continue with their progress with more independence from the school.

Changes made to how children were accessing books, how parents were trying to promote engagement with reading and an increasing awareness of the role of a positive disposition towards reading can be seen to impact positively on the reading habits of a number of the children involved. Different strategies may have more or less efficacy in different households which underlines the importance of a bespoke plan for each family.

There were notable benefits for a number of family relationships and reading benefits were also observed for several siblings in participating households.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Introduction

The issue being considered here is the role that parents can play in their children's education and how schools might be able to work with parents more effectively to support them to play this role. More specifically this is explored through asking whether schools can empower parents to help develop their children's recreational reading habits. To answer this question it was necessary to find out what parent's beliefs and experiences of supporting recreational reading were. Consideration was then given to the other two research sub-questions: how can school interventions empower parents? And: how can reading habits be developed?

This research aimed to answer these questions by testing the two theoretical frames that have been developed. The first is that parental involvement interventions can be successful if the intervention is bespoke, collaborative and sustained. The second is that there are three contributing factors for supporting recreational reading: providing access to texts, promoting engagement in texts and modelling positive attitudes towards reading. This framework can be used to identify barriers to reading and target strategies which are likely to improve reading habits.

The intervention data showed it was possible to expand the range and rate of strategies parents were using to support reading. Through the introduction of reading strategies five parents achieved their goals: two had reluctant readers begin reading regularly, one succeeded in having a previously enthusiastic reader return to reading regularly, one succeeded in improving relationships with the child they were working with and one began reading in her first language.

Parents who participated in the intervention also reported a notable improvement in their own assessment of their skills, knowledge, confidence and ability to get help to support their child's reading. There were unintended benefits observed too. Six found positive outcomes for relationships and four of five households where a sibling was present recorded positive benefits for those other children. All participants continued with their focus on reading at home post-intervention. These results add to our knowledge of how parental involvement interventions can work and how reading habits can be developed at home.

The following discussion is in four parts. It begins with the implications from the results for developing reading habits and how the access, engagement and modelling frame used operates to help increase the efficacy of interventions. The second part then 'zooms out' to consider the implications for parental involvement initiatives more generally. This includes how the supporting reading and parental involvement frames developed align with each

other, how they reflect key aspects of the NZC, quality teacher professional learning and professional community of practice models. Consideration is then given to the unique way DBR methodology was used before discussing how the results can alter our understandings of parental involvement interventions. Finally, parts three and four address the implications and limitations of the research.

## **Developing reading skills**

### *Schools can successfully intervene to promote reading at home*

The results from the intervention confirm what is known about promoting reading and the access, engagement and modelling frame provides a way to consider what the results of the research add to that knowledge.

In line with observations of the strong link between access to texts and student engagement in reading (Heyns, 1978; Jesson et al., 2014; Mullis et al., 2012), a number of the participants found using access strategies led to significant improvements in reading engagement for their children. This increased engagement in turn led to higher reading mileage. Though it is easy to think that the benefits of providing a text rich home are widely accepted these days, less than 40% of families in the profiling phase of the research identified this as a strategy. Five parents in the intervention group reported pre-intervention that they endeavoured to provide a book filled home and that they placed an importance on going to the library. However, in two of the case studies this did not lead to reading. In some instances more explicit strategies may be needed for physical access to texts to be converted into reading. As we saw with Family 1, when the mother built on the strategy of going to the library by selecting a number of library books at random, there was a positive effect on her daughter's reading. It may be that in some instances the number of books or range of text on offer is overwhelming and a reduced selection makes the process of finding something to read more manageable. While this research confirms the importance of access to texts in promoting reading it would appear that physical access on its own is not always enough. For some they will need further strategies for taking the next step and selecting a book from those available.

This research shows that though access is a necessary condition for reading it does not guarantee that reading will be the outcome. Five participants found that as well as access engagement strategies were needed to develop reading habits. Programmes like 'Duffy Books in Schools' and the Auckland Public Library's 'Dare to Explore!' summer reading initiative provide physical access to books but they will not necessarily have the desired effect of increasing reading if they do not consider further steps to help students engage with texts once they have them. Strategies like the 'book flood' idea (Guthrie, 1982; Warwick, 2000) have potential here as it moves beyond a merely passive provision of text

by providing a strategy for interacting with those texts. Many reading programmes do work but this research provides some clear ways to evaluate existing reading programmes to find ways to enhance them and increase their efficacy.

There are also two important points to be noted about engagement strategies. Though four participants found having conversations about reading was difficult, at the conclusion of the intervention all seven were trying to use discussion to take a more active role in encouraging engagement with texts. In all but one case the results of this were positive. However, it is also clear that discussing texts with children is its own skill and some parents will need support to be able to do this confidently. The second important point here is that the results highlight the importance of establishing and maintaining routines as a strategy to promote reading. While the importance of routines and activities such as reading to children are well documented in early childhood education and primary education literature there is little addressing the role of these types of strategies at secondary level. These results confirm the importance of parents taking an active role in encouraging reading, as noted by Chamberlin (2013), Kim (2009) and Sullivan and Brown (2013), but add to our knowledge by providing specific details about how parents can do this. The results also indicate that some of these strategies can have an important role to play in secondary settings. As with the issue of access, some programmes which target engagement (such as 'Running Start' and 'Storymates' (Baker, 2003)) could improve their efficacy by using this frame to take a more holistic view of their work and thereby increase their scope for positive outcomes.

Modelling of a positive disposition is important regardless of what dimensions of supporting reading development are the foci of intervention. The 2012 PIRLS report (Mullis et al.) stressed the importance to a child's reading of parents enjoying, and being positive about, reading. Again, this was evident in the intervention with all seven participants who completed the intervention identifying their own positive modelling and disposition as being factors in encouraging their children to read. As well as confirming that these activities and strategies can lead to increased reading, the intervention has shown that these habits can be developed and importantly, that they are amenable to intervention. It is possible to help parents to develop their children's reading habits at home. Several participants noted that even their participation in the research had a positive effect on their children's attitude to reading because their participation communicated a strong value for reading. Therefore there is scope for interventions such as this to increase the perceived value of reading in homes simply by having parents take part.

Therefore, while supporting previous research on factors which promote reading, this research takes a step further to show that successful interventions to support the development of reading habits need to be underpinned by all three of these dimensions. The relative balance of each depends on the individual situations of families and this is why

programmes that do not have an evaluative component to assess needs and target their responses are limiting their effectiveness. The framework developed here provides a diagnostic tool for doing just this sort of evaluation, thereby increasing the chances of successful outcomes from reading interventions.

The success experienced by five of the families in this intervention demonstrates that young people can indeed be helped to develop their recreational reading habits. This comes through particularly strongly in the two cases of reluctant readers starting to read more and the case of the previously keen reader returning to regular reading. This shows that adolescent reluctance to read is not inevitable: schools can work with parents to successfully address issues of reading reluctance.

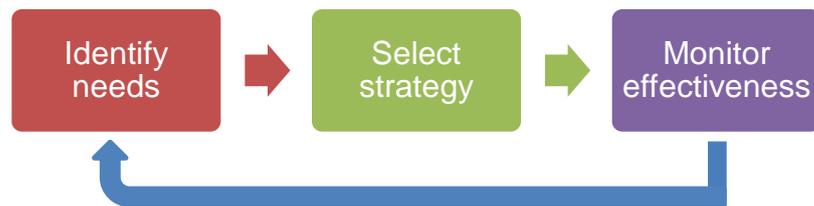
*The frame developed for supporting recreational reading is a valid intervention tool*

The framework provides a structure parents and schools could use to identify strengths and gaps in existing reading practices. While there is a large volume of research into reading and reading strategies there is little available to know how this knowledge might be consistently used by educators to add to parents' skills in supporting reading. As such there is a need for a manageable way to make this research knowledge available to parents in a form which they can utilise. Conceiving of supporting reading as having three distinct dimensions (access, engagement and modelling) provides a frame which has two very important functions. Firstly, as noted above, this framework can be used diagnostically to identify areas which are likely to have high impact in terms of improving reading. There are many reasons why students do or do not read as well as a plethora of reading strategies available. A process is required to identify which may work in a particular situation and the access, engagement and modelling framework provides a way to assess what practices are currently happening and isolate areas to work on. This leads to the second important function of the frame which is to align intervention strategies to needs. As shown in Chapter 4, the frame can be used as a typology for classifying different reading strategies. It then becomes possible to choose strategies that will meet the needs identified. Despite the disparate recreational reading situations of the families involved in this research the use of this framework made it possible for five of them to reach their goals and the other two to better understand the process of supporting reading.

