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Susan Ann Crosby^a, Timothy Rasinski^b, Nancy Padak^b & Kasim Yildirim^c

^a K. R. Hanchey Elementary School

^b Kent State University

^c Mugla Sitki Kocman University, Turkey

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A 3-Year Study of a School-Based Parental Involvement Program in Early Literacy

SUSAN ANN CROSBY
K. R. Hanchey Elementary School

KASIM YILDIRIM
Mugla Sitki Kocman University, Turkey

TIMOTHY RASINSKI
NANCY PADAK
Kent State University

ABSTRACT. Although parental involvement in children's literacy development has been recognized for its potential in helping children develop early literacy achievement, studies of the effectiveness and sustainability of school-based parent involvement programs are not numerous. This study examines the effectiveness and durability of a school-based parent involvement program that was implemented by school staff without external supervision over 3 consecutive years in a public school. Results indicate that implementation of the program was associated with higher levels of children's achievement in foundational literacy competencies. Moreover, the program has sustained over 3 years and actually grew in the levels of parental participation over time. The authors argue that effective and systemic parental involvement programs are possible and can be guided by certain principles of program development and if implemented by a committed teaching staff.

Keywords: early literacy, family involvement, foundational literacy skills

Getting children off to a successful start in reading is critical to their later development as readers. Juell (1988) reported a 90% probability that a child who was a poor reader at the end of Grade 1 would remain a poor reader at the end of Grade 4. More recently, Hernandez (2011) noted that students who are not reading at grade level by Grade 3 are 4 times less likely to graduate from high school on time than children who are reading proficiently at Grade 3. Yet, despite these dire predictions, the reality of literacy achievement is disturbing. Data from the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009) reports that a third of all fourth-grade students in the United States are reading at a level considered below basic. These data demonstrate the urgency of developing new ways to

help greater numbers of emerging and early readers succeed.

Research has also fairly well established that success in reading, especially for struggling readers, requires students to read (Allington, 2005). A review of studies on student reading reported that time engaged in reading is associated with reading achievement (Morgan, Mraz, Padak, & Rasinski, 2009). One way to increase the sheer amount of reading done by students is to encourage reading at home. Home involvement has been found to be a key ingredient in student reading success (Fawcett, Padak, & Rasinski, 2013). A large-scale international study of reading achievement among second-grade students found that home involvement and amount of time spent reading at home were the top predictors of student success in reading (Postlethwaite & Ross, 1992). Several reviews of research into the impact of parental involvement have been remarkably consistent in suggesting improvements in students' overall learning (Jeynes, 2005) and literacy development (Senechal & Young, 2008). Moreover, parent involvement in the early years of schooling has been found to have positive effects on students' literacy development through grade 3 (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002) and Grade 4 (Senechal, 2006b). The efficacy of parent involvement programs, however, is not universally endorsed. An analysis of 41 parental involvement programs (K–12) concluded that there is little empirical evidence to support the claim that parental involvement programs are an effective way to improve student learning achievement (Mattingly, Prislun, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002). In her review, Quadri (2012) reported that "most schools are

Address correspondence to Timothy Rasinski, Reading and Writing Center, Kent State University, 401 White Hall, Kent, OH 44242, USA. (E-mail: trasinsk@kent.edu)

involving parents in school-based activities in a variety of ways but the evidence shows that there is little, if any on parental efficacy and subsequent learning and achievement of preschool children” (p. 6). Harris and Goodall (2008) concluded that parental engagement in children’s learning in the home leads to the greatest gains in student achievement. Perhaps school-based parental involvement programs that are carried out at home offer the greatest potential for improving student learning outcomes. Regardless of the actual approach taken, more empirical research into parental involvement in student learning is necessary.

