

COMPARISON OF EARLY LITERACY ATTITUDES OF HEAD START
TEACHERS AND THE FREQUENCY OF LITERACY ACTIVITIES IN
WISCONSIN HEAD START CLASSROOMS

By

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ABSTRACT

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Comparison of the Early Literacy Attitudes of Head Start Teachers and the
Frequency of Literacy Activities in Wisconsin Head Start Classrooms

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Head Start began a school readiness focus in 2000 with an emphasis on accountability when the National Head Start Bureau issued an outcomes framework for all Head Start programs. This was followed up by President Bush's early childhood initiative, *Good Start, Grow Smart*. This initiative focused on early literacy and national accountability for all Head Start programs.

In response to the national early literacy emphasis, the researcher developed a teacher survey to focus on early literacy attitudes, importance of early literacy activities and frequency of early literacy activities in Head Start classrooms. Demographic information was utilized to compare years of experience and educational level of teachers to attitudes and importance of early literacy in Head Start. Data was collected by sending a survey to 200 Head Start teachers in 56 Head Start agencies throughout the state of Wisconsin in February, 2002. One hundred forty six surveys were returned to the researcher, which yields a return rate of 73%.

The Head Start teachers in Wisconsin were asked to participate in the study through their Head Start Director. The Head Start Directors asked teachers in their programs to complete the surveys. If the teachers wished to participate in the study, they completed the survey and returned it in a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Level of teacher education and years of teaching experience made a difference in early literacy in Head Start classrooms. As educational level increases, attitudes about early literacy tend to also increase. A statistical significant difference was found at the .05 level between teachers with Associate degrees from those with Bachelor and Master level degrees.

Along with early literacy attitudes increasing with educational attainment, the researcher also concluded that teachers feel more skilled teaching early literacy activities as their educational level increases. A significant difference at

the .01 level was found between teachers with CDA's, Associate and Bachelor degrees from those with Master's degrees.

As with level of education, a significant difference was found when comparing early literacy attitudes with years of teaching experience. Teachers with 3-5 years experience scored significantly different at the .05 level from those with 6-10 years of experience.

Teachers with 6-10 years of experience scored highest in section two of the survey, attitudes about literacy. Teachers with 2 years or less of teaching experience scored the highest in section three of the survey, importance of teaching early literacy skills and teachers with 11 years or more of teaching experience scored highest on section four of the survey, frequency of literacy activities.

This study would be beneficial if repeated one year from now, once the Head Start teachers have been trained in the CIRCLE literacy model and have had a chance to implement literacy strategies in the classroom. Comparing current early literacy attitudes, early literacy importance and frequency early literacy activities may be very different one year from now in Head Start classrooms based on continued training and mentoring support within their programs.

The information collected though this survey was very useful in delineating necessary literacy training and technical assistance areas for Head Start teachers. Teachers reported spending the least amount of time on helping students to find letters in words and act out events from stories. These activities

are two important literacy aspects for young children to experience. The data also showed teachers with 2 years or less teaching experience reported the highest scores in importance of early literacy skills. It is important for training and technical assistance providers to appreciate teacher differences based on years of teaching experience and level of education.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

According to the Ready to Learn, Ready to Read Town Meeting on April 22, 2001 the five top priorities for the United States Department of Education/Administration came from the Early Childhood Education: Ready to Learn, Ready to Read Initiative, spearheaded by the first lady, Laura Bush. The priorities include: strengthening Head Start, partnering with states to improve literacy, \$45 million for new research on literacy, new public awareness on the importance of literacy and \$75 million for pre-reading programs.

Head Start is a comprehensive preschool program serving low-income, preschool children and their families. Authorized under the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Head Start is dedicated to increasing both the everyday effectiveness of children and preparing them for the future. The 1994 Head Start Reauthorization Act began Early Head Start to extend services beyond preschool children to low-income, pregnant women and families with infant and toddlers. According to the Wisconsin Head Start Association (WHSA) 2001 annual report, there are currently 12 Early Head Start grantees in Wisconsin. Head Start and Early Head Start grantee and delegate agencies promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children, and by ensuring proper health, education, nutrition, social and other services are provided to family members as determined by a family assessment (WHSA, 2001).

Head Start is based on the premise that children develop within the context of their family and culture. The comprehensive range of Head Start

services is developed to meet the needs of each individual child and his or her family's developmental, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage and experience. Programs and all services provided to Head Start families promote parents as the primary educators and nurturers of the child, and offer family members opportunities for growth and change, based on the belief they are best able to identify their individual strengths, needs, interests and seek solutions accordingly (WHSA, 2001).

Head Start programs are required to gather programmatic data and complete a Program Information Report (PIR) on an annual basis. This information is submitted to the National Head Start Bureau and compiled on a national level. The 2000-01 PIR stated that there are a total of 667 teachers in the state of Wisconsin. Seventy-five teachers (11.24%) hold an associate degree in Early Childhood or related field, 197 (29.54%) hold a baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood or related field, 25 (3.75%) hold a graduate degree in Early Childhood or related field, 255 (38.23%) have a CDA, and 21 (3.15%) have other degrees (WHSA, 2001).

According to the WHSA Annual Report (WHSA, 2001) teachers in Wisconsin have a large range of educational experiences and years of teaching experience. This tells us that teachers are at different stages of professional development. Each stage of teacher development relates to early literacy and how the teacher approaches literacy activities in his/her classroom.

So what is early literacy? Several varied definitions of literacy for young children currently exist. Some sources referred to emergent literacy, while others

referred to pre-reading skills and school readiness. Whithurst and Lonigan (1998) defined emergent literacy as the, “acquisition of literacy best conceptualized as a developmental continuum, with it’s origins early in the life of a child” (p. 850). A more understandable definition of emergent literacy is the development of a child’s skills and awareness about reading and writing that occur in the course of everyday activities before a child enters school (McGee, Purcell-Gates, 1997). Yet the National Head Start Bureau defined emerging literacy as a progression, an ongoing process of developing and acquiring language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Emergent literacy refers to the earliest signs of interest in and ability to read and write. Emergent literacy skills at the start of kindergarten are a good predictor of children’s reading abilities throughout their educational career. Exposure to literacy activities early in life, both at home and in early childhood classrooms, are essential to the development of these skills (Childtrends, 2001).

“All children, especially those at risk for reading difficulties, should have access to early childhood environments that promote language and literacy growth and that address a variety of skills that have been identified as predictors of later reading achievement” (Burns, Snow, & Griffin, 1998, p. 7). Some of these predictors are included in the 1998 Head Start Reauthorization Act, which stated that Head Start children must meet specific education performance standards in language and literacy. “Children must: develop phonemic and print awareness; understand and use language to communicate for various purposes; understand and use increasingly complex and varied vocabulary; develop and

demonstrate an appreciation of books; and, in the case of non-English background children, progress toward acquisition of the English language” (Head Start Act, 1998, p. 32). The Act also requires that children produce specific learning outcomes. Children must: “Know the letters of the alphabet are a special category of visual graphics that can be individually named; recognize a word as a unit of print, identify at least 10 letters of the alphabet; and associate sounds with written words” (Head Start Act, 1998, p. 32).

All of these goals are challenging for young children, but certainly obtainable for most preschool children if they have proper access to an appropriate literacy-rich environment and high quality teaching that provides ongoing literacy opportunities for all children. In fact, some children’s progress in literacy development will be advanced and should be nurtured by both teachers and parents. Teachers can expect that many children in Head Start will learn to recognize many, if not all, of the letters of the alphabet, write their own names, and read a few simple, everyday words like, “Mom” or a friend’s name. Other children will need a more systematic approach to achieve the literacy goals of the program. This individualized approach to teaching literacy is the foundational premise of Head Start and is clearly related to what we know about how early literacy skills develop (NAEYC, 2000a).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to compare the attitudes of Head Start teachers around the subject of early literacy to the frequency of literacy activities in the Head Start classrooms. This included information of teacher’s attitudes on

the weight of importance that literacy components hold in their classrooms. Demographic information was utilized to compare years of experience and educational level to attitudes and importance of early literacy in Head Start. Data was collected by sending a survey to 200 Head Start teachers throughout the state of Wisconsin in February, 2002. The study was used to determine the areas of need for further training and technical assistance in the area of early literacy for Head Start teachers.

Null Hypotheses

The four null hypotheses for this research were:

1. There will be no difference in the attitudes toward early literacy, importance of literacy activities and the frequency of literacy activities done in the classroom based on the educational level of teachers.
2. There will be no relationship between the number of children in the classroom and the frequency of literacy activities in the classroom.
3. There will be no relationship between the number of volunteers in the classroom and the frequency of literacy activities done in the classroom.
4. There will be no difference in attitudes toward early literacy, importance of literacy activities and the frequency of literacy activities done in the classroom based on years of teaching experience.

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms needed to be defined.

These were:

1. C.D.A. – Child Development Associate (a certification for early childhood educators prior to an Associate Degree (AA)).
2. Early Head Start – A comprehensive program for low-income families with children ages 0-3.
3. Emergent literacy – The view that literacy learning begins at birth and is encouraged through participation with adults in meaningful activities; these literacy behaviors change and eventually become conventional over time.
4. Emergent reading – A child's pretense of reading before he is able to read fluently and conventionally. Shows the child's interest and motivation is learning to read.
5. Expressive language – Children's use and knowledge of words in spoken language.
6. Family literacy – The different ways in which family members initiate and use literacy in their daily lives. Family literacy programs generally emphasize adult literacy skills, early reading activities, parent-child activity time, and parenting skills.
7. Head Start – A comprehensive preschool program for low income children, ages 3-5.
8. Letter knowledge – The ability to identify the letters of the alphabet.
9. Phoneme – The smallest units of sound that combine to form syllables and words (for example, b-i-g, three phonemes).

10. Phonemic awareness – The ability to recognize spoken words as a sequence of sounds.
11. Phonics – The relation between letters and sounds in written words or an instructional method that teaches children these connections.
12. Phonological awareness – The whole spectrum from primitive awareness of speech and rhythms to rhymes awareness and sound similarities and, at the highest level, awareness of syllables or phonemes.
13. Whole language – A philosophy of teaching literacy skills that includes the use of trade books, with the concurrent instruction in reading, writing, and oral language and focuses on meaningful, functional and cooperative learning.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions which were apparent in this research. It was assumed that all teachers completing the surveys understood the questions. It was also assumed that all surveys were responded to honestly, and a fair representation of Wisconsin Head Start teachers completed the literacy surveys.