Although all three dimensions will always be present in some way, using the frame to target a particular dimension makes it more likely that the intervention will be effective. This was seen with the families working with reluctant readers who used a range of strategies (e.g. digital applications and 'book grabbing') to find ways to help the children find books they were interested in. They then turned to the issue of engagement to know what their children were actually doing with these texts and to find ways to keep them interested in reading them (e.g. specific reading times, asking questions, talking about issues). In this way the access dimension can be used to help profile current patterns and then the

engagement dimension can be used to help ensure that reading is happening. As the results show, a change to one dimension will often have an impact on other dimensions. Changing access can result in a big change in the quantity of reading being done and this can lead to more discussions about reading. Talking about reading conveys a sense of its importance and hence is modelling a positive attitude towards reading. So while a support strategy targets a particular dimension it can have a wider effect on reading culture in general. This can also be seen in the participants' reports on the positive benefits for siblings who were not the primary focus of the interventions.

Consistent with an inquiry approach (Education Review Office, 2011), if a strategy is not working it is possible to use the information afforded by the lack of progress and refocus on another strategy or dimension. For instance, the participant who found that engagement strategies were not working because, contrary to their initial perception, the child was not a keen reader, was able to identify that there was actually an issue with accessing texts and this became their focus. Without a framing device to assess needs and find apposite strategies the choice of strategies may well become ad hoc and finding something that works more a question of luck. A summary of how this framework can be systematically applied in this way is shown in Figure 26.



*Figure 26.* How the access, engagement and modelling frame functions as an inquiry process

This frame allows the intervention to be holistic and goal based. Unlike a prescribed programme or set of strategies (such as those mentioned above), this approach can take into account a student's reading level, reading interests, reading disposition, available time and family members' time, skill, knowledge and confidence and offer an approach which is suited to their situation. Therefore the frame allows the intervention to be driven by the needs of the families rather than by the requirements of a particular programme. This was seen in the different approaches taken by each family in the intervention. This holistic aspect is also reflected in the intervention being goal based. As the frame will identify different strategies for different families their goals will necessarily be different. This means that success is measured against progress towards those goals rather than an externally

imposed system of measurement. This in turn gives families more ownership over the process.

The framework could support systematic intervention design. An extensive search on databases using key words such as 'intervention', 'design', 'framework', 'frame', 'framing' and 'reading', was made for extant frames for reading intervention design which allow, as this one does, for a very holistic approach which can also zoom-in on very specific and precise strategies. None were found which could inform the present theoretical approach. Though existing interventions have their own theoretical base they are often specific to their context and may lack transferability. For example 'Duffy Books in Homes' operates on the theory that provision of books will increase the desire for, and skill in, reading of participants. It is unlikely that a similar approach with engagement strategies, such as simply sending a list of strategies home in a school newsletter with no follow-up support, would lead to a significant increase in desire or skill in reading. It is a strength of this frame that it is able to encompass a wide-range of situations, even including existing programmes, but still retain efficacy on a very practical level. It allows a shift from the general (improving reading habits) to the specific (for instance a discussion in the car on the way to school or a visit to the library) and back to the general. In this way the frame can connect an overall goal to specific actions and maintain a sense of how the actions are contributing to achieving that goal. This means that advocating for consideration of this approach is not suggesting that it be an alternative or replacement to the many positive initiatives already helping to promote reading, but rather for it to be a starting point for new reading interventions and an evaluative lens for existing programmes. This could help ensure existing programmes are deploying their resources strategically. It could also be a way for schools to support existing community programmes.

As a tool for intervention this frame also works at a meta-level. If we take the parents' involvement as the focus rather than the students' reading, the parents were given access to strategies and support they did not previously have and this allowed them to make changes to how they supported reading at home. The workshops and follow-up communications were direct strategies to encourage parents to engage with the intervention and to promote their involvement. By offering the opportunity to be involved and putting resourcing into working with the parents the school was modelling the importance both of reading and of parents working alongside their children to support their academic development.

Understanding the utility of this framing device to interventions at these two levels allows us to see the potential for it to be used far more widely than just reading interventions. There is no reason why it could not be used to help progress other issues which a school deemed worthy of intervention. For example promoting numeracy, healthy lifestyles, interpersonal skills or self-efficacy are all goals that would benefit from involving parents and providing them with access to knowledge and resources, using strategies to promote their

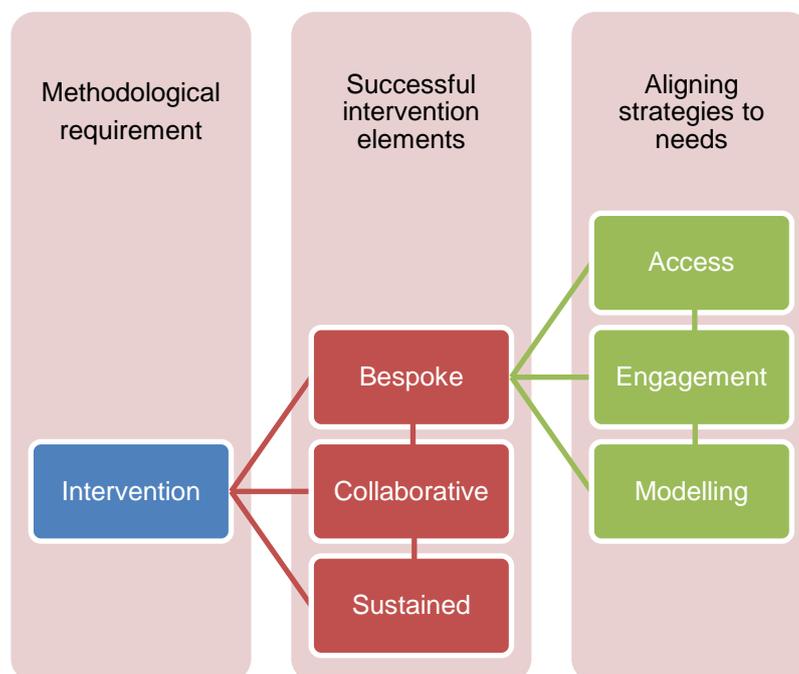
engagement with the intervention and modelling a positive disposition towards the intervention focus. This would in turn enable parents to help their children access the relevant resourcing, help them to promote engagement with the intervention focus and model the disposition they want to encourage in their children. There is reason to believe that the framework's efficacy could work beyond the scenarios tested in this research and exploring how it might work in other situations is an apparent area for further research. The results of this research show that when schools and families share goals an opportunity exists for a collaborative response.

Beyond working with parents, consideration of how this framework might work with different groups may warrant investigation. A school's initiative to try and positively change pedagogy may also benefit from this framework as a tool for both diagnostic purposes and to align strategies to teachers or departments in a differentiated way.

### Parental involvement

*How other knowledge is reflected in the new approach*

The synthesis of the access, engagement and modelling frame with the parental involvement frame (Figure 27) discussed below, presents a comprehensive new approach for designing and evaluating a range of interventions. This synthesis has a number of novel features, most notably the aligning of strategies to needs and the co-construction of the intervention process. While the result is unique, it does draw on a number of elements from other contexts.



*Figure 27: Alignment of DBR methodology and theoretical frames*

Differentiation and use of an inquiry process are consistent with expectations of the NZC (Ministry of Education, 2007). The NZC explicitly recognises both the differentiated needs of learners and an inquiry process as a way to help better meet these needs: “[s]ince any teaching strategy works differently in different contexts for different students, effective pedagogy requires that teachers inquire into the impact of their teaching on their students” (p.35). Though this statement has students in mind, it is clear from this research that its intent is just as pertinent to a school’s work with families and families’ work with their children. Applying the idea of using a differentiated approach when working with parents and inquiring into the impact of that work is not a big step if we consider that ‘community engagement’ is one of the eight principles of the curriculum. Specifically it requires that in the delivery of the curriculum to students a school “engages the support of their families, whānau, and communities” (p.9). In this sense the approach advocated here is very much in the spirit of the NZC and offers a way for schools to make the principle of community engagement embodied within the curriculum more than just a goal in an annual plan.

With this in mind a one-size-fits-all approach could be considered unlikely to be as effective and even unconsciously judgemental of parents. It is, perhaps, unreasonable to expect that a single approach would manifest in a consistent or reliable way across a diverse range of skills, experience and resources and there may be a temptation to judge parents who are not getting positive results as somehow being at fault compared with their peers. If some parents are reporting success there may be little incentive to consider that for others it may be the programme which is at fault. In this research the strategies taken up by parents were often modified which shows not only that refining strategies to best meet needs is important but also that participants exercised a great deal of autonomy in the intervention process. In line with the principles of the NZC (2007), a space and an opportunity to be involved were created but parents made the process of involvement fit their own conditions. In this way the inquiry can inform the differentiated approach and observing the implementation of the differentiated approach informs the inquiry. Using an inquiry approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme therefore draws aspects of the NZC together with the DBR methodology (the application of a DBR approach is discussed below).