Despite the potential promise of parent involvement in children’s reading, not all initiatives to and approaches for home involvement meet with great success over the long term, often on very practical grounds (Feiler, 2010; Padak & Rasinski, 2006; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). Parental programs on reading often have low parent turnouts and participation (Moorman, 2002). Anecdotal reports from teachers and principals note that even programs to involve parents in children’s reading that have been successful one year often disappear or regress in the following year as parents’ and teachers’ initial enthusiasm and excitement over the programs wanes. Maintaining parent involvement in reading over extended periods of time can be a challenge for most teachers and schools. Despite our search of several databases (e.g., ERIC, Google Scholar), we were unable to locate studies on the durability or sustainability of school-based parent involvement programs in reading. Because this appears to be, at the very least, a relatively unexplored area, investigations into the sustainability of school-based parent involvement programs in early literacy are clearly warranted.

Rasinski, Padak, and Fawcett (2009) identified several principles of successful parent involvement initiatives in reading. These include the following:

- Use methods of instruction that are proven. In the same way that we want teachers to use scientifically based instructional methods, when asking parents to work with their children in literacy we need to insure that the methods we share with parents are based on proven, effective practice.
- Develop a consistent program or instructional routine that does not vary widely over time. The consistency allows parents to develop a sense of competence in their literacy work with their children.
- Make the parent involvement activity easy and quick to implement. Parents’ time to help their children may be limited. Moreover, parents do not generally have the same instructional training as teachers. Programs for parents should be simple in their implementation and not take an excessive amount of time—10–15 min per day seems sufficient.
- Provide training and support. Most parents lack instructional expertise. We need to help parents learn the

methods we wish them to implement with their children. Moreover, we need to provide parents with ongoing support in their work with children.

- Whatever we ask parents to do with their children should be enjoyable and should involve authentic reading. Parents and children are more likely to grasp that what they are doing at home will help the children become good readers if the activity involves real reading. Moreover, parents and children are more likely to persist in implementing the program if they perceive the instructional activity as fun and enjoyable to do.

In their review of parent involvement in literacy programs, Senechal and Young (2008) identified three types of involvement—parents reading to their children, parents listening to their children read, and parents tutoring their children in reading. Parent programs that involved parents listening to their children read and parents tutoring their children in reading had significant positive effects on their children’s reading development. Although the research review indicated that parents reading to their children was not associated with growth in children’s literacy, other researchers (e.g., Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Lonigan & Whitehurst 1998) and scholars (e.g., Trelease, 2013) view parents reading to their children as a powerful tool in children’s early literacy development. In a separate study Senechal and LeFevre (2002) found that both children’s exposure to books at home and parental instruction in literacy predicted different aspects of reading development in Grade 3.

Rasinski (1995) and Padak and Rasinski (2005) developed a school- or classroom-based daily parent involvement literacy program of literacy lessons for parents of young children to accomplish at home called *Fast Start (FS)*. The program is based on the principles of effective parent involvement program noted above, elements of effective foundational fluency instruction (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, 2010; Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2011), and that contain the three types of literacy involvement noted by Senechal and Young (2008). *FS* is based on the assumption that word recognition and fluency are foundational reading competencies that young children must master early in their reading development (Chall, 1996; Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). These foundational skills form the base for continued literacy development, including silent reading comprehension (Walczyk & Griffith-Ross, 2007). Research on students who struggle in reading suggests that a substantial number of students beyond Grade 3 who exhibit difficulty in reading comprehension and overall reading achievement have not achieved sufficient proficiency in word recognition and fluency (Rasinski & Padak, 1998; Valencia & Buly, 2004).

In *FS* parents and children are asked to master a daily poem or rhyme appropriate for young children. In each 10–15-min lesson a child sits next to the parent and listens

to the parent read a rhyme to the child several times. While listening to the parent read in a fluent manner, the child's visual attention is directed to the words on the page. Next, the child and parent read the rhyme together two or three times; again the parent draws the child's attention to the words on the page by pointing to the words as they are read. Finally, the child is invited to read the rhyme to the parent two or three times, again pointing to the words as they are read. Through the multiple readings of the short text children begin to develop fluency in recognizing the words in print. The brevity of the poem allows it to be read multiple times in a matter of minutes.