Limitations

Several limitations were identified by the researcher. The limitations included that there may have been misinterpretations of questions on the survey. Not all 667 teachers in the state of Wisconsin were sent surveys and therefore the results may not reflect the views of all the Head Start teachers in Wisconsin. The survey did not allow for personal comments and therefore teachers needed

to answer within the confines of the survey. This survey was given to Head Start teachers prior to the early literacy initiative released by President Bush, therefore programs have not been through the intensive early literacy training sessions.

The following chapters include a review of current early literacy literature, methodology of the study, results and discussion of the early literacy research and a chapter dedicated to summarizing, concluding and recommendations for future research. Chapter two will focus on defining early literacy and outlining appropriate early literacy practices for the classroom. Current research and early literacy studies will be discussed here. Chapter three will include a description of the subjects surveyed, the instrumentation used, data collection procedures, data analysis, assumptions and limitations identified by the researcher. Chapter four will describe demographic information, and detail the item analysis of the early literacy research. This chapter will also identify and discuss each research hypothesis. Chapter five will include a summary of the research, discuss conclusions and outline recommendations for future research and training and technical assistance.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will describe Head Start's history from a national and state perspective. Early literacy development in young children and developmentally appropriate literacy techniques for classroom teachers and parents will be addressed. This chapter will also focus on literacy activities for all children, including those with disabilities and English as a second language. The importance of home environments in literacy success for young children will be examined. Finally, it will compare current research in early literacy and how the classroom teacher affects the outcome of literacy growth in young children.

History of Head Start

Head Start has a long tradition of delivering comprehensive and high quality services to enhance the healthy development of low-income children. Since its inception in 1965, Head Start has served more than 19.4 million children. For fiscal year 2001, Head Start was federally funded at \$6.2 billion and served more than 857,000 children and their families nationwide (NHSA, 2001). In Wisconsin, during the 2000-2001 program year, combined state and federal funding has given 15,678 children and their families the opportunity to be enrolled in Head Start (WHSA, 2001).

According to the Wisconsin Head Start Association 2001 Annual Report, Wisconsin currently has 56 Head Start agencies, including 10 tribal programs and one migrant program. In addition, there were 12 Early Head Start programs,

including two tribal programs. The majority of funding for these programs comes directly from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (ACF). The state also funds several Head Start programs through a combination of general-purpose revenues and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) dollars. At the state level, Head Start funds are administered by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in cooperation with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) (WHS, 2001).

During the 2000-2001 program year, 91% (\$81 million) of all Head Start programming in Wisconsin was federally funded. An additional \$2 million in expansion funds were awarded for the purpose of serving more children and families in fiscal year 2002. State Head Start supplemental funding provided \$7.4 million for the remaining 9% of all programming, offering increased opportunities for more low-income children and families in Wisconsin to be enrolled in the program (WHS, 2001).

Early Literacy Development in Young Children

Children develop language skills beginning at infancy and continuing throughout their entire life. Even in the first few months of life, children begin to experiment with language. Young babies make sounds that imitate the intonation and rhythms of adult speech; they “read” gestures and facial expressions, and they begin to associate sounds with frequently heard words (NAEYC & IRA, 1998). Young babies and toddlers enjoy listening to familiar songs and rhymes, they play peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake, and manipulate objects

such as board and picture books and alphabet blocks in their play. From these remarkable beginnings, children learn to use a variety of symbols (Rush, 1999).

For years, parents and educators have believed that reading and writing were difficult skills for children and that they would only be ready to learn at a specific point in their development. We now know that children learn about language the same way they learn about their own experiences, by imitating, exploring, experimenting, trying out their ideas, and participating in their cultures (Rush, 1999). Role modeling plays a large part in children learning literacy skills. Children often watch others read and write in order to get things accomplished. They also may pretend to do informal teaching that adults and older children may provide through literacy-focused play. The quality and quantity of early experiences in literacy have a direct impact on the differences in achievement levels of children (Rush, 1999). Preschool aged children engage in behaviors that mimic skillful reading and writing all the time. As parents or educators we must recognize these skills being displayed as learning opportunities and enhance them as much as possible. Emerging literacy looks at oral language, reading and writing as interconnected parts of literacy development. Each of these language skills supports and builds the development and use of the others (NHSA, 1998).

Oral language is the foundation for literacy during the preschool years. Before children can learn to read and write, they must first develop a basic vocabulary, a sense of how stories are told, and phonological awareness. Children most often acquire these skills when they communicate and speak with

adults who allow them time to speak, listen carefully to them and respond directly and appropriately (McCabe & Dickinson, 2001).

Early Literacy Classroom Activities

One of the most important methods in developing oral language in children is through oral book reading. Reading needs to take place every day in the early childhood classroom. McCabe & Dickinson (2001) suggested that a teacher should aim for at least 20 minutes per day for a half-day session. Teachers need to make reading fun by playfully choosing voices for various characters and commenting on interesting parts of the book, which may pose confusion for the child. A good way to increase conversations during book reading is to listen attentively to children's comments while reading and to build upon each comment. If a child asks a question, it is important for the teacher to respond by providing additional information, while defining and using varied vocabulary. Classroom teachers must also be aware of chances to discuss the meanings of words and use a variety of words, ranging from simple to complex, with children throughout the day. This process will assist in building the child's vocabulary (McCabe & Dickinson, 2001).

Some simple classroom strategies for children according to McCabe and Dickinson (2001) include:

- (1) Ensure that one or more adult reads with small groups of children every day in the classroom. Encourage volunteers to read with children. Identify children who may need extra assistance in reading and contact volunteer groups at nearby colleges, high

schools, community organization, religious groups, businesses or senior centers to help in the classroom. In addition to reading with volunteers, children can draw pictures about the characters in the book or make up stories of their own. After listening to the child's story, volunteers may print or type the story for the child to keep.

(2) Keep track of which children are read to in small groups.

Ensure that all children have this experience at least one time per week. Don't forget to include children with special needs in the rotation of reading.

(3) Set aside time when children can tell stories about real experiences involving pets, animals they may have seen, hobbies, family trips or the child's relatives. Giving details, descriptions, and telling stories not only helps children learn how stories are written and what they mean, but is also builds vocabulary and communication skills. Do not focus on correcting the children's grammar while they tell stories, instead role model correct grammar yourself.

(4) Introduce varied vocabulary as part of the daily curriculum.

Teach groups of words that may be linked to the current theme in the classroom. Utilizing rhymes, songs and poems are an effective technique to introducing new vocabulary to children. Make up stories about children in group time and include their names in familiar songs. Ask families to help you learn songs, poems, and

stories in the children's home language. (McCabe & Dickinson, 2001, p. 21 - 22)

Other techniques may include setting up a reading area in the classroom by creating a colorful and cozy space where children can read their own stories or be read to. Make sure this area has appropriate lighting and that interesting books are placed where children can easily access them. It is important to include books for children with special needs and that the space does not become exceedingly large. It is more important that the space is well defined and that children enjoy using it.

Teachers need to plan time in the daily schedule so that children can look at books on their own. It is also important that teachers incorporate the community into literacy planning and teaching. Plan a field trip to the local library. Many times story hours can be established for a classroom of children, if prearranged with the librarian. Reading stories to children about their native culture and/or language is also important when focusing on literacy development. Children often respond well to stories of their own cultures. This experience exposes other children to cultures different from their own. In addition, offer picture books without words so children have the opportunity to make up their own stories to go along with the pictures (McCabe & Dickinson, 2001).

Early Literacy for All Children

It is vital that we do not forget about children who may have disabilities in our literacy skill development planning. Head Start has always been a leader in including children with disabilities. Expectations by the Head Start Performance

Standards are that all children in Head Start programs will experience language and literacy rich environments. All children, including those with disabilities, need literacy rich learning environments that provide the foundation for later school success. For most children with disabilities, an effective language and literacy development program includes the same elements as one for typically developing children. But the specific goals for the children's development and teaching strategies used may be adapted depending on the severity of the child's disability. These goals need to be set as part of the child's Individualized Education Plan referred to as an IEP (NAEYC, 2000b).

Early Literacy Progression

Unconsciously, children naturally follow a developmental progression in gaining literacy skills according to DeBarshe (1995). In order to become fully competent in reading and writing, children must master and coordinate skills from the following six domains: 1. Oral language: Vocabulary and grammar form the foundation of reading comprehension. 2. Motivation: Interested children seek out adult assistance and voluntarily engage in activities that help to build their literacy skills. 3. Print concepts: Knowing that letters are individual, discrete units, that reading goes from left to right and top to bottom, that print translates to meaning and that print is useful in performing real world activities. 4. Phonological awareness is the ability to hear sounds within the spoken words. 5. Decoding (or phonics): Letter identification, matching letters with in their spoken sounds and blending these sounds to create and read whole words. 6. Automaticity is the goal of all children becoming able readers. With practice,

children can recognize common words as a unit or whole (sight reading) (DeBaryshe, 1995). However critical the six domains are to successful literacy skills in children, we must not forget that children's language learning is rooted deeply in the caring environments of their homes and families. Most children will gain knowledge in the first three domains through experiences before they begin elementary school.

Importance of Home Environments

Children who reside in homes where reading and writing are common and valued tend to experience more success with reading as they begin school (Childtrends, 2001). No matter how much time a teacher or school dedicates to working with children, most parents naturally have the opportunity to spend more time in this process. Since building oral language skills takes a lot of time and experience, it is crucial to seek out the help of parents. Teachers need to help educate parents about the essential building blocks of early literacy skills. They need to encourage parents to read to their children on a daily basis and encourage them to tell stories. Parents, who often encourage children to tell them stories and use a variety of vocabulary, help their children to develop oral language skills, which in turn, helps them learn to read.

Some parents cannot read themselves or may have difficulty reading. It is important to inspire and support these parents to be especially responsive to their children's conversations and encourage them to talk with their child at length every day. Teachers need to encourage parents who do not speak fluent

English to use their native language when talking with their children, because advanced language skills such as varied vocabulary and lengthy story telling are necessary for the support of further literacy skills. By encouraging a variety of oral language skills, teachers and parents can better assist children in learning to read (McCabe & Dickinson, 2001).

Strategies for Parents in Supporting Early Literacy

Low-income families often face challenges in exposing children to books and reading, both financially and otherwise. A number of approaches have been taken to address this situation. Many programs, including Head Start, participate in programs where families receive free books throughout the year. Several other options have been explored with varying degrees of success, including home visitation programs and family literacy programs, such as Even Start. Research suggests that the effectiveness of these types of programs depends on the extent and dedication of the families' participation (Childtrends, 2001).