The learning opportunities for parents had features consistent with those identified as being effective for teachers (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). As explained in Chapter 3, for the purposes of this research parents were cast in the role of practitioners in the application of a DBR approach. It is clear from the results that consideration of parents in this role can extend further. For example a number of the principles of quality teacher professional learning arguably apply equally to working with parents in this way. If we consider the ‘effective contexts for promoting professional learning opportunities that impacted on a range of student outcomes’ offered by the Teacher Professional Learning

and Development Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (TPL&D BES) (Timperley et al., 2007), it is clear that there is alignment between a number of these contexts and the opportunities offered to parents in this intervention. For example prevailing discourses were challenged as parents learnt more, both positive and negative, about their children's reading and the complexities of promoting reading and active school leadership was shown by the school's provision of this opportunity and the principal being involved in emailing notice of the opportunity to parents. Like the use of DBR in researching parental involvement, the BES contexts for promoting quality teacher professional learning transfer fairly easily to a parental involvement context. This opens up the possibility for other areas of knowledge regarding teacher practice to be evaluated for use in a parental involvement context.

The intervention phase of this research also shares characteristics with the professional community of practice model of professional development. Again, while this is a concept that has traditionally been applied to teacher professional learning, the key elements can be clearly seen in this study and hold true for work with parents. Timperley et al. identify (2007) two conditions of effective professional communities. The first of these is that participants have the support they need to "process new understandings and their implications for teaching" (p.xxx). To help do this processing, "[e]xpertise external to the group brought new perspectives" (p.xxx). As shown in Chapter 3 participants were challenged both in their application of strategies (for example finding that strategies which worked for others in the group were unsuccessful in their own context) and in terms of what they learnt about their children (for example that they held very different attitudes to reading than the participants had believed). Throughout the process participants had access to the researcher to provide support and guidance. The second condition of an effective professional community identified in the TPL&D BES was a focus 'on analysing the impact of teaching on student learning. This focus was assisted by grounding discussions in artefacts representing student learning and by teachers having high but realistic expectations of students and believing they could make a difference' (p.xxx). The research journals completed by parents required them, on a weekly basis, to reflect on the effects of the strategies they were using and document how those reflections might inform what they did the following week (see Appendix E). In this way they were analysing the impact of their involvement on their children. The journals and stories they brought to workshops were the artefacts which were used to discuss the progress families were making. The families' knowledge of their children and what they learnt from their initial attempts to use their intervention strategies meant that expectations were realistic. Their involvement demonstrated that they had high expectations: they believed participation could improve their children's reading habits. Although not deliberately set up to be a parent version of a teacher professional community, this intervention incorporated the two central conditions of an effective learning community.

As with the reading frame described above, there is no extant model in the parental involvement space which is able to have both the flexibility to encompass a wide range of approaches and the specificity to provide practical guidance for families. Typologies like those of Epstein (1995) and Lueder (2011) (Figure 2) are excellent for understanding the possibilities of parental involvement, and Lueder's progression of parental involvement (Figure 4) is a very useful way of understanding how different types of involvement could lead to better outcomes for students. The frameworks which have been developed and synthesised for this research provide a process by which these ideas might effectively be used. Though there is no single model on which this one builds, it incorporates not only the complexity of parental involvement as described in Chapter 2, but also key aspects of the New Zealand Curriculum, an inquiry approach, effective teacher professional learning and effective learning communities. It provides a nexus for a disparate, but important, range of considerations to be brought together in a way that provides an accessible link between theory and practice.

#### *A transferrable methodological approach*

An important methodological aspect of this research was the use of Design-Based Research principles (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). Though previously a methodology used for interventions involving researchers and teachers, in this instance it has been successfully deployed to frame an intervention with parents. This demonstrates that DBR can be transferred to a school/parent situation where the school become the researchers and the parents the practitioners. The implications of this are important as it shows the capacity of DBR for school research and improvement is greater than might have previously been understood. The potential of DBR in settings beyond its traditional uses means that its use merits consideration in a wider range of contexts.

The use of DBR for this research was an effective way to test the two theoretical frames which were developed for the intervention phase. The frames have a focus on producing practical outcomes for those involved. In this case the parents and their children. The use of DBR allowed for the development of the intervention design principles and for the theoretical understanding of these principles to be better understood (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Barab & Squire, 2004). The emphasis of DBR on also moving from the theoretical to the practical allowed these intervention design principles to be tested. The positive outcomes from the intervention detailed in Chapter 3 were achieved through the synthesis of the two theoretical frames. Using DBR as a basis for the research design was particularly useful for this purpose because it supported the inquiry approach of both theoretical frames. In this way DBR methodology and the inquiry approach discussed above can be seen to complement each other.

They are several ways DBR can play an important role in trying to better understand the field of parental involvement. As was observed in Chapter 2, the concept of 'parental

involvement' is complex and fraught (Fan & Chen, 2001). The flexibility provided by the need for DBR to be responsive to different contexts allows for variation between participants and for their individual approaches to change in the course of the intervention. This flexibility also means that each intervention can have a specificity of focus which can inform understandings of that particular aspect of parental involvement. The DBR approach, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, also offers a way to ensure a high degree of validity when measuring parental involvement interventions. It is effective because it allows for the complexities of parental involvement but also a robust way to design and measure parental involvement interventions.

As has been noted, the approach taken here allows for research ideas and practical strategies to be brought together in a meaningful way. This exemplifies the aspect of DBR which requires research to be both theoretical and practical (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). In line with DBR principles the theoretical understandings of working with parents and developing reading contributed to a practical intervention for participants. Conversely, the practical requirement of the intervention has helped inform the theoretical understandings which underpin the research.

The use of DBR in this way has another important function. Though schools work with parents in a myriad of structured and unstructured ways there are very few attempts by schools to investigate how these interactions work or what the outcomes are. This research, by adapting the DBR methodology to apply to a parental involvement context, was a systematic investigation and analysis of how this type of intervention worked in this context. As was noted in Chapter 2, the only aspect of DBR which was not applicable to this research was that it involve multiple iterations. This was because the intervention was the first iteration. In demonstrating the suitability of using a DBR approach in a parental involvement context this research provides not only a robust methodological starting point for future research in this area but also provides an example which others can use to refine and develop understandings of how schools can work effectively with parents.

The process which was used here may raise questions about treatment fidelity. However, as adaption, refinement and creation of strategies to suit individual families were encouraged, it must be understood that treatment fidelity is less relevant to this process. The research did not seek to prove that a particular strategy could reliably be implemented in a particular way to produce a predictable result. On the contrary, a guiding principle was to avoid treating all participants as if they were the same and to respond by deliberately making the strategies different. What was important here were the outcomes: were reading habits developing? The DBR methodology allows for the validity of the *process* to be established. There is no need for the strategies which comprise that process to all have been implemented in a uniform way.

### *Interventions need to try to align school and family practices*

The results of this intervention demonstrate that schools can work to encourage parental involvement in a way that results in positive outcomes for students. The first theoretical level of this intervention was the overlapping spheres of influence model (see Figure 1) put forward by Epstein (1995) and which echoes the ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998). The idea of trying to improve outcomes for students by increasing the 'overlap' between home and school supports Robinson's (2011) argument that making the transition between these two locations easier is an important way to help support students. All seven families who completed the intervention reported positive benefits as a result of working with the school more closely.

The positive aspects of this intervention go beyond the obvious benefits for the students and their parents which have been identified in Chapter 4. The parents have been empowered by their involvement but that involvement also empowers the school to find further ways to develop positive relationships with parents. This in turn supports the mutual goal of improving student outcomes. Similarly, while the school is providing support for the parents, by being involved the parents are supporting the school. By being mutually empowering and supportive the intervention increases the opportunity for school and family practices to more closely resemble one another.