Adding a bit of word play after this routine provides extra benefit for two reasons. First, children may have memorized the poem after several readings; thus, they may not be focusing sufficiently on the words in print. More important, research has demonstrated the power of this word play. In 2008 Senechal and Young did a meta-analysis of a number of experimental studies that looked at the effects of three kinds of parent involvement on children's reading growth—parents reading to children, parents listening to children read, and parents following either of these up with word play or work on literacy skills. Nearly 1,200 families were included in the studies they analyzed. Senechal and Young found that the addition of word play or instruction in other "literacy skills" was 2 times more effective than having parents simply listen to their children read and 6 times more effective than when parents simply read to their children.

Thus, the *FS* lesson concludes with a brief word play or word study period. Parents and children select words from the poem. Interesting words from the poem, for example, might be written on a sheet of paper. Parents and children then read and try to use the words in their own language over the next several days. Similarly, word families from poems may be identified (e.g., *-eep* from *Little Bo Peep*). Parents and children then brainstorm words containing the word family and list them on a separate sheet of paper (e.g., *sheep, peep, seep, deep, sleep, jeep, steep, beep, weep, sweep, creep*). Children and parents then practice reading the words several times over the next several days. Families can also play simple word games with the words.

Ideally, parents and children engage in learning a *FS* poem on a daily basis. However, realizing the time challenges of parenting, teachers may ask parents to complete a *FS* lesson fewer times per week. It is essential, however, that parents and children engage in *FS* regularly over the course of multiple weeks. Regular implementation leads to the greatest gains in reading achievement.

FS has been employed in a variety of generally small-scale school and clinical settings of relatively short term duration and has been found to be effective in improving the literacy outcomes of young children (Padak & Rasinski, 2004; Rasinski, 1995; Rasinski & Stevenson, 2005; Imperato, 2009). Students in these studies have demonstrated improvement in word recognition, fluency, and overall reading achievement as a result of their

involvement in *FS*. Moreover, parents and children have overwhelmingly indicated that doing the *FS* lessons was an enjoyable experience that had a positive impact on their children's literacy learning.

These studies, however, as well as most studies of parental involvement in literacy, have generally been of 1-year duration. For systemic parent involvement programs to have a lasting effect they need to be effective and they need to be implemented over multiple years. Most parent involvement programs are generally not of such an extended duration. Often, the novelty of the program wears off and parent (and teacher) involvement in the program fades. Indeed, in our review of studies on parental involvement in reading, the issue of the durability of the parental program from one year to the next was not addressed. Extensive research reviews by Mattingly et al. (2002) and Senechal (2006a) of the effect of family literacy programs in Grades K–12 and K–3, respectively, did not examine the durability of such programs. They did not examine if a program deemed successful continued into the following academic years. In these reviews a program's success was determined by its end-of-year or end-of-program effects on student development. However, programs, even if successful, have little value if they are not maintained from one year to the next. As mentioned earlier, however, there has been little research, if any, on the sustainability of such programs over multiple years.

In the present study, then, we attempted to address two key questions in parental involvement in children's literacy.

Research Question 1: To what extent does *FS* reading, implemented as part of a school-based reading program improve the literacy development of Grade 1 and kindergarten students?

Research Question 2: To what extent is a school able to maintain a parent involvement program over multiple years?

Implementing FS in Russell Elementary School

The following section is written from the perspective of the first author, a teacher in the school in which *FS* was implemented. *FS* was implemented in Russell Elementary School (school name is a pseudonym), which is located in the United States. Russell Elementary currently has 610 students enrolled; 88% of the students are on free or reduced-price lunches. Approximately 60% of students enrolled are Caucasian, 30% are African American, and the remaining 10% are Native American, Hispanic, Asian American, or other. The school has eight preschool classes, 12 kindergarten classes, and 11 Grade 1 classes. The kindergarten and Grade 1 classes have approximately 22 children in each classroom.

We first learned about *FS* in the spring of 2008 when we went to a professional development workshop about fluency. Our principal was impressed with the results of

previous studies on *FS* and wanted our school to implement it for our kindergarten and first-grade students.

We started off the 2008–2009 school year with an in-service for all faculty and staff about *FS*. Each first-grade classroom teacher was given a copy of the implementation book for the program. We invited the parents to come to one of two parent meetings. One was offered at night with child-care provided, and another one was offered during the school day. Our classroom teachers presented the