Some helpful strategies for parents include: Use your native language when speaking with your child. During mealtimes, turn off the television and/or radio. Talk and listen to your child. Ask questions and comment on what they say. Use varied word and advanced vocabulary. When traveling or waiting with your child, listen and talk with them. Read with your child at least one time per day, or ensure that someone does. Provide your child with age-appropriate books and magazines from libraries (McCabe & Dickinson, 2001).

Importance of Early Literacy Awareness for Educators

Why does this information hold importance for early educators to know?

The development of skilled reading occurs naturally for most children, provided that their home environment encourages literacy, without significant problems. However, one in three children experience significant difficulties in learning to read in early elementary school (Lonhigan, Burgess & Anthony, 2000). Children who experience early difficulties in learning to read have a higher likelihood to continue struggling throughout their school career. Children who enter school with limited reading skills are at a much higher risk of being placed in special education classes. A vast majority of children who are currently referred to special education classes are referred because of an unsatisfactory progression in reading skills (Lonhigan, Burgess & Anthony, 2000). Rush (1999) also noted that children growing up in low-income environments have lower than average levels of reading achievement and higher than average rates of placement in special education classes. Research done by Lonhigan, Burgess and Anthony (2000) suggested that this discrepancy in test scores and special education classes can be linked to differences in a child's experience during his or her early childhood years, both in an education setting and at home.

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA 2000a) conducted a study to assess the availability and quality of books for young children.(Bodrova, Leong & Paynter, 1999). This national study assessed the availability and quality of books for young children (ages 0-5). This study found disturbing evidence that quality books are eluding children from families

with low incomes in early childhood classrooms. It also found that the literacy emphasis in most early childhood programs is not strong enough to prepare children for school. So what can be done in early childhood settings to offset these findings?

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Teachers and parents alike need to learn the appropriate way to nurture early literacy skills in young children. Neuman, Copple & Bredekamp (2000) outlined the five core areas for early literacy skills: teaching children to read and write, increasing school variation, teaching reading, recognizing early beginnings of literacy and current policies and resources. The first area is teaching children to read and write. It is essential and urgent to teach children to read and write competently, enabling them to reach today's high standards of literacy. Although the United States enjoys the highest literacy rate in its history, society now expects everyone in the population to function beyond the minimum standards of literacy.

The second area is increasing variations in our schools. With the increasing variation among young children in our programs and schools, teaching today has become more challenging. Experienced teachers throughout the United States report that the children they teach today are more diverse in their backgrounds, experiences, and abilities than those they have taught in the past.

Thirdly, among many early childhood teachers, a maturationist view of young children's development continues despite much evidence to the contrary. A readiness view of reading development assumes that there are specific times

and/or stages in the early childhood years when the teaching of reading should begin.

The fourth area addresses early beginnings of literacy. Recognizing the early stages of literacy acquisition too often has resulted in use of inappropriate teaching practices suited to older children or adults. Unfortunately, teaching practices associated with outdated views of literacy development are still prevalent and utilized in many classrooms today.

Lastly, current policies and resources are inadequate to ensure that preschool and primary teachers are qualified to support the literacy development of all children, a task requiring a strong preservice program and ongoing professional development. For early childhood teachers in the United States, no uniform preparation requirements or licensure standards exist. In fact, a high school diploma is the highest level of education required to be a child care teacher in most states (Neuman, Bredekamp & Copple, 2000). Head Start is currently raising the educational requirements for their teachers. The Head Start Performance Standards now require that 50% of all teachers across the United States must have an Associate degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field by the year 2003 (Head Start Act, 1998).

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) developed several research-based concepts on improving the reading achievement of America's children. They include: home language and literacy experiences, appropriate preschool programs, reading success skills, primary-level instruction, classroom environments, diversity, disabilities, reading

proficiency and building on opportunities to improve reading achievement (CIERA, 2000a).

Home language and literacy experiences lead to the development of key print concepts. Joint book reading with family members help children develop a wide range of knowledge that helps to support their school based learning. Once a child enters school, a parent can help by role modeling good reading habits and monitoring a child's homework. Programs that assist families in initiating and implementing these types of activities show positive outcomes for children's later reading achievement (CIERA, 2000a).

Preschool programs are particularly beneficial for children who do not experience informal learning opportunities in their homes. These preschool experiences must include opportunities to listen to and examine books, say nursery rhymes, write messages, and to see and talk about print concepts. These types of preschool experiences lead to improved reading achievement in the later school years with some effects providing gains through third grade (Neuman & Roskos, 2000).

Skills that predict later reading success can be promoted through a variety of classroom's language and meaningful reading and writing events in kindergarten and grade one. The two most powerful of the predictors are letter-name knowledge and phonemic awareness. Instruction that includes phonemic awareness assists children in hearing and blending sounds. Activities that promote this recognition of sounds can be motivating and fun for young children, including the use of rhymes, poems, songs and the use of journals and

messages. This type of instruction has proved to have positive effects on the primary-grade reading achievement, especially when paired with letter-sound instruction (CIERA, 2000a).

Primary-level instruction that supports successful reading acquisition is consistent, well designed, and focused. Teachers provide opportunities for children to receive systematic work recognition instruction on common, consistent letter-sound relationships and important but often unpredictable high-frequency words such as “the” and “what”(CIERA, 2000a).

Primary-level classroom environments in successful schools provide opportunities for students to apply what they have learned in teacher-guided instruction to everyday reading and writing. In these classrooms, teachers read books aloud and engage the children in follow-up conversations. Children read independently every day and they are given opportunities to write stories and keep journals (CIERA, 2000a).

Cultural and linguistic diversity among America’s children reflects the variations within the communities and home in which they live and is manifested in differences in their dispositions toward and knowledge about topics, language and literacy. The child’s home language is especially critical for schools to build upon when the children are learning to speak, listen to, write and read English. There is considerable evidence that proves the knowledge that students acquire in speaking and reading their first language will articulate into learning to read a second language (CIERA, 2000a).

Children who are identified as having reading disabilities benefit from systematic instruction, but not at the cost of opportunities to engage in meaningful reading and writing. These children excel with the same types of instruction that would be provided in a normal setting (CIERA, 2000b).

Proficient reading in third grade and above is sustained and enhanced by programs that adhere to four fundamental features: (a) deep wide opportunities to read, (b) the acquisition of new knowledge and vocabulary, partially through wide reading but also through explicit attention to acquiring networks of new concepts through instruction, (c) an emphasis on the influence that the kinds of text and the ways writers organize particular texts has on understanding, (d) explicit attention to assisting students in reasoning about text (CIERA, 2000b).

Professional opportunities to improve reading achievement are prominent in successful school and programs. These opportunities allow teachers and administrators to analyze instruction, assessment and achievement of the students. This then allows the opportunity for setting goals for improvement and learning about effective practices for children in the individual classrooms. It is important for us to remember that entire schools staffs, not just first-grade teachers, are involved in bringing children to high levels of achievement.

Current Trends in Early Literacy

Why is all of this information regarding the emphasis on early literacy skills to critical to early childhood programs right now? The current presidential Administration is placing a high emphasis on improving the literacy skills of children in early childhood programs, more specifically, Head Start. The Bush

Administration is currently working with a school readiness organization, the Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE) out of the University of Texas at Houston, to increase the literacy skills of Head Start teachers across the country (CIRCLE, 2002).

CIRCLE begins by categorizing three typical early literacy teaching characteristics as: (1) Large group, one-dose training without in-classroom support (2) Potpourri of topics which lack focus on development of specific skill sets; and (3) Didactic focus without adequate time to practice skills. CIRCLE also identified that most early childhood programs ignore the need for involvement and buy in from all staff levels (e.g., directors, coordinators, teachers and aides) and the lack of evaluation of training effectiveness. CIRCLE is currently proposing a four tier innovative solution to address the issues described above. First, the education of legislators on the importance of funding for higher quality pre-kindergarten programs with focus on early literacy skill development will serve as a priority. Next, CIRCLE will be providing national summer institutes for Head Start management staff to be trained as CIRCLE certified trainers. The staff will then go back to their individual programs and train all teachers to utilize the literacy approaches in Head Start classrooms. The content of this approach will included; responsive teaching practices, language enrichment including scaffolding throughout the day, read aloud's and print and book awareness, motivation to read, phonological awareness, letter knowledge and early work recognition, and written expression. Lastly, they propose that state pre-kindergarten guidelines be developed and maintained (CIRCLE, 2002).

CIRCLE's literacy training model is a way for teachers to deepen their expertise in the area of early literacy for young children. According to CIERA's 2001 report on teacher's beliefs and practices about literacy instruction, the educational level of the teachers was directly related to the beliefs, attitudes and practices of early literacy activities in the classroom (Burgess, Lundgren, Lloyd, Pianta, 2001). The areas identified in CIERA's 2001 report were; alphabet knowledge beliefs, word and story knowledge beliefs, verbal language beliefs, word-study practices, alphabet knowledge practices, story practices and interest motivation practices. Teachers with less than a four-year degree held lower scores in alphabet knowledge beliefs, word and story knowledge beliefs, word-study practices, and alphabet knowledge practices. However, they held higher scores in work and story knowledge beliefs, story practices and interest motivation practices. There was little to no difference in beliefs or practices between teachers with bachelors and masters degrees (Burgess, Lundgren, Lloyd and Pianta, 2001). CIERA also found that the number of years teachers had taught was related to their emphasis on story-related practices. Teachers with more teaching experience tended to value activities that involved telling or illustrating a story more than their less-experienced counterparts.

Self-report activities varied greatly in the CIERA study. They found that teachers reported that minimal time was devoted to writing activities in their classrooms, which directly related to the teachers' beliefs that writing is unimportant for preschoolers (Burgess, Lundgren, Lloyd and Pianta, 2001).

Early Literacy Research in Head Start

The National Head Start Bureau in Washington, DC conducted a longitudinal study of Head Start programs called Family and Child Experiences Study (FACES). Through the FACES study, Head Start has national data available on what children know and can do when they enter the program, when they leave the program, and after they complete the Kindergarten year. This information is based on direct assessments of a nationally representative sample of 3,200 children in 40 programs across the country, starting in Fall 1997, and replicated with a second cohort of 2,800 children in 43 programs starting in Fall 2000. Three additional sources of information were sought. The classroom trained observers measured the quality of classroom resources and instruction. Teachers reported on their credentials and experiences. Parents described the types of literacy activities they engage in with children at home (National Head Start Bureau, 2001).