### *Reconceptualising parental involvement*

The designing of parental involvement interventions can be reconceptualised by synthesising the two theoretical frames which have been tested (Figure 27). The parental involvement frame had three dimensions: interventions aimed to be bespoke, collaborative and sustained. As has been noted, research into the effects of parental involvement has often focussed on what parents are already doing rather than specifically on interventions to generate involvement (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Pomerantz et al., 2007). This is problematic particularly for meta-analyses like those of Domina (2005) and Fan and Chen (2001). Where interventions are used they are often using a specific programme or strategy (Cox, 2005; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003) and though some do promote collaboration this is often getting information from parents rather than empowering them to actually implement an intervention themselves (Cox, 2005). The enormous complexity of parental involvement described in Chapter 2 means that understanding exactly why an intervention leads to a particular result in a specific case can be difficult. Seeing the diversity and different sets of variables involved for a family as a resource rather than a potential barrier may enable interventions to operate with a higher degree of success.

This can be achieved by recognising that interventions need to be responsive to the needs of participants. The need for responsiveness at an individual school level has been noted by a number of researchers (Cox, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2009; Lueder, 2011;

Stelmack, 2005). This framework goes further in designing for each individual family. The resulting bespoke programmes essentially mean every family has its own unique intervention. The benefits of this approach are clear in the progress made by all seven families who completed the intervention. For the two families who had not reached their goals after ten weeks, the reasons why strategies were not working were able to feed into adjustments to their approach to make it even more responsive. By using the access, engagement and modelling frame described above to align relevant strategies to the particular circumstances of participants it is possible increase ownership and efficacy for those involved. This is why the need for a parental involvement intervention to be bespoke is the first dimension of the parental involvement frame. While all three dimensions contribute to decisions regarding the selection of access, engagement and modelling strategies it is the bespoke dimension where these two frames align (see Figure 27).

In order to achieve the level of responsiveness described the intervention design must be collaborative. Without the knowledge provided by participants about their children and home-life or without the educational knowledge and input of the school this tailored response would not be possible. Families involved in this study included solo parents, working parents, stay at home parents and a grandparent. It would not be possible to design for these differences without participants' input. In the intervention described in this research the workshops gave an opportunity for a dialogic relationship which allowed both the requisite sets of skills to be utilised.

The third dimension of the parental involvement frame was that the intervention be sustained. The complexity of parental involvement means that even with the prior knowledge of the parents and school combining to identify strategies, some approaches will be more effective than others (Finn, 1998; Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Pomerantz et al., 2007). As was observed with the participants in this instance, some found that strategies they liked were impractical in their own situations and some found that as their knowledge of their child as a reader changed the strategies they looked to changed as well. The learning of the participants as they went made this an iterative process which had highlights and also challenges for every family involved. As such the support of the researcher and other participants was important for providing advice and encouragement. Working with parents over time was another way this intervention could take the complexities suggested in previous research and use this to refine the approaches being taken by participants. By acknowledging participants' skills and working with them as co-designers of the intervention over an extended period time, this framework offers a new way to conceptualise parental involvement interventions.

Learning has to be recursive. Interventions need to be sustained in order to provide the necessary opportunities for parents to develop their knowledge, refine their understandings and embed new practices. Timperley et al. (2007) note that "teachers require similar conditions to students when in-depth learning is being promoted; that is, they need multiple

opportunities to learn through a range of activities” (p. xxxvii). Once again there is a clear logic in extending this condition to parents’ in-depth learning. Furthermore, Timperley et al. recognise that “[m]ultiple opportunities to review, revise, and refine practice allowed teachers to make changes in line with their developing theoretical knowledge and to translate this into their existing contexts in safe and manageable ways” (p.248). This intervention provided parents with multiple opportunities to trial a range of strategies and to observe, and reflect on, the results. It also provided opportunities for learning from others’ experiences. This is in contrast to ‘one-off’ forms of parental involvement (such as information evenings) which do not follow-up to see if the information has been understood or interpolated by parents. The sustained approach shown in this research not only provided on-going support but the requirement for parents to ‘do something’ as a result of their involvement gave opportunities to evaluate their understandings and provide further guidance and clarification if needed.

Observations from this research can be used to adapt Lueder’s (2011) model (see Figure 4). This research has drawn on the work of Lueder in order to situate its work with parents within a wider frame of parental involvement. Applying Lueder’s hierarchical series of progressions sees this research operating at the fourth level of ‘coaching’, where parents’ capacity to help play the necessary roles to support their child is enhanced. In light of what this research has found and the emphasis that has been placed on parents’ own knowledge being integral to planning a successful outcome, ‘coaching’ is a somewhat problematic term. Lueder sees coaching as an aspect of mentoring and while it might seem semantic to debate whether the researcher in the current situation was acting as a mentor or not, there is a clear difference between what happened and ‘coaching’. We can think of a ‘coach’ as a recognised expert leading those with less knowledge and expertise towards some goal. The coach, as the expert, is in a position of authority over those they coach. A coach has greater decision making power than those whom they coach. While this research was trying to increase parents’ capacity to help with their children’s education, it did not operate in a coaching style. In this research the relationship between school and parents was more equal: it was configured as people with a common interest but expertise in different areas working together rather than one person’s knowledge being dominant over another’s. Everyone was acknowledged for the expertise they brought to the process. To allow for this, and to build on Lueder’s structure, it may be better to consider the fourth stage as one of ‘collaborating’ rather than ‘coaching’.

It should be stressed that this type of intervention takes place at the fourth level of Lueder’s framework and though hierarchical, the previous three stages are important for getting to a point where parents will participate in this kind of intervention. The issue of parents who are not at a point where they would participate in a programme like this is addressed below, but it is important to note that while working with parents in this way might be the goal, there may need to be a number of initiatives on behalf of a school before this is possible for

some of their parents. The suggestions and examples for working in those earlier stages provided by Epstein (1995; 2005), Epstein et al. (2009) and Lueder (2011) are an excellent starting point for building towards the fourth, collaborative, stage.

The frames tested here add to other tools for encouraging positive parental involvement at different levels. Where the frames of Epstein (1995) and Lueder (2011) are important for understanding the range of parental involvement activities and offering ways to develop specific areas of involvement the current research can provide a way to enact these activities on an individual level. These results are encouraging for pursuing this type of approach in order to understand it more and how it might complement other work schools and parents are already doing. All school initiatives must deal with questions of resourcing and in some instances an approach which is responsive on a community level, but not an individual level, may seem like the most appropriate step towards achieving the desired goal. However, elements of the approach investigated here may still be incorporated into other programmes. A prescribed programme may show benefits for a majority of participants but a more bespoke, collaborative and sustained approach may benefit outliers who are not registering the same gains as other participants.

Other possible applications for this approach include using it in a range of scenarios with parents beyond the reading intervention described here. As discussed above, along with using the access, engagement and modelling frame to help provide the bespoke element of the intervention there is no reason why a school could not apply the same logic to other school goals.

These frameworks for trying to help change habits could also be considered for interventions beyond working with parents. It would be interesting to see if using this approach with teaching staff could similarly improve outcomes by using teachers' beliefs, experience and styles to create bespoke interventions which all contribute towards a common goal. In working with teachers it may be possible, as with parents, to turn the diversity which can be problematic for implementing change into a strength of the overall response.

Though the idea of individual interventions may seem daunting, especially when working with larger numbers, the overall design of this research project meant that by far the majority of the time resource needed was provided by the participants. By empowering participants to design, implement and monitor their own response the input of those responsible for the project may be no more substantial than the effort required to lead a group of diverse individuals through a prescribed programme. In this way the current research adds another tool when considering how to effect a change of habit or practice by reconceptualising how we might work with people to effect that change.

## **Implications**

Schools are always trying to find ways to improve and meet the needs of their communities but many need help to develop programmes to align the contributions of the school, families and the community (Epstein et al., 2009). Teachers often want to improve the reading habits of their students and this research demonstrates that in this instance an intervention for the parents can have a positive impact relatively quickly. It may well be that in some cases going straight to parental involvement will yield more satisfactory results than trying to effect change through the classroom only. Schools should seriously consider the direct role parents might play in helping them reach their goals. This is particularly pertinent if we want learning to continue beyond the school gates: a coordinated approach to achieving this could be expected to work better than waiting for it to happen organically. When selecting goals and planning how to achieve them, schools should consider the role of parents, the types of parental involvement that they currently have and which types would be advantageous for achieving their goals. In some instances an intervention working with parents in the ways described in this research may be a better way for schools to achieve those goals. They may also be relatively easy for teachers to implement at a smaller level.

As discussed already, although this research focused on improving reading habits the use of this approach need not be limited to reading. The needs of students and communities are many and will be different in different locations. Within schools needs may often differ especially if the school operates in a diverse community. The approach trialled here offers a tool for schools to use in a wide range of situations and for a wide range of purposes.

A further implication is that knowledge of how the different dimensions of the frameworks tested here operate may offer a way to strengthen existing interventions. Some interventions may benefit from incorporating these models to target those for whom the current approach is not working.

## **Limitations**

In line with the design-based methodology which was used in this research, the intervention was a prototype. As such further testing and iterations are required and this would be specifically useful in addressing some of the limitations of the current project. A number of these have been alluded to already.

Firstly, the participants in this research were all volunteers. As such, though a number had low confidence in their ability to help their children with their reading they had enough of a sense of connection to the school and confidence to choose to be part of the project. This leaves a question as to whether it would be possible to involve other parents in a process

like this. Whether hard-to-reach parents could be given access to an intervention like this in a way that sees them become involved will be important to find out. This also raises the question as to whether hard-to-reach parents would enjoy similar results to those in the current project. A number of researchers have commented that harder to reach parents are more likely to respond to a personal approach (Green et al., 2007; Lewis et al., 2011; Stelmack, 2005). Further trialling which targeted parents, rather than waiting for them to volunteer, may help address some of these questions.

Similarly, while it seems logical that this approach could work in a variety of situations with a variety of foci this trial was limited to reading and parental involvement. So while there is an argument for its efficacy beyond working with parents to improve reading habits this remains untested. Further iterations of the intervention would be necessary to see if the success for the participants in this instance can translate into other contexts.

As noted above, the bespoke approach does not necessarily have to be labour intensive in comparison with other interventions. However, this trial was with a small group and the possibility of scaling-up such an approach in order to connect with a greater range and number of participants is not addressed here. Trying to keep the strongly collaborative nature of the intervention intact whilst also developing mechanisms for working with larger numbers would present issues which would need to be worked through. A further trial with a larger number of participants would seem like a logical further step for testing this approach and exploring ways to negotiate this issue.

A further limitation of the present research is that while the success of individual cases can be measured against their stated goals, there is no measure here of outcomes for students. The scope of this project allowed for a ten-week intervention and it was decided that this was not a long enough time frame to robustly measure reading gains for the children involved. As discussed in Chapter 2, reading gains can take a long time to show up. As well as this the ten-week intervention period would not be long enough to demonstrate that any gains in reading ability that might be identified would be sustained beyond the intervention. If the focus on reading at home stopped after ten weeks, reading gains may not be consolidated. Longitudinal data would be required to try and make a case for benefits to individual students reading abilities over time (Sullivan & Brown, 2013). This research therefore does not provide the empirical evidence of benefits to student outcomes which has eluded proponents of parental involvement (Bull et al., 2008; Cox, 2005; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Finn, 1998; Stelmack, 2005) and drives the criticism of its detractors (Domina, 2005). However, it does point the way to how this might be empirically tested. By running the intervention over a longer timeframe and using clearly defined measures for assessing student outcomes to gather data at different time points, it would be possible to see if the positive changes to reading habits do translate into improved reading ability, and hence better academic outcomes, for students (Chamberlin, 2013; Martin et al., 2004; Mullis et al., 2012; Sullivan & Brown, 2013).

In terms of the measures, some parents found filling in their research journals on time each week could be a challenge when they were busy. As these journals provide a good deal of rich description to help understand the process the participants are going through, it is important to make this as easy as possible. It would be recommended that parents are given the choice of completing this electronically in further iterations. An easy to fill in form emailed to participants each week and emailed back to the researcher would help facilitate the timely recording of observations. It would also help the researcher to identify areas where further support or discussion may be useful.

## **Conclusion**

This intervention improved the reading habits of a number of students. It helped empower the parents involved by improving their confidence, skills and knowledge of helping with reading at home. Despite some of the uncertainty in the literature about parental involvement this project demonstrated that parental involvement interventions can have positive outcomes which justify their use.

The theoretical and methodological model for parental involvement which has been developed and trialled here provides a way to negotiate the contested terrain of the parental involvement literature, to incorporate the enormous range of variables which contribute to parental involvement as an advantage rather than a disadvantage, and design practical interventions which help schools and parents achieve common goals. It is specific enough to provide practical, everyday, realistic strategies for families to use but flexible enough to be applied to a wide range of interventions aimed at improving an organisation's performance. Though this is a small prototype trial it suggests many possibilities for further research and adaptation.

## Appendices

## Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet



Te Kura Akoranga o Tāmaki Makaurau  
Incorporating the Auckland College of Education

Epsom Campus  
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone 64 9 623 8899  
Facsimile 64 9 623 8892  
[www.education.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.education.auckland.ac.nz)

The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92601, Symonds  
Street  
Auckland 1150, New Zealand

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

#### Year 9 Parent Reading Intervention

Project title: Improving reading habits through the development of strong home-school partnerships

Name of Researcher: David Taylor

My name is David Taylor and I am a member of the Northcote College English Department and currently a full-time student at the University of Auckland. Based at the Woolf Fisher Research Centre at the Faculty of Education, I am carrying out research towards completion of a Master of Educational Leadership degree under the supervision of Dr Rebecca Jesson.

This research project seeks to establish whether schools can broaden the range of interventions available to them for improving outcome for students by empowering parents to help support their children's learning at home. This is particularly the case in secondary schools where subject knowledge becomes more and more specialised and increasingly the content students learn is outside of the everyday knowledge and experience of their parents. Forming stronger relationships with parents would also enable a school to access, and share, parents' knowledge and skills in helping their children's learning. This research focuses on reading strategies for parents of Year 9 students and will explore whether parents, working collaboratively with the school and other parents can improve parents confidence in their own ability to support their child's reading at home.

As a parent of a Year 9 student you are invited to participate in this reading intervention which would offer the chance to work collaboratively with the researcher and other parents to see if your own range of strategies, skills, knowledge and confidence in supporting your child's reading development can be increased.

Participation is voluntary and would involve attending a first workshop on --/--/-- and second workshop on --/--/--. The initial workshop is for parents and the researcher to discuss and share the reading strategies that are, or could be, used at home. Participants would then

select one or more strategies they feel would be useful to use at home and also practicable for their family. The second workshop would be a chance to discuss what has worked well, what was unsuccessful, give general impressions and establish what you might want to do next to support your child's reading development in the future. Each workshop will be approximately 2 hours long. At the start of each workshop there will be a short questionnaire about your attitudes and beliefs to supporting reading at home. The purpose of these questionnaires is to establish whether your confidence and knowledge of supporting reading changes over the course of the intervention. You will also be required to complete entries in an intervention journal (10 minutes once a week) over the XX weeks of the project.

This data will be kept securely by the researcher for six years and then destroyed.

Participants have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Participants have the right to withdraw their data from the research up to 31 August 2014. The school Board of Trustees has provided an assurance that participation or non-participation will have no impact on your, or your child's, relationship with the school.

Quotes or descriptions from the workshops, questionnaires and intervention journals will be used in the completed master's thesis, as well as in reports on the research, publications, conference presentations, talks, and research presentations. We will never identify participants by name, and we will do everything we can to maintain participants' anonymity and confidentiality. Although it is unlikely, however, there is always the chance that a participant's identity might be guessed by people who know them or know of them. For this reason we would ask you to carefully consider what you feel comfortable talking about; and let us know if there is anything you would not want us to report in public.

Finally, we will be working as a group and we ask people to respect each other's privacy and confidentiality – that is, to not tell other people about who else was involved, or what they said. However, we cannot guarantee that people will always stick to this, so please also take this into account in deciding what you might share in the workshops.

If you would like to know more about this study please contact:

Researcher:

David Taylor

[dtay064@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:dtay064@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

Supervisor:

Dr Rebecca Jesson

[r.jesson@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:r.jesson@auckland.ac.nz)

Ph: 623 8899 ext 48162

Head of Department:

Professor Judy Parr

[jm.parr@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:jm.parr@auckland.ac.nz)

Ph: 623 8899 ext 88998

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 87830/83761. Email: [humanethics@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@auckland.ac.nz).

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 9 April 2014 for (3) years, Reference Number 011297

## Appendix B: Consent Form



Te Kura Akoranga o Tāmaki Makaurau  
Incorporating the Auckland College of Education

Epsom Campus  
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone 64 9 623 8899  
Facsimile 64 9 623 8892  
www.education.auckland.ac.nz

The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92601, Symonds  
Street  
Auckland 1150, New Zealand

### CONSENT FORM

Year 9 Parent Reading Intervention

### THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Improving reading habits through the development of strong home-school partnerships

Name of Researcher: David Taylor

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to take part in this research intervention, which will consist of two 2-hour workshops, trialling reading support strategies and recording the process in an intervention journal.

I understand that parts of what I say may be quoted (anonymously) in research publications and presentations.

I understand that I am free to withdraw participation at any time, and to withdraw any data traceable to me up to 31 August 2014.