Results of FACES 1997 found that children who completed Head Start showed more progress than the other typical preschool child in some measures of early literacy, such as vocabulary growth and early writing. However, Head Start children showed little progress in letter recognition or knowledge of print concepts over the course of a program year. By the spring of Kindergarten, Head Start graduates made large gains in vocabulary, letter recognition and writing skills relative to national norms. Both program efforts and parent efforts mattered. Children in classrooms with richer teacher-child interaction and more language learning opportunities had higher vocabulary scores. These high

quality classrooms were more likely to have teachers with higher educational levels. Parents who read to children more frequently had children with greater work knowledge (National Head Start Bureau, 2001).

Preliminary analysis of data from FACES 2000 suggest that Head Start children are making greater progress in the two areas where they fell behind three years ago: learning alphabet letters and understanding book and print concepts. During the 2000-2001-program year, children again showed a greater increase than the typical preschool child in vocabulary, early writing, and early math. In addition, they held their own relative to national norms in letter recognition and showed significantly greater gain in book knowledge (National Head Start Bureau, 2001).

Continuing analyses of FACES 2000 data on teaching methods and classroom practices may help answer questions about the types and frequency of the literacy-related activities in which Head Start teachers engage. For example, what kinds of curricula are utilized and most effective in promoting children's learning? What kinds of instructional settings – small group, whole group or individual are best for literacy interactions? What teacher characteristics are most important for ensuring a literacy rich environment for children? Early examinations of the data suggest that while large group and individual story reading is the most common type of literacy activity, a majority of teachers are observed to teach letters in their classrooms. Although Head Start has lower child: adult ratios than most preschool programs, it is still most common for literacy activities to take place in larger group settings. Finally,

programs reporting the use of well-supported comprehensive curricula have children with comparable gains in literacy and math outcomes (National Head Start Bureau, 2001).

Teacher Qualifications

There is much controversy about the education level of teachers having direct correlation to the literacy outcomes for young children. In terms of general preparation of teachers, we may not all agree what is the minimum requirement for a teacher to be skilled in early literacy activities for young children. Some believe that “life experience” is a substitute for formal training, while others believe that a minimum number of courses in reading fundamentals are essential for success (Raphael, 2001). In the state of Wisconsin, 3.15% of teachers hold a CDA, 11.24% hold Associate degree’s, 29.54% hold a four-year degree and 3.75% hold graduate degrees (WHSA, 2001).

While teacher’s knowledge about language and literacy is fundamental to their ability to teach students, the average number of credits for reading, writing and language practices, as well as children’s literature and literacy assessment averages 6.36 semester hours (2.23 courses) in a typical four year undergraduate teacher preparation program (Raphael, 2001).

Summary

This chapter outlined Head Start’s history from a national and state perspective. Early literacy development in young children and developmentally appropriate literacy techniques for classroom teachers and parents was addressed. This chapter also focused on literacy activities for all children,

including those with disabilities and English as a second language. The importance of home environments in literacy success for young children was examined. Finally, it compared current research in early literacy and how the classroom teacher affects the outcome of literacy growth in young children.

Ensuring that all Head Start children reach their fullest potential, as future readers and writers is an important, shared responsibility of many, including, administrators, teachers, parents, and all adults who care for and work with children. Head Start and all other early childhood programs need to examine the effectiveness of their current classroom practices and approaches to increasing language and literacy skills in children, and as needed, seek out and or design new approaches and practices based on current research (Feld, 1998). If every child is expected to enter kindergarten equipped with early literacy skills, the focus and emphasis of this important topic must be increased in all early childhood programs. We must take a closer look at the qualifications of our teachers in the area of early literacy in order to reach positive outcomes for all.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology including a description of subjects, sample selection of the subjects to whom the survey was administered, development of the actual survey, procedures for data collection, procedures for data analysis, and limitations of the study. This study was devised to compare the attitudes of Head Start teachers, including importance of literacy activities along with the frequency of literacy activities in the classroom setting.

Description of Subjects

The subjects for this study were Head Start teachers in the state of Wisconsin during February of 2002. There were 667 Head Start teachers and 56 Head Start agencies, statewide in February 2002. Two hundred surveys were sent to 56 Head Start agencies in the state. One hundred forty six surveys were returned to the researcher, which yields a return rate of 73%.

Sample Selection

The Head Start teachers in Wisconsin were asked to participate in the study through their Head Start Director. Each Head Start Director was sent a cover letter explaining the study, the confidentiality of the surveys, informed consent, and how the results would be utilized. A copy of the cover letter is included in Appendix A. The Head Start Directors asked teachers in their programs to complete the surveys. If the teachers wished to participate in the

study, they completed the survey and returned it in a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Instrumentation

The researcher perceived that Head Start teachers were apprehensive regarding the shift in focus from social competence to school readiness with emphasis on early literacy. To determine if this perception was accurate, the researcher created a survey to measure the teachers' perceptions of early literacy, including importance ratings of teaching early literacy skills in a Head Start classroom. The amount of time literacy activities were executed in the Head Start classroom was also addressed. Because this instrument was developed by the researcher for the purpose of this study, no tests of reliability or validity were conducted. However, the instrument was created based upon the Head Start Performance Standards, the current Presidential Administration's emphasis on early literacy and current early literacy research conducted by CIRCLE and CIERA.

The survey consisted of 46 items. Section one of the survey consisted of nine items relating to demographic information. Questions in this section addressed number of years teaching, ethnicity, gender, educational level, location of the Head Start program, number of children in the classroom, length of Head Start day and number of volunteers in the classroom on a weekly basis.

Section two of the survey focused on literacy attitudes, covering items 10 - 24. Attitude statements were written for the participant to rate on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These statements included items

such as, “Early literacy skills are vital to later school success” and “I enjoy teaching early literacy concepts to children.”

Section three of the survey addressed the teacher’s perception of the importance of early literacy activities in the classroom. This section covered questions 25 – 35 and used a Likert scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (essential) for rating each question. In this section teachers were asked how important it is to teach their students to name letters, write letters and words, and tell their own stories, for example.

Section four of the survey covered the frequency of literacy activities in the Head Start classroom. This section addressed items 36 – 46 using a Likert scale of 1 (no time) to 5 (large amounts of time). In this section teachers were asked how much time they spend in their classrooms having students name letters, listen to an adult read aloud and retell a story, for example.

Prior to the final draft, the survey was reviewed by personnel from the University of Wisconsin-Stout and Program Specialists working with Head Start programs. The instrument was also piloted in two Head Start programs in the state of Wisconsin. Once these steps were completed, the survey was amended to reflect the appropriate modifications. A copy of the finalized survey is included in Appendix B.

Data Collection

The researcher distributed the surveys through a mailing to each Head Start Director in Wisconsin during the month of February 2002. This mailing included a number of surveys, self-addressed stamped envelopes for each

survey, a letter explaining the study, confidentiality of surveys, informed consent, and use of the survey results. Teachers who agreed to participate in the research study completed the survey and returned it to the researcher in a self-addressed, stamped envelope, which was provided. Surveys were returned throughout February, March, and April of 2002.

Data Analysis

The surveys received from the participating Head Start teachers were processed at the University of Wisconsin-Stout Computer Center. Data from the surveys were examined using descriptive statistics to classify, compare and summarize the results.

The instrument was divided into four separate sections. Analysis on section one, demographic information, included frequency distributions, percentages, mean, median, and standard deviations.

In section two, three, and four both one-way analysis of variance with a student Newman-Keuls multiple range test and Pearson correlation coefficients were used to analyze the data. This resulted in comparative data related to differences and patterns between early literacy attitudes, importance of early literacy activities, and frequency of early literacy activities in the Head Start classroom.

Assumptions

A few assumptions were made about the data collection and the instrument used to collect data. First, the researcher assumed that the instrument was valid, measuring what it was intended to measure. It was also

assumed that all teachers taking the survey understood and answered all questions honestly.

Limitations

Several limitations were identified by the researcher relating to the methodology, data collection, and the instrument used to collect data. Due to the fact that the researcher self-developed the research instrument, it was not tested for reliability or validity. Participants in this study may have misinterpreted questions on the survey, skewing the results. The researcher did not allow space for personal comments on the research instrument.

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter includes the results of the survey comparing the importance of early literacy activities and early literacy attitudes of Head Start teachers and time spent in the classroom on literacy activities in Wisconsin Head Start classrooms. The demographic information statistics will be reported on first, followed by an item analysis and research hypotheses findings. A discussion of the findings will conclude the chapter.

Demographic Information

Demographic information was collected for descriptive purposes and to assist in the comparison for specific groups. Questions were asked regarding gender, ethnicity, level of education, location of program, length of the typical day, number of years teaching, courses taken in teaching reading and language arts and number of children in the Head Start classroom. There were a total of 200 surveys sent to Head Start programs in the state of Wisconsin in January of 2002. Out of the 200 surveys distributed, 146 were returned. This constituted a 73% return rate.

Gender

Section one of the survey addressed demographic information including gender. Of the participants in this study, the group consisted of 144 women (98.6%) and 2 men (1.4%).

Table 1. Gender

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	2	1.4
Female	144	98.6

Ethnicity

Teachers were asked to indicate their ethnicity. Of the above 146 participants, five (3.4%) were African American, two were Asian (1.4%), 129 (88.4%) were Caucasian, five were Hispanic (3.4%), one (.7%) was Native American and four (2.7%) selected the other category to describe their ethnic background.

Table 2. Ethnicity

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
African-American	5	3.4
Asian	2	1.4
Caucasian	129	88.4
Hispanic	5	3.4
Native American	1	.7
Other	4	2.7

Educational Level

Level of education varied among the respondents. Most respondents reported having a four-year BA/BS degree in Early Childhood or a related field. The educational level of the participants ranged from no teacher education to those with master's degrees; three (2.1%) had no teacher education, 23 (15.8%) had a CDA, 25 (17.1%) had an associate degree in early childhood, 75 (51.4%) received a four-year degree in early childhood or a related field and 20 (13.7%) held a master's degree in a child development field.

Table 3. Educational Level

<i>Educational Level</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
No teacher Education	3	2.1
CDA	23	15.8
Associate Degree	25	17.1
Four-Year BA/BS	75	51.4
Master's Degree	20	13.7

Location

Participants were asked to report which location, rural, suburban or rural, best described the local of their Head Start program. Of the 146 surveys, only 144 participants responded to the question on location of the Head Start classroom for a total of 97.3% response rate. Fifty-five (37.7%) responded that their Head Start classroom was located in a rural area of Wisconsin, 26 (17.8%) reported being located in a suburban area and 61 (41.8%) stated that their program was located in an urban setting.

Table 4. Location

<i>Location</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Rural	55	37.7
Suburban	26	17.8
Urban	61	41.8

Children in Classroom

Teachers were asked to identify the number of children in their Head Start classroom at one given time. The total number of children in the Head Start classrooms surveyed ranged from 9 children to 30 children, with mode of 17 (n = 17, 28.8%). Twenty-seven teachers (18.5%) indicated a class size of 20. Table 5 shows the details of frequency and percent.

Table 5. Number of Children in the Classroom

<i>Number of Children</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
9	2	1.4
11	1	.7
12	10	6.8
14	3	2.1
15	10	6.8
16	17	11.6
17	42	28.8
18	19	13
19	8	5.5
20	27	18.5
21-30	4	2.8

Length of Head Start Day with Children

Teachers were asked to report the average length of time that they spent with Head Start children per day. The 144 participants in this study reported that their length of day with children ranged from 1.5 hours to 11.5 hours, with a mode of a 3.5 hour day. Table 6 details the results of length of day in 7 subcategories.

Table 6, Length of Day

<i>Length of Day in Hours</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.5 – 3.0	12	8.2
3.25 – 4.0	74	50.8
4.5 – 5.0	4	2.8
5.5 – 6.0	12	8.2
6.35 – 7.0	29	19.9
7.25 – 8.0	13	8.9
8.5 – 11.5	2	1.4

Courses in Teaching Reading/Language Arts

Teachers that responded to this survey had taken a variety of courses in teaching reading and language arts. The number of courses taken indicated by the respondents ranged from zero classes to a total of 33 courses. This data was questioned by the researcher, due to the responses and the range of scores.

Table 7. Courses Taken Related to Reading/Language Arts

<i>Semester Courses Taken</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
0	11	8.1
1	12	8.2
2	26	19.3
3	25	18.5
4	23	17.0
5	13	9.6
6	13	9.6
8 - 33	12	8.2

Volunteers

Several of the participants in this study reported having volunteers in their Head Start classrooms on a weekly basis. The number of volunteers in the classroom each week ranged from zero to 20 with a mode of 1 volunteer per week.

Table 8. Volunteers

<i>Number of Volunteers per week</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
0	32	21.9
1	42	28.8
2	41	28.1
3	18	12.3
4	7	4.8
5	2	1.4
6 - 20	4	2.8

Item Analysis

Section two of the survey addressed teacher attitudes about early literacy. This section covered items number 10 through 24. Fifteen attitude statements were questions rated on a Likert scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

The mean scores and standard deviations for each item are listed on Table 9. The statements were ordered from the highest value mean response to

the least. The attitude items in section two of the survey ranged from means of 2.45 to 4.8. The attitude statements with the high scores, ranging from 4.0, strongly agree, and up (maximum score of 5) were items 14, it is important for children to develop an appreciation for literature; item 10, early literacy skills are vital to later school success; item 11, I enjoy teaching early literacy concepts to children; item 17, teaching literacy skills in Head Start prepares children for kindergarten; item 21, teaching early literacy skills in Head Start will produce positive outcomes; item 19, teaching early literacy skills in Head Start will produce positive outcomes. Items with low scores, ranging from 3.0, uncertain and lower, disagree and strongly disagree (minimum score of 1), were identified. Only one item fell in this category, which was item 15, I am not very enthusiastic about teaching early literacy skills in Head Start.

Table 9. Item Analysis – Section Two: Attitudes About Literacy

<i>Item</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
14. It is important for children to develop an appreciation for literature.	1	4.80	.40
10. Early literacy skills are vital to later school success.	2	4.73	.64
11. I enjoy teaching early literacy concepts to children.	3	4.53	.76
15. I am NOT very enthusiastic about teaching early literacy skills in Head Start.	4	4.47	.96
17. Teaching literacy skills in Head Start prepares children for kindergarten.	5	4.44	.80
21. Teaching early literacy skills in Head Start will produce positive outcomes.	6	4.30	.88
19. Teaching literacy skills in Head Start is a fad, which will soon pass.	7	4.29	.93
16. Head Start teachers need further training in developing early literacy techniques.	8	3.95	.87
22. I struggle to integrate literacy activities in the classroom setting.	9	3.94	1.03
20. Head Start should be focusing on social competency in children NOT early literacy skills.	10	3.74	1.13
23. I am a skilled teacher in the area of early literacy.	11	3.60	.87
12. Teaching literacy skills should be done in kindergarten and consecutive grades.	12	3.50	1.52
18. Public schools feel Head Start currently does and adequate job teaching literacy skills to children.	13	3.11	.90
24. Involving parents in literacy activities is difficult.	14	3.05	1.17
13. Young children should know how to read before they enter first grade.	15	2.45	1.01

Section three of the survey addressed to the importance of teaching individual literacy skills in Head Start. See Table 10 for the ranking the mean and standard deviation of each question. Questions 25 through 35 of the survey were asked with a Likert scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (essential). The survey questions with the highest scores, ranging from 4.0, very important, and up (maximum of five, essential) were items 30, importance of teaching your students to respond to stories, question 32, importance of teaching your students to tell

their own stories and question 33, importance of teaching your students to tells stories from pictures. The survey items with the lowest scores ranging from 3.0 and lower (minimum score of one) were items 28 importance of teaching students to write letters and words, item 26, importance of teaching students to say the sounds that letter and letter combinations make and item 35, importance of teaching your students to recognize words in a book.

Table 10 Item Analysis – Section Three: Teaching Literacy in Head Start

<i>Item (How important is it to teach your students to...)</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
30. Respond to stories by talking?	1	4.42	.68
32. Tell their own stories?	2	4.31	.74
33. Tell a story from pictures?	3	4.28	.74
31. Relate their experiences to those in a storybook?	4	3.94	.93
29. Write their own names?	5	3.63	.92
27. Understand the meaning of words?	6	3.37	1.11
25. Name letters?	7	3.15	1.10
34. Recognize letter is a book?	8	3.04	1.12
28. Write letter and words?	9	2.85	1.02
26. Say the sounds that letter and letter combinations make?	10	2.66	1.14
35. Recognize words in a book?	11	2.41	1.06

Section four of the survey addressed early literacy activities and the daily schedule, focusing on how much time individual teachers spent in the Head Start classrooms on individual literacy activities. See Table 11. Questions number 36 through 46 were ranked on a Likert scale of 1 (no time) to 5 (large amounts of time). The survey items with the highest scores, ranging from 4.0, average time, and up (maximum score of five) were items 38, frequency of drawing to illustrate a story, item 41, frequency of reciting rhymes, song and poems and item 46, frequency of reading or looking at books independently. The items with the

lowest scores, ranging from 3.0, some time, and lower (minimum score of one, no time) was item 37, frequency of finding letters in words.

Table 11 Item Analysis – Section Four: Literacy Activities and Your Daily Schedule

<i>Item (How much time do you spend in your classroom having students...)</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
38. Draw to illustrate a story?	1	4.63	.59
41. Recite rhymes, songs and poems?	2	4.45	.74
46. Read or look at book independently?	3	4.43	.69
43. Retell a story?	4	3.65	.89
40. Draw pictures and then tell a story to go with the pictures?	5	3.49	1.00
44. Discuss words' meaning?	6	3.42	.93
45. Write letters or words?	7	3.41	.98
36. Name letters?	8	3.37	.93
39. Draw pictures to illustrate a story?	9	3.36	.98
42. Act out events from a story?	10	3.36	1.03
37. Find letters in words?	11	2.78	.89

Using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient Matrix, the averages for section two, early literacy attitudes, section three, importance of teaching early literacy and section four, frequency of literacy activities in the classroom. This comparison surfaced four statistically significant findings. The average total score for section two, attitudes was significantly related at the .05 level of significance to the average total score for section four, frequency ($p=.018$). The average total score for section two, early literacy attitudes, was significantly related at the .001 level of significance to the average total scores for section three, importance of literacy ($p= .000$). The average total score for section four, frequency of literacy activities was significantly related at a .05 level of significance with the average total score of section two, attitudes ($p= .018$). Furthermore, the average total score for section four, frequency of literacy

activities was significantly related at a level of .001 level of significance to the average total score for section three, importance of literacy activities. See Table 12.

Table 12 Item Analysis – Correlations Between Sections 3 and 4

	Section 2 Average	Section 3 Average
Section 3 Average Pearson Correlation	.511	
Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	
N=	145	
Section 4 Average Pearson Correlation	.196	.403
Sig. (2 tailed)	.018	.000
N=	145	144

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis one stated there is no difference in the attitudes toward early literacy, the importance of literacy activities and the frequency of literacy activities based on educational level of teachers. To test the hypothesis an ANOVA and Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test were utilized. After analyzing the data no significant difference was found when comparing attitudes, importance and frequency of literacy activities average total scores with educational level, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. However, 4 items were found to have significant findings based on educational level of teachers. On item 12, teaching literacy skills should be done in kindergarten and consecutive grades, a significant difference at the .05 level was found based on the educational level of teachers surveyed. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers holding a CDA ($x = 2.87$) scored significantly different from teachers with an

Associate degree ($x= 3.17$), Bachelor's degree ($x= 3.71$) and Master's degree ($x= 4.05$). Teachers with Associate degrees scored significantly different at the .05 level from teachers with Bachelor's degrees ($x= 3.71$) and Master's degrees ($x= 4.05$). Furthermore, those teachers with Bachelor's degrees ($x= 3.71$) scored significantly different at .05 level than those teachers with a Master's degree ($x= 4.05$).

On item 23, I am a skilled teacher in the area of early literacy, a significant difference at the .01 level of significance was found based on the educational level of the teachers surveyed. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers holding a CDA ($x= 3.30$) Associate's degree ($x= 3.40$) or Bachelor's degree ($x= 3.64$) scored significantly different from teachers with a Master's degree ($x=4.15$).

On item 40, how much time do you spend in your classroom having students draw and tell stories to go with the picture, a significant difference at the .05 level of significance was found based upon the teachers' educational level. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple comparison test, you are unable to detect the significantly different scores for teachers with CDA's ($x= 3.28$), Associate's degrees ($x= 3.65$), Bachelor's degrees ($x= 3.70$) or Master's degrees ($x= 3.84$).