I understand that my participation or non-participation will have no impact on my, or my child's, relationship with the school.

I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings.

If yes, please provide an electronic or physical address for sending you a summary of findings:

I agree to not disclose the contributions of other participants in the workshops.

I understand that while all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure information shared in workshops will remain confidential it cannot be guaranteed that a workshop member would not share another's comments outside of the workshop

I understand that data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS  
COMMITTEE ON 9 April 2014 for (3) years, Reference Number 011297

## Appendix C: Profiling Questionnaire

### Year 9 Parents Reading Support Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to build a picture of Year 9 parents' thoughts about supporting reading at home. It is completely voluntary. There are no right or wrong answers and your responses will remain completely anonymous. By completing the questionnaire you are confirming that you have understood the nature of the research and why you have been selected. You are also giving your consent for the data you supply to be used in the research project.

As a child moves through the school system the role that parents and caregivers play changes. These questionnaires will provide a snapshot of Year 9 parents' beliefs about their role in supporting their children's reading as they move into high school.

#### 1. What we do at home:

a) Please list anything you do at home that you consider supports your child's reading (reading could include recreational reading/ information gathering/ online reading/ shared or independent reading).	
Activity: (For example: listening to them read, reading to them, talking to them about books/ reading, encouraging them to read, helping them access reading materials, advice, modelling etc.)	How much time per week, in total (minutes/hours), would you spend on these activities?

#### 2. The importance of developing reading skills.

For each statement please circle the answer you think most closely matches your own viewpoint.

a) At high school <i>continuing</i> to develop reading skills is:				
Much less important than it was when they were younger	Somewhat less important than it was when they were younger	About as important as it was when they were younger	Somewhat more important than it was when they were younger	Much more important than it was when they were younger

b) At high school parental involvement in children's reading is:				
Much less important than it was when they were younger	Somewhat less important than it was when they were younger	About as important as it was when they were younger	Somewhat more important than it was when they were younger	Much more important than it was when they were younger

c) At high school parental involvement in a child's school work:				
Limits a child's development of independence	Could restrict a child's development of independence	Has no effect on a child's development of independence	Could help a child's development of independence	Is important for a child's development of independence

### 3. The help I can offer.

For each statement please circle the descriptor that you think best represents your own position.

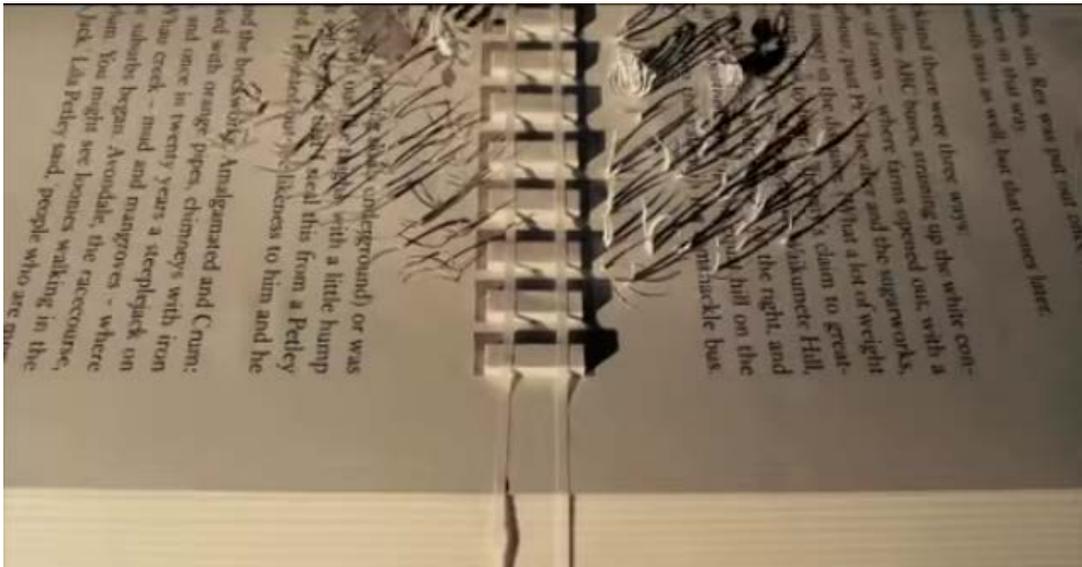
a) I have the skills and knowledge to help support my child's reading development.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

b) I know how to get help to support my child's reading development.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

c) I am confident that I can help support my child's reading development.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

**Thank you very much for participating in this research. Please place this questionnaire in the box in the foyer before you leave.**

## Appendix D: Workshop booklet



### Improving Reading:

#### How to help children develop their reading skills



Cover image from New Zealand Book Council animation 'Going West':  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_jyXJTlrH0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_jyXJTlrH0)

## Contents

1. Reading strategies	Page 4
2. Getting help	Page 6
3. Habits	Page 7
4. Praising Effort	Page 8
5. What can you do?	Page 10

**'[A]lthough the worlds of school and home may differ greatly, students will thrive if there are enough bridges between them to make the crossing a walk into familiar rather than foreign territory'**

Viviane Robinson, 2001

David Taylor  
Sam McNaughton

[dtaylor@northcote.school.nz](mailto:dtaylor@northcote.school.nz)  
[smcnaughton@northcote.school.nz](mailto:smcnaughton@northcote.school.nz)

## Reading Strategies

### Facts

- Good literacy skills are essential for all areas of study – including maths and P.E.
- Reading develops vocabulary, grammar, syntax as well as knowledge of world, other people and ourselves
- Reading and not-reading are habits
- Children learn from the habits of their parents
- Reading speed and stamina must be built like any skills
- All reading is good reading: fiction, non-fiction, biographies, articles, news stories, graphic novels...
- A U.S. study has found a direct relationship between the number of books in the home and how many years people spend in education – a stronger indicator than socio-economic status and parental education

### Strategies

- Belong to your local library and make weekly or fortnightly visits
- A minimum of 30 minutes reading every day will have enormous long term benefits
- Set aside joint or whole family reading time
- Read yourself and be seen to be reading
- Talk about what you are reading
- Read aloud to your child –whatever their age
- Have them read aloud to you
- Good readers question, clarify, summarise and predict: integrate these questions into your shared reading conversations
  - Why do you think they've done that?
  - What's happening?
  - Is that a good idea?
  - Are they really who they say they are?
  - Is he the brother or the cousin?
  - Where was she from?
  - So what's happened?
  - How did they end up in this situation?
  - Why are they responding that way?
  - What will happen next?
  - Is that a good idea?
  - How will it end?
  - How will the other characters respond?
- Read the same books/ articles etc. separately and then discuss
  - What did you think of character A?
  - Do you agree with what the judge said?
  - My favourite part was when...
  - At first I found it boring and thought...
  - I found the ending...
  - Character B was so annoying!
  - I liked the idea that Character C was able to be forgiven for his mistakes
- Have a book club: go out for hot chocolate/ milkshake/ a walk/ picnic...

- Read the book then have a movie night to watch the film
  - What are the differences?
  - What was left out?
  - Is it different?
  - Better/ worse?
- Base reading around a topic of special interest:
  - a relative
  - a place
  - an activity
  - a time in history

## Getting help

- School librarians (Jackie Hawthorne and Erin Grey)
- English teacher
- Public librarians
  - <http://www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/EN/Teens/Pages/default.aspx>
- Online forums like Good Reads:
  - <http://www.goodreads.com/>
- National Library
  - <http://schools.natlib.govt.nz/creating-readers/creating-reading-culture/engaging-teens-reading>
- Other parents/ students
- Poetry:
  - <http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/>
  - [www.poetry.org](http://www.poetry.org)
  - <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

## Habits

### Facts

- A habit is created by performing the desired behaviour time after time until it no longer requires large amounts of self-control
- Given the choice of leisure activities on offer, it is probably not a 'natural' behaviour for your child to do schoolwork at home!
- You will need to help them develop this habit, initially it might take a large amount of self-control but with persistence it will become a habit and take little or no effort to continue

### Strategies

- Successfully forming a habit may be helped by:
  - Taking small steps (e.g. 15 minutes of revision per night in total)
  - Only try to change or create one habit at a time (e.g. don't try to go to bed 1 hour earlier and do 15 minutes of revision per night and not eat any sugar after dinner)
  - Help your child repeat the behaviour as many times as you can, the more it is repeated the more it becomes instinctive

## Praising Effort rather than Ability is Essential

### Facts

- Praising ability rather than effort is damaging to children
- Ability is NOT fixed or predetermined
  - If we believe we have a certain ability in an area we have no reason to work to get better at it
  - We have an excuse for failure in things we don't think we're good at
  - We have no reason to persevere
  - We enjoy our success less: we were always going to be successful
  - We can have nothing to gain and everything to lose
  - Along with the Content Knowledge of subjects, to be successful students need to learn perseverance and HOW to put in effort
- Schoolwork is about LEARNING not about how clever we are
- Good marks aren't an indicator of future success...