On item 44, how much time do you spent in your classroom having students retell stories, a significant difference at the .05 level of significance was found based on the teachers' educational level. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers holding a CDA ($x= 3.26$), Associate degree

($x = 3.32$) and Bachelor degree ($x = 3.36$) scored significantly different from teachers with a Masters degree ($x = 3.95$).

A trend in the data was found on attitudes about early literacy (section 2 of the survey). As educational level increases, attitudes about early literacy tend to also increase. See Table 13.

Table 13 Item Analysis: Relationship Between Literacy Attitudes, Importance and Frequency with Level of Education

<i>Item</i>	<i>CDA n=23</i>	<i>Associate Degree n=24</i>	<i>Bachelor's Degree n=75</i>	<i>Master's Degree n=20</i>	<i>F Value</i>
12. Teaching literacy skills should be done in kindergarten and consecutive grades.	X= 2.87 SD= 1.52	X= 3.17 SD= 1.63	X= 3.71 SD= 1.39	X= 4.05 SD= 1.61	3.165 *
23. I am a skilled teacher in the area of early literacy.	X= 3.30 SD= .93	X= 3.40 SD= .96	X= 3.64 SD= .82	X= 4.15 SD= .67	4.294 **
Section II: Attitudes about Literacy Average Scores	X= 3.8841 SD= .3945	X= 3.8363 SD= .4948	X= 4.0372 SD= .4470	X= 4.1357 SD= .4132	2.443
Section III: Importance of teaching literacy in Head Start Average Scores	X= 3.5138 SD= .5284	X= 3.4764 SD= .5763	X= 3.4370 SD= .6919	X= 3.4409 SD= .1139	.101
40. How much time do you spend in your classroom having students draw pictures and then tell a story to go with the picture.	X= 3.65 SD= .78	X= 3.84 SD= .90	X= 3.28 SD= 1.00	X= 1.13 SD= .25	2.722 *
44. How much time do you spend in your classroom having students retell stories.	X= 3.26 SD= .75	X= 3.36 SD= .76	X= 3.32 SD= .99	X= 3.95 SD= .21	2.771 *
Section IV: Frequency of literacy activities in the Head Start classroom Average Scores	X= 3.7233 SD= .4953	X= 3.8145 SD= .4800	X= 3.5688 SD= .4361	X= 3.7318 SD= .5354	2.141

* = .05 level of significance

** = .01 level of significance

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis two stated there will be no relationship between the number of children in the classroom and the frequency of literacy activities in the classroom. After comparing the statistical averages from sections two, three and four of the survey, there was no statistical relationship of frequency of literacy activities in the classroom with number of children in the class. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. A Pearson Correlation of .044 was found (n=144) which was not significant. See Table 14.

Table 14. Correlations Between Number of Children in the Classroom and Frequency of Literacy Activities

	Section 4 Average
Item 7: Children in the Classroom Pearson Correlation	.044
Sig. (2 tailed)	.603
N=	144

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis three stated that teachers with a greater number of volunteers in the Head Start classroom did not show an increase in literacy activities in the classroom. After comparing the statistical averages from the survey, the results indicate that teachers with a greater number of volunteers in the Head Start classroom did not have an increased number of early literacy activities in their classrooms. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. The data stated that (n=145) there was no statistical relationship between the number of children

in the Head Start classroom compared to the average score of (section IV) Time Dedicated to Literacy Activities. See Table 15.

Table 15. Correlation Between Volunteers in the Classroom and Number of Children

	Section 4 Average
Item 9: Volunteers per week	
Pearson Correlation	-.064
Sig. (2 tailed)	.442
N=	145

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis four stated there is no difference in the attitudes toward early literacy, the importance of literacy activities and the frequency of literacy activities based on years of teaching experience. To test the hypothesis an ANOVA and Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test were utilized. After analyzing the data no significant difference was found when comparing importance and frequency of literacy activities with years of teaching experience. However, a significant difference at the .05 level of significance was found when comparing overall early literacy attitudes with years of teaching experience. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with 3-5 years of teaching experience ($x = 3.8318$) scored significantly different at the .05 level of significance from those teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience ($x = 4.1424$). Since one out of the three areas of the hypothesis were found to have statistical significance, along with 11 items within the three sections, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The item analysis found 11 items having significant findings based on years of teaching experience. See Table 16.

On item 10, early literacy skills are vital to later school success, a significant difference at the .05 level of significance was found based on the years of experience of teachers surveyed. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with teaching experience of 3-5 years ($x= 4.53$) scored significantly different at the .05 level of significance from those with 6-10 years of experience ($x= 4.95$) Teachers with teaching experience 2 years or less ($x=4.71$) scored significantly different at the .05 level of significance from those with 6-10 years of experience ($x= 4.95$).

On item 11, I enjoy teaching early literacy concepts to children, a significant difference at the .01 level of significance was found based on the years of experience of teachers surveyed. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with teaching experience of 3-5 years ($x= 4.19$) scored significantly different at the .01 level of significance from those 11 years of experience ($x= 4.65$) and from those with 6-10 years of experience ($x= 4.76$) Teachers with teaching experience of 2 years or less ($x=4.51$) scored significantly different at the .01 level from those with 11 years of experience ($x= 4.65$) and those with 6-10 years of experience ($x= 4.76$). Teachers with experience of 11 years or more ($x= 4.65$) scored significantly different at the .01 level from those with 3-5 years experience ($x= 4.19$). Furthermore, those teachers with experience of 6-10 years ($x= 4.76$) scored significantly different at a .01 level from those with 3-5 years of experience ($x=4.19$).

On item 14, it is important for children to develop an appreciation for literature, a significant difference at the .05 level was found based on the years of teaching experience. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with teaching experience of 11 years or more ($x= 4.71$) scored significantly different at the .05 level from those teachers with 6-10 years of experience ($x= 4.95$). Teachers with 3-5 years of experience ($x= 4.72$) scored significantly different at .05 level from those teachers with 6-10 years of experience ($x= 4.95$).

On item 21, teaching early literacy skills in Head Start will produce positive outcomes, a significant difference at the .05 level was found based on the years of experience of teachers surveyed. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with teaching experience of 3-5 years ($x= 3.97$) scored significantly different at the .05 level from those with 6-10 years of experience ($x= 4.55$).

On item 22, I struggle to integrate literacy activities in the classroom setting, a significant difference at the .05 level was found based on the number of years of experience of the teachers. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with teaching experience of 3-5 years ($x= 3.64$) scored significantly different at a .05 level from those teachers with 6-10 year of experience ($x= 4.37$).

On item 25, how important is it to teach your students to name letters, a significant difference at the .001 level was found based on the number of years of teaching experience. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test,

teachers with 6-10 years of experience ($x= 2.68$), 3-5 years experience ($x= 3.08$) and 11 years or more (3.10) all scored significantly different at a .001 level from those with 2 years or less experience ($x= 3.68$).

On item 28, how important is it to teach your students to write letters and words, a significant difference at the .05 level was found based on years of teaching experience. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with 3-5 years experience ($x= 2.51$) scored significantly different than those teachers with 2 years or less experience ($x= 3.22$).

On item 31, how important is it to teach your student to related their experience to those in a storybook, a significant difference at the .05 level was found base on the years of teaching experience. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with 2 year or less experience ($x= 3.76$), 11 years or more ($x= 3.81$) and teachers with 3-5 years experience ($x= 3.86$) scored significantly different at a .05 level from those teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience ($x= 4.35$).

On item 36, how much time do you spend in your classroom having students name letters, a significant difference at the .01 level was found based on years of teaching experience. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with 6-10 year of experience ($x= 3.08$) scored significantly different at the .01 level than those with 2 years or less experience ($x= 3.68$). Teachers with 11 years or more experience ($x= 3.13$) scored significantly different at a .01 level than those teachers with 2 years or less experience ($x= 3.68$).

On item 42, how much time do you spend in your classroom having students act out events from a story, a significant difference at the .001 level was found based on years of teaching experience. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with 2 years or less experience ($x = 2.88$) scored significantly different at the .001 level from those teachers with 3-5 years experience ($x = 3.36$), 6-10 years experience ($x = 3.47$) and those with 11 years or more experience ($x = 3.84$).

On item 43, how much time do you spend in your classroom having students retell a story, a significant difference at the .05 level was found based on number of years of teaching experience. Using the Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test, teachers with 2 years or less experience ($x = 3.45$), 3-5 years of experience ($x = 3.53$) and those with 6-10 years of experience ($x = 3.63$) scored significantly different at a .05 level from those teachers with 11 years or more experience ($x = 4.06$).

Table 16. Item Analysis: Relationship Between Literacy Attitudes, Importance and Frequency with Years of Teaching Experience

<i>Item</i>	<i>2 years or less experience n=41</i>	<i>3-5 years of experience n=36</i>	<i>6-10 years of experience n=38</i>	<i>11 years or more experience n=31</i>	<i>F Value</i>
10. Early literacy skills are vital to school success.	X = 4.71 SD= .64	X= 4.53 SD= .84	X= 4.95 SD= .23	X= 4.71 SD= .64	2.802 *
11. I enjoy teaching early literacy concepts to children.	X= 4.51 SD= .75	X= 4.19 SD= 1.01	X= 4.76 SD= .49	X= 4.65 SD= .61	3.978 **
14. It is important for children to develop an appreciation for literature.	X= 4.80 SD= .40	X= 4.72 SD= .45	X= 4.95 SD= .23	X= 4.71 SD= .46	2.797 *
21. Teaching early literacy skills in Head start will produce positive outcomes.	X= 4.29 SD= .84	X= 3.97 SD= .18	X= 4.55 SD= .76	X= 4.39 SD= .67	2.910 *
22. I struggle to integrate literacy activities in the classroom setting.	X= 3.88 SD= .90	X= 3.64 SD= 1.25	X= 4.37 SD= .71	X= 3.84 SD= 1.13	3.528 *
Section II: Attitudes about literacy Average Scores	X= 3.9804 SD= .4658	X= 3.8318 SD= .4817	X= 4.1424 SD= .3973	X= 4.0131 SD= .3810	3.161 *
25. How important is it to teach your student to name letter?	X= 3.68 SD= 1.06	X= 3.08 SD=1.05	X= 2.68 SD= .97	X= 3.10 SD= 1.08	6.233 ***
28. How important is it to teach your students to write letters and words?	X= 3.22 SD= 1.06	X= 2.51 SD= 1.07	X= 2.68 SD= .78	X= 2.94 SD= 1.03	3.690 *
31. How important is it to teach your students to relate their experiences with those in a storybook?	X= 3.76 SD= 1.04	X= 3.86 SD= .99	X= 4.35 SD= .68	X= 3.81 SD= .87	3.379 *
Section III: Importance of teaching literacy Average Scores	X= 3.5898 SD= .7242	X= 3.3275 SD= .5934	X= 3.4324 SD= .5376	X= 3.4780 SD= .5759	1.192
36. How much time do you spend in your classroom having students name letters?	X= 2.80 SD= 1.02	X= 2.92 SD= .87	X= 2.61 SD= .82	X= 2.81 SD= .79	4.117 **
42. How much time do you spend in your classroom having students act out events from a story?	X= 2.88 SD = 1.14	X= 3.36 SD = .99	X= 3.47 SD= .98	X= 3.84 SD= .69	5.949 ***
43. How much time do you spend in your classroom having students retell stories?	X= 3.45 SD= 1.01	X= 3.53 SD= .81	X= 3.63 SD= .82	X= 4.06 SD= .77	3.328 *
Section IV: Frequency of literacy activities Average Scores	X= 3.5864 SD= .5570	X= 3.7121 SD= .4556	X= 3.6005 SD= .4283	X= 3.8035 SD= .4059	1.631

* = .05 level of significance ** = .01 level of significance *** = .001 level of significance

Discussion

This study was aimed at capturing the current early literacy attitudes, perceived importance of literacy skills and frequency of early literacy activities in Wisconsin Head Start classrooms. Data was collected from 146 Wisconsin Head Start teachers during the months of February, March and April 2002.

Section one of the survey revealed a description of the sample population participating in this study. The majority of participants were Caucasian females, with a mode of 2 years of teaching experience. The majority of survey participants reported having a mode of 17 children in their classrooms (28.8%) for an average of 3.5 hours (41.8%). Most of the survey respondents (51.4%) reported having a four-year degree (n=75) and 20 (13.7%) responded to holding a Master's degree. The Wisconsin respondents reported they were located in urban areas (41.8%), followed by rural area (37.7%) with the remaining 17.8% located in suburban areas. Teachers responding to the survey reported having 1 (28.8%) to 2 (28.1%) volunteers present in their classrooms each week.

Section two of the survey focused on Head Start teachers' current attitudes regarding early literacy. This section revealed that the 146 teachers who responded to the survey felt strongly that it is important for children to appreciate literature ($x = 4.80$) and that early literacy skills are vital to later school success ($x = 4.73$). In contrast, the respondents rated item 18, public schools feel Head Start does an adequate job teaching literacy skills to children at a mean of only 3.11. They also rated item 12, teaching literacy skills should be done in kindergarten and consecutive grades at a mean of 3.50.

Data for section two, early literacy attitudes, revealed a positive correlation between educational level of teachers and their attitude toward early literacy. Teachers with a CDA scored an average mean of 3.8841, teachers with Associate degrees scored an average mean of 3.836, those with Bachelor degrees scored an average mean of 4.0372 and teachers with Masters degrees scored an average mean of 4.1357. As a teacher's educational level increases, with a slight deviation in teachers with Associate degrees, attitude toward early literacy tends to rise.

Section three of the survey focused on collecting Head Start teachers' perceptions of the importance of early literacy activities in the classroom. Teachers reported that it was most important to teach children to respond to stories by talking with a mean of 4.42, followed by the importance of having children tell their own stories with a mean of 4.31. The teachers felt it was least important to teach children how to say the sounds that letters and letter combinations make at a mean of 2.66, preceded by teaching children to write letters and words, at a mean of 2.85.

Section three of the survey addressed the frequency of literacy activities in the Head Start classroom. As reported by the respondents, the most frequent literacy activity was listening to adults read aloud ($x = 4.63$), followed by reciting rhymes, songs or poems ($x = 4.45$). Activities that the teachers spent the least amount of time on included; finding letters in words ($x = 2.78$) and acting out events from a story ($x = 3.36$).

Most of the findings of this study concurs with the research discussed in chapter two. The 2001 CIERA report stated that teachers with less than a four-year degree held lower scores in literacy knowledge and attitudes, mainly in alphabet knowledge beliefs, word and story knowledge beliefs, work-study practices and alphabet knowledge practices. In addition, they held higher scores in work and story knowledge beliefs, story practices and interest motivation practices (Burgess, Lundgren, Lloyd and Pianta, 2001). This study found that teachers with a CDA averaged a 3.8841 in literacy attitudes (on a scale of 1 - 5, which 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 representing strongly agree) and an average of 3.5138 in literacy importance. Teachers with an Associate's degree averaged a 3.8363 in attitudes about literacy and a 3.4764 in literacy importance, compared to literacy attitude averages of 4.0372 and a literacy importance average of 3.4370 for teachers with Bachelor and Master's degrees consecutively. This study concurs with the CIERA study in the progression of education comparing with literacy attitudes, however it contradicts the finding that teachers with less than a four-year degree place less emphasis was early literacy importance.

In the same 2001 report, CIERA also found that teachers reported minimal time devoted to writing activities in their classrooms, which directly related to the teachers' beliefs that writing is unimportant for preschoolers. This research found that teachers rated importance of writing letters and words as a 3.0. See Table 17.

Table 17. Importance of writing letters and words

<i>Rating #28</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1 – not important	10	6.8
2 – somewhat important	46	31.5
3 - important	55	37.7
4 – very important	22	15.1
5 - essential	11	7.5

Table 18. Importance of writing names

<i>Rating #29</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1 – not important	3	2.1
2 – somewhat important	6	4.1
3 - important	61	41.8
4 – very important	46	31.5
5 - essential	29	19.9

The above data shows the majority of teachers surveyed felt that writing letters and words was important, but not very important or essential, while writing their names was slightly more important for a child to learn while in Head Start.

Overall, the survey conducted with Head Start teachers showed many trends. Concerning literacy attitudes, teachers with bachelor’s degrees and those with two years or less teaching experience reported the highest scores. Teachers with bachelor’s degrees and those with 2 years or less teaching experience showed the highest scores in their perception of importance of literacy activities in the classroom. Bachelor degreed teachers and those with 2 years or less of teaching experience reported the highest frequency of initiating literacy activities in their Head Start classrooms. This information shows the importance of working with new teachers to ensure that literacy attitudes and frequency of activities continues throughout their Head Start teaching career.

Teachers with Master's degrees and 6-10 years of experience reported having the highest scores in literacy attitudes. Those teachers with Associate degrees and 3-5 years of teaching experience rated lowest on importance of literacy activities. Section four of the survey, frequency of literacy activities, was scored lowest by teachers with Bachelor degree's and those with 2 or less years of teaching experience. This information shows the importance of including teachers with varying levels of education in continuing professional development opportunities regarding early literacy and providing new experiences for those teachers with a large number of years of teaching experience.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize findings of this research, draw conclusions and make recommendations for future studies in this area of study, as well as, recommendations for training and technical assistance providers of Head Start.

Summary

The overall purpose of this research was to identify and compare the literacy attitudes of Head Start teachers in the state of Wisconsin, while looking at perceptions of literacy importance and frequency of literacy activities in Head Start classrooms. The hypotheses of this study were:

1. There will be no difference in the attitudes toward early literacy, importance of literacy activities and the frequency of literacy activities done in the classroom based on the educational level of teachers.
2. There will be no relationship between the number of children in the classroom and the frequency of literacy activities in the classroom.
3. There will be no relationship between the number of volunteers in the classroom and the frequency of literacy activities done in the classroom.
4. There will be no difference in attitudes toward early literacy, importance of literacy activities and the frequency of literacy activities done in the classroom based on years of teaching experience.

The subjects of the study were Wisconsin Head Start teachers during spring of 2002. Two hundred surveys were sent to Wisconsin Head Start programs in January 2002. Out of the 200 surveys distributed, 146 were returned, yielding a 73% return rate.

The instrument was developed by the researcher after review of recent literature on early literacy practices and current trends relating to early literacy. The survey was pilot tested by 20 Head Start teachers. The instrument was then revised based on the results of the pilot test.

The survey consisted to four sections. Section one requested demographic information, including; gender, education level, ethnic background, year of teaching experience, location of Head Start program, length of Head Start day, number of weekly average of volunteers and number of children in the classroom. Section two consisted of 15 items representing teachers' literacy attitudes. Teachers were asked to rate their perception of each statement based on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Section three contained 11 items, which focused on capturing the importance of literacy activities. Teachers were asked to rank their response on a Likert scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (essential). Section four included 11 items examining the frequency of literacy activities in the classroom. Teachers were asked to rate their responses on a Likert scale of 1 (no time) to 5 (large amounts of time).

The 200 surveys were sent to Head Start programs throughout the state of Wisconsin with a self-addressed stamped envelope for their return and a cover letter that explained the study and described confidentiality. The subjects were

asked to return the surveys within 8 weeks. From the 200 surveys distributed, 146 were returned and used in the tabulation of the data.

The data obtained from the surveys was processed at the University of Wisconsin-Stout Computer Center. The data was analyzed by the use of frequency counts, means, mode, median, standard deviations, percentages, Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test and Pearson Correlation Coefficient Matrix.

Demographic results were analyzed using mean, median, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. The study indicated that the majority of respondents (98.6%) were female and of Caucasian decent (88.4%). Level of education varied among the participants, 2.1% reported having no teacher education, while 15.8% reported having a CDA, 17.1% an associate's degree, 51.4% a four-year degree and 13.7% reported having a master's degree. Of the 146 teachers who responded to the survey, a mean of 7.23 years of teaching experience was reported. Teachers reported on the number of courses they have taken in reading and language arts, the mean in this area was 3.94. Using frequency counts, the data indicated that the average number of children in a Head Start classroom is 17.3 with a length of day at an average mean of 4.86 hours and an average mean of 1.79 volunteers in the classroom per week. The respondents reports living in rural areas (37.7%), suburban areas (17.8%) and urban areas (41.8%).

This study found that Head Start teachers overall have positive attitudes in relation to early literacy with an average mean score of 3.99 on a scale of 1-5.

Teachers felt most strongly on the attitude statement, it is importance of children to develop an appreciation for literature. The 146 teachers who responded to the survey scored an average mean of 4.80 on this statement.