### Strategies

- Try to avoid ability based comments:
  - You've always been good at drawing
  - You're just naturally good at sport
  - You're such a talented musician
  - Of course you did well you're so good at science
  - You're so clever
  - You get your talent at maths from your mum
- Instead base the praise on effort
  - You spend so much time drawing you just keep getting better and better
  - All that training has really improved your tackling - it's really impressive
  - You've done so much music practice lately it's sounding wonderful
  - You put in so much effort for that test you really deserve that great mark
  - You work so hard and do so well – I'm so proud of you
  - Your mum worked hard to be good at maths too
- Decide for each task what a reasonable amount of effort will be
- Give praise as soon as it's done rather than waiting until it has been marked:
  - I can see you've tried really hard with this – well done!
  - What part are you most pleased with?
  - Do you think we allowed enough time to do the best job?
- Ask how they feel about their effort, are they pleased with the result, proud of their work:
  - Encourage: 'I've tried really hard' and 'I've done my best work'

## What can you do?

- What constraints do you have?
  - time
  - transport
  - support
  - others?
- Quality not quantity...
- Schedule it in
- Make it realistic

## Appendix E: Research Journal (sample page)

Week 1

Date:

1. Which strategies have we used this week, how long did we spend on them and how did we feel about them?

Strategy:	Frequency: (For example twice)	Total time: (For example 25 minutes)
Describe what you did:		
Explain how it went: <i>At first/ but then/ so we tried...</i>		
How do you feel about it and why? <i>I feel [positive / negative / mixed / uncertain / confused]about how it went because...</i>		
How you think your child feels about it: <i>My child would probably say the experience for them was [positive / negative / mixed / uncertain / confusing] because...</i>		

2. Considering everything we have done in the intervention so far:

a) My overall impression of how it is going is...

b) Since last week my level of confidence in my ability to help is:			
Lower	The same	Higher	
c) My motivation to keep going is:			
Low			High

**Appendix F: Pre- and post-intervention questionnaire**

Year 9 Parents Reading Support Questionnaire

Name:

1. What we do at home:

a) Please list anything you do at home that you consider supports your child's reading (reading could include recreational reading/ information gathering/ online reading/ shared or independent reading).	
Activity: (For example: listening to them read, reading to them, talking to them about books/ reading, encouraging them to read, helping them access reading materials, advice, modelling etc.)	How much time per week, in total (minutes/hours), would you spend on these activities?

2. The importance of developing reading skills.

For each statement please circle the answer you think most closely matches your own viewpoint.

a) At high school <i>continuing</i> to develop reading skills is:				
Much less important than it was when they were younger	Somewhat less important than it was when they were younger	About as important as it was when they were younger	Somewhat more important than it was when they were younger	Much more important than it was when they were younger

b) At high school parental involvement in children's reading is:				
Much less important than it was when they were younger	Somewhat less important than it was when they were younger	About as important as it was when they were younger	Somewhat more important than it was when they were younger	Much more important than it was when they were younger

c) At high school parental involvement in a child's school work:				
Limits a child's development of independence	Could restrict a child's development of independence	Has no effect on a child's development of independence	Could help a child's development of independence	Is important for a child's development of independence

3. The help I can offer.

a) I have a good knowledge of my child's reading ability.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

b) I have a good knowledge of their reading strengths.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

c) I have a good knowledge of their reading weaknesses.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

d) They would ask me for help if they were finding a text difficult.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

e) They would ask for help choosing a text.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

f) I know what they like to read.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

g) I would feel confident selecting a text they would like.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

h) We discuss their reading.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

i) We discuss my reading.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

j) I would feel confident giving advice to others about supporting reading.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

4. Overall

For each statement please circle the descriptor that you think best represents your own position.

a) I have the skills and knowledge to help support my child's reading development.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

b) I know how to get help to support my child's reading development.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

c) I am confident that I can help support my child's reading development.				
strongly agree	agree	I'm unsure	disagree	strongly disagree

## References

- Allington, R. L., McGill-Franzen, A., Camilli, G., Williams, L., Graff, J., Zeig, J., . . . Nowak, R. (2010). Addressing summer reading setback among economically disadvantaged elementary students. *Reading Psychology, 31*(5), 411-427.
- Alvermann, D. (2003). *Seeing themselves as capable and engaged readers: Adolescents and re/mediated instruction*. Retrieved from <http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/literacy/readers.pdf>
- Anderson, T., & Shattuck, J. (2012). Design-based research: A decade of progress in education research? *Educational Researcher, 41*(16), 16-25.
- Baker, L. (2003). The role of parents in motivating struggling readers. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 19*(1), 87-106. doi:10.1080/10573560308207
- Barab, S., & Squire, K. (2004). Introduction: Design-based research: Putting a stake in the ground. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences, 13*(1), 1-14.
- Biddulph, F., Biddulph, J., & Biddulph, C. (2003). *The complexity of community and family influences on children's achievement in New Zealand: Best evidence synthesis (BES)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental process. In R. M. Lerner, & W. Damon (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. theoretical models of human development* (5th ed., pp. 993-1028). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Brooking, K., & Roberts, J. (2007). *Evaluation of the home-school partnership - literacy programme*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Bull, A., Brooking, K., & Campbell, R. (2008). *Successful home-school partnerships*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

- Catsambis, S. (2001). Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in children's secondary education: Connections with high school seniors' academic success. *Social Psychology of Education, 5*, 149-177.
- Chamberlin, M. (2013). *PIRLS 2010/11 in New Zealand: An overview of national findings from the third cycle of progress in international reading literacy study (PIRLS)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Clinton, J., Hattie, J., & Dixon, R. (2007). *Evaluation of the Flaxmere project: When families learn the language of school*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Coe, R. J. (2012). Conducting your research. In J. Arthur, M. Waring, R. Coe & L. Hedges (Eds.), *Research methods and methodologies in education* (pp. 41-52). California: Sage Publications Inc.
- Cook-Cottone, C. (2004). Constructivism in family literacy practices: Parents as mentors. *Reading Improvement, 41*(4), 208-216.
- Cox, D. D. (2005). Evidence-based interventions using home-school collaboration. *School Psychology Quarterly, 20*(4), 473-497.
- Desforges, C., & Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review*. (No. 433). Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.
- Domina, T. (2005). Levelling the home advantage: Assessing the effectiveness of parental involvement in elementary school. *Sociology of Education, 78*(3), 233-249.
- Dweck, C. S., & Lennon, C. (2001). Person vs. process focused parenting: Impact on achievement motivation. *Paper presented to Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development*, Minneapolis.
- Education Review Office. (2011). *Directions for learning: The New Zealand curriculum principles, and teaching as inquiry*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

- Elley, W. (2000). The potential of book floods for raising literacy levels. *International Review of Education*, 46(3), 233-255.
- Entwisle, D., Alexander, K., & Olson, L. (2001). Keep the faucet flowing: Summer learning and home environment. *American Educator*, 25(3), 10-15.
- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 701-712.
- Epstein, J. L. (2005). *Developing and sustaining research-based programs of school, family, and community partnerships: Summary of five years of NNPS research*. Baltimore MD: National Network of Partnership Schools: Johns Hopkins University.
- Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G. & Sheldon, S. B. (2007). *Family and community involvement: Achievement effects*. Retrieved from [http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/FamCommInv\\_AE.htm](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/FamCommInv_AE.htm)
- Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S. B., Simon, B., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., . . . Williams, K. J. (2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. California: Corwin Press.
- Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2006). Moving forward: Ideas for research on school, family, and community partnerships. In C. F. Conrad, & R. Serlin (Eds.), *SAGE handbook for research in education: Engaging ideas and enriching inquiry* (pp. 117-138). California: Thousand Oaks.
- Evans, M., Shaw, D., & Bell, M. (2000). Home literacy activities and their influence on early literacy skills. *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 54(2), 65-75.
- Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 1-22.
- Finn, J. D. (1998). Parental engagement that makes a difference. *Educational Leadership*, 55(8), 20-24.
- Gorinski, R. (2005). *Parent mentoring initiative evaluation*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

- Graham-Clay, S. (2005). Communicating with parents: Strategies for teachers. *School Community Journal*, 15(1), 117.
- Green, C. L., Walker, J. M. T., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2007). Parents' motivations for involvement in children's education: An empirical test of a theoretical model of parental involvement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(3), 532-544.
- Guthrie, J. T., Lutz Klauda, S., & Ho, A. N. (2013). Modelling the relationships among reading instruction, motivation, engagement, and achievement for adolescents. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 48(1), 9-26. doi:10.1002/rrq.035
- Guthrie, J. T., & Wigfield, A. (2000). Engagement and motivation in reading. In P. D. Pearson, R. Barr & M. L. Kamil (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (3rd ed., pp. 403-422). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Guthrie, J. T. (1982). The book flood. *Journal of Reading*, 26(3), 286-288.
- Guthrie, J. T., Alao, S., & Rinehart, J. M. (1997). Literacy issues in focus: Engagement in reading for young adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 40(6), 438-446.
- Hancock, T., Kaiser, A., & Delaney, E. (2002). Teaching parents of preschoolers at high risk: Strategies to support language and positive behavior. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 22(4), 191-212.
- Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2007). *Engaging parents in raising achievement - Do parents know they matter?* ( No. DCSF-RBW004). London: United Kingdom Government.
- Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. (Eds.). (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement*. U.S.A.: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Heyns, B. (1978). *Summer learning and the effects of schooling*. New York: Academic Press, Inc.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1995). Parental involvement in children's education: Why does it make a difference? *Teachers College Record*, 97(2), 311-331.

- Jaeger, R. (1988). Survey research methods in education. In R. Jaeger (Ed.), *Complimentary methods for research in education* (pp. 303-330). Washington: American Educational Research Association.
- Janiak, R. (2003). *Empowering parents as reading tutors: An example of a family school partnership for children's literacy development*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Jesson, R., McNaughton, S., & Kolose, T. (2014). Investigating the summer learning effect in low SES schools. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 37(1), 45-54.
- Jeynes, W. H. (2011). *Parental involvement and academic success*. New York: Routledge.
- Katyal, K. R., & Evers, C. W. (2007). Parents—Partners or clients? A reconceptualization of home–school interactions. *Teaching Education*, 18(1), 61-76.  
doi:10.1080/10476210601151573
- Kim, J. (2004). Summer reading and the ethnic achievement gap. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 9(2), 169-188. doi:10.1207/s15327671espr0902\_5
- Kim, J. (2009). *How to make summer reading effective*. Retrieved from [www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/Research\\_Brief\\_03\\_-\\_Kim.pdf](http://www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/Research_Brief_03_-_Kim.pdf)
- Kim, J., & Quinn, D. M. (2013). The effects of summer reading on low-income children's literacy achievement From Kindergarten to grade 8: A meta-analysis of Classroom and home interventions . *Review of Educational Research*, 83(3), 386-431.  
doi:10.3102/0034654313483906
- Kim, J., & White, T. (2008). Scaffolding voluntary summer reading for children in grades 3 to 5: An experimental study. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 12(1), 1-23.
- Kirsch, I., De Jong, J., LaFontaine, D., McQueen, J., Mendelovits, J., & Monseur, C. (2003). *Reading for change: Performance and engagement across countries*. Paris: OECD.

- Kloosterman, R., Notten, N., Tolsma, J., & Kraaykamp, G. (2011). The effects of parental reading socialization and early school involvement on children's academic performance: A panel study of primary school pupils in the Netherlands. *European Sociological Review*, 27(3), 291-306. doi:10.1093/esr/jcq007
- Kuhn, M. (2005). A comparative study of small group fluency instruction. *Reading Psychology*, 26(2), 127-146.
- Kuhn, M., Schwanenflugel, P. J., Morris, R., Mandel, L., Woo, D. G., Meisinger, E. B., . . . Stahl, S. A. (2006). Teaching children to become fluent and automatic readers. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 38(4), 357-387.
- Lewis, L., Kim, Y. A., & Bey, J. A. (2011). Teaching practices and strategies to involve inner-city parents at home and in the school. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 27(1), 221-234.
- Lincoln, L., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lueder, D. C. (2011). *Involving hard to reach parents: Creating family/ school partnerships*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Lunenburg, F., & Irby, B. (2002). *Parent involvement: A key to student achievement*. Paper presented to Annual Meeting of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, Burlington, VT.
- Martin, M. O., Mullis, I., & Gonzalez, E. (2004). Home environments fostering children's reading literacy: Results from the PIRLS 2001 study of reading literacy achievement in primary schools in 35 countries. *1st IEA International Research Conference*, Lefkosia, Cyprus.
- Ministry of Education. (2007). *New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2014). *English achievement objectives*. Retrieved from <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum/Learning-areas/English/Achievement-objectives>

- Moje, E. B. (2002). Re-framing adolescent literacy research for new times: Studying youth as a resource. *Reading Research and Instruction, 41*(3), 211-28.
- Moje, E. B. (2008). Foregrounding the disciplines in secondary literacy teaching and learning: A call for change. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 52*(2), 96-107.  
doi:10.1598/JAAL.52.2.1
- Moje, E. B., Overby, M., Tysvaer, N., & Morris, K. (2008). The complex world of adolescent literacy: Myths, motivations, and mysteries. *Harvard Educational Review, 78*(1), 107-154.
- Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Foy, P., & Drucker, K. T. (2012). *PIRLS 2011 international results in reading*. The Netherlands: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.
- Onwuegbuzie, A., & Leech, N. (2007). Validity and qualitative research: An oxymoron? *Quality & Quantity, 41*, 233-249.
- PISA. (2013). *PISA 2015 draft reading literacy framework*. Paris: OECD.
- Pomerantz, E. M., Moorman, E. A., & Litwack, S. D. (2007). The how, whom, and why of parents' involvement in children's academic lives: More is not always better. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(3), 373-410.
- Resetar, J. L., Noell, G. H., & Pellegrin, A. L. (2006). Teaching parents to use research-supported systematic strategies to tutor their children in reading. *School Psychology Quarterly, 21*(3), 241-261.
- Roberts, J., Jurgens, J., & Burchinal, M. (2005). The role of home literacy practices in preschool children's language and emergent literacy skills. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 48*(2), 345-359.
- Robinson, V. (2011). *Student-centered leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Sénéchal, M. (1998). Differential effects of home literacy experiences on the development of oral and written language. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33(1), 96-116.
- Sénéchal, M., & LeFevre, J. (2002). Parental involvement in the development of children's reading skill: A five-year longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 73(2), 445-460.
- Sheldon, S. B., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2004). Partnership programs in U.S. schools: Their development and relationship to family involvement outcomes. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 15(2), 125-148.
- Simon, B. (2001). Family involvement in high school: Predictors and effects. *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin*, 85(627), 8-19.
- Simon, B. (2004). High school outreach and family involvement. *Social Psychology of Education*, 7, 185-209.
- Stake, R. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: The Guildford Press.
- Stelmack, B. (2005). *Parental involvement: A research brief for practitioners*. Retrieved from <http://resources.curriculum.org/secretariat/files/Mar8Parentalinvolvement.pdf>.
- Sullivan, A., & Brown, M. (2013). *Social inequalities in cognitive scores at age 16: The role of reading*. (No. 10). London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education, University of London.
- Timperley, H., & Robinson, V. (2002). *Partnership: Focusing the relationship on the task of school improvement*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007). *Teacher Professional Learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Twist, L., Schagen, I., & Hodgson, C. (2007). *Readers and reading: The national report for England 2006 (PIRLS: Progress in international reading literacy study)*. UK: National Foundation for Educational Research.

- Tymms, P. (2012). Questionnaires. In J. Arthur, M. Waring, R. Coe & L. Hedges (Eds.), *Research methods and methodologies in education* (pp. 231-240). California: Sage Publications Inc.
- Van Voorhis, F. L. (2001). Interactive science homework: An experiment in home and school connections. *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin*, 85(20), 20-32. doi:10.1177/019263650108562703
- Wigfield, A., Guthrie, J., Perencevich, K., Taboada, A., Lutz Klauda, S., McRae, A., & Barbosa, P. (2008). Role of reading engagement in mediating effects of reading comprehension instruction on reading outcomes. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 432-445. doi:10.1002/pits.20307
- Williams, D. (2005). Teaching parents to teach kids; Pilsen, little village schools offer workshops that give parents the academic skills to help students. *Catalyst Chicago*, 16(7), 16.
- Wylie, C., Hodgen, E., Hipkins, R., & Vaughan, K. (2008). *Competent learners on the edge of adulthood: A summary of key findings from the competent learners @ 16 phase*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). California: Sage Publications.