Respondents scored an average mean score of 3.46 on their perceptions of the importance of early literacy goals. This rating fell in to the important, but not very important or essential category. The statement with the highest rating by participants was the importance of teaching children to respond to stories by talking ($x= 4.42$).

While examining the data related to frequency of literacy activities, the researcher found that teachers scored an average mean of 3.67. The most frequent activity was having students listen to an adult read aloud ($x= 4.63$).

Four null hypotheses were stated by the researcher, all four were not rejected based on the lack of significant findings. Hypothesis one stated there is no difference in the attitudes toward early literacy, the importance of literacy activities and the frequency of literacy activities based on educational level of teachers. To test the hypothesis an ANOVA and Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test were utilized. After analyzing the data no significant difference was found when comparing attitudes, importance and frequency of literacy activities with educational level, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. However, 4 items were found to have significant findings.

Hypothesis two stated there will be no relationship between the number of children in the classroom and the frequency of literacy activities in the classroom. After comparing the statistical averages from the survey the results indicate that

there was no statistical significance of frequency of literacy activities in the classroom with a lower number of children in the class, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. A Pearson Correlation of .044 was found (n=144) which was not significant.

Hypothesis three stated that teachers with a greater number of volunteers in the Head Start classroom did not show an increase in literacy activities in the classroom. After comparing the statistical averages from the survey, the results indicate that teachers with a greater number of volunteers in the Head Start classroom did not have an increased number of early literacy activities in their classrooms, therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected. The data stated that (n=145) there was no statistical significance between the number of children in the Head Start classroom compared to the average score of (section IV) Time Dedicated to Literacy Activities was .443 with a Pearson Correlation of -0.64 .

Hypothesis four stated there is no difference in the attitudes toward early literacy, the importance of literacy activities and the frequency of literacy activities based on years of teaching experience. To test the hypothesis an ANOVA and Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparison test were utilized. After analyzing the data no significant difference was found when comparing importance and frequency of literacy activities with years of teaching experience, however a significant difference at the .05 level of significance was found when comparing overall literacy attitudes with years of teaching experience and 11 individual items were found to have statistical significance. Due to the significant individual and overall findings the hypothesis was rejected.

Conclusions

This research assisted the researcher in drawing several conclusions regarding early literacy in Head Start classrooms. The two most revealing areas of comparison were in the level of teacher education and years of teaching experience.

The data from the Wisconsin respondents gleaned a trend in attitudes about early literacy (section 2 of the survey). As educational level increases, attitudes about early literacy tend to also increase. A statistical significant difference was found at the .05 level between teachers with Associate degrees from those with Bachelor and Master level degrees.

Along with early literacy attitudes increasing with educational attainment, the researcher also concluded that teachers feel more skilled teaching early literacy activities as their educational level increases. A significant difference at the .01 level was found between teachers with CDA's, Associate and Bachelor degrees from those with Master's degrees.

As with level of education, a significant difference was found when comparing early literacy attitudes with years of teaching experience. Teachers with 3-5 years experience scored significantly different at the .05 level from those with 6-10 years of experience.

Teachers with 6-10 years of experience scored highest in section two of the survey, attitudes about literacy. Teachers with 2 years or less of teaching experience scored the highest in section three of the survey, importance of teaching early literacy skills and teachers with 11 years or more of teaching

experience scored highest on section four of the survey, frequency of literacy activities.

Recommendations for Further Research

The data for this survey was very comprehensive, however, the researcher found it was missing one vital piece of comparative demographic data. Information regarding the child: adult ratio would have been very helpful when comparing information about frequency and attitudes of literacy activities in the Head Start classroom.

This study would be beneficial if repeated one year from now, once the Head Start teachers have been trained in the CIRLCE literacy model and have had a chance to implement literacy strategies in the classroom. Comparing current early literacy attitudes, early literacy importance and frequency early literacy activities may be very different one year from now in Head Start classrooms based on continued training and mentoring support within their programs.

In order to gather comprehensive early literacy data for Region V, this study should be replicated in other Region V states, such as Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana.

Recommendations for Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Providers

The information collected though this survey was very useful in delineating necessary literacy training and technical assistance areas for Head Start teachers. The researcher would recommend that time be dedicated to increasing the frequency of literacy activities done in the Head Start classrooms by all

educational levels of teachers and focusing on increasing literacy attitudes of teachers, mainly those with CDA's and associate degrees.

Teachers reported spending the least amount of time on helping students to find letters in words and act out events from stories. These activities are two important literacy aspects for young children to experience. Training and technical assistance providers should focus on foundations such as these when doing on site support to Head Start teachers.

The data showed teachers with 2 years or less teaching experience reported the highest scores in importance of early literacy skills. As training and technical assistance providers, it is important for them to ensure that they are supporting and nurturing the early literacy attitudes and frequency of using early literacy skills of these "new" teachers so that it can be built upon throughout their Head Start teaching career. It is important for training and technical assistance providers to appreciate teacher differences based on years of teaching experience and level of education.

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APPENDIX A

Hello,

Let me introduce myself, my name is Wendy Bowe, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin – Stout in the College of Human Development. My research advisor is Dr. Karen Zimmerman. She can be reached at (715) 232-2530. You are invited to participate in my research in the area of Early Literacy in the Head Start classroom. This study will focus on how Head Start classrooms differ in the area of Early Literacy. The results of this survey will be utilized to increase the quality of Head Start training in the area of early literacy.

Please understand that by returning this survey, you are giving your informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. You understand that the basic nature of the study is to increase quality of literacy trainings for Head Start programs and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. You also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. The benefits of participating in this survey will be the compilation of the final results, which will be available to view when finished. This information may give the subjects an opportunity to increase their literacy activities in a Head Start classroom. You need to be aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. You realize that you have the right to refuse to participate and that your right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with on coercion or prejudice.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complains should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Sue Foxwell, Research Administrator, UW-Stout Institution Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

Thank you for your participation in this survey. Your time is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Wendy Bowe
Graduate Researcher

Dr. Karen Zimmerman
Research Advisor

Attention Head Start Directors: Please distribute the enclosed surveys to your teaching staff. Once the surveys are complete they may return them in the self addressed stamped envelopes provided. If you are in need of additional surveys, please let me know. You may reach me at (608) 742-8814 ext. 298. Thank you for your time in helping me complete my research project!!

APPENDIX B

Head Start Early Literacy Survey

The purpose of this survey is to help us understand how Head Start classrooms differ from one another. The survey asks questions about your educational background, your approach to teaching and your methods of helping children learn to read and write as well as the composition of your classroom.

Your answers to these questions are confidential. In any reports that may be prepared, you will not be identified by name or in any way that will allow someone to know the identity of people who gave specific answers to questions.

Demographic Information:

Please provide the following data about yourself:

1. _____ Write the total number of years you have been teaching Head Start.
2. _____ Which category best describes your racial or ethnic background?
(write number in blank)
 1. African-American
 2. Asian
 3. Caucasian
 4. Hispanic
 5. Native-American
 6. Other (please specify) _____
3. _____ Write your gender: MALE FEMALE
4. _____ What is the highest teacher education program that you have completed?
(choose only one answer and write that number in the blank):
 1. no teacher education program
 2. a CDA (Child Development Accreditation)
 3. an **associate's** degree in early childhood or related field
 4. a four-year BA or BS in early childhood or related field
 5. a master's degree program in early childhood or related field
5. _____ How many formal courses (semester or quarter long college classes) have you had in teaching reading and language arts? (write number in blank)

Please provide the following information about your classroom:

6. _____ Which word best describes the location of your Head Start classroom?
 1. Rural
 2. Suburban
 3. Urban
7. _____ How many children are in your classroom? (at one given time)
8. _____ How long is your usual Head Start day (with the children)? (number of hours)
9. _____ How many parents or others volunteer are in your classroom for one or more hour per week?

Attitudes about Literacy:

Please rate the following statements based upon your beliefs and attitudes toward teaching literacy in a Head Start Classroom. Circle your rating following each statement.

Rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, with a 1 meaning that you strongly disagree with the statement, and a 5 meaning that you strongly agree with the statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	-----Disagree	-----Undecided	-----Agree	-----Strongly Agree

	<u>SD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>SA</u>
10. Early literacy skills are vital to later school success.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I enjoy teaching early literacy concepts to children.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Teaching literacy skills should be done in kindergarten and consecutive grades.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Young children should know how to read before they enter first grade.	1	2	3	4	5
14. It is important for children to develop an appreciation for literature.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am NOT very enthusiastic about teaching early literacy skills in Head Start.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Head Start teachers need further training in developing early literacy techniques.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Teaching literacy skills in Head Start prepares children for kindergarten.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Public schools feel Head Start currently does an adequate job teaching literacy skills to children.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Teaching early literacy skills in Head Start is a fad, which will soon pass.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Head Start should be focusing on social competency in children NOT early literacy skills.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Teaching early literacy skills in Head Start will produce positive outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I struggle to integrate literacy activities in the classroom setting.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I am a skilled teacher in the area of early literacy.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Involving parents in literacy activities is difficult.	1	2	3	4	5

Teaching Literacy in Head Start:

Circle the number indicating the importance of each of the following goals for the literacy program in your classroom.

<u>How important is it to teach your students to:</u>	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Important</u>	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Essential</u>
25. Name letters?	1	2	3	4	5
26. Say the sounds that letters and letter combinations make?	1	2	3	4	5
27. Understand the meaning of words?	1	2	3	4	5
28. Write letters and words?	1	2	3	4	5
29. Write their own names?	1	2	3	4	5
30. Respond to stories by talking?	1	2	3	4	5
31. Relate their experiences to those in a storybook?	1	2	3	4	5
32. Tell their own stories?	1	2	3	4	5
33. Tell a story from pictures?	1	2	3	4	5
34. Recognize letters in a book?	1	2	3	4	5
35. Recognize words in book?	1	2	3	4	5

Literacy Activities and your Daily Schedule:

Rate the following items on a scale of 1 to 5 according to how much time you dedicate in your classroom schedule to the conducting the following items. A 5 will indicate that you spend large amounts of time on that particular activity while a rating of a 1 will mean you spend no time on that activity.

1	2	3	4	5
No Time-----Some Time-----				

How much time do you spend in your classroom having students:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 36. Name letters? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Find letters in words? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. Listen to an adult read aloud? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. Draw pictures to illustrate a story? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. Draw pictures and then tell a story to go with the pictures? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. Recite rhymes, songs, or poems? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. Act out events from a story? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. Retell a story? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. Discuss words' meaning? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. Write letters or words? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. Read or look at books independently? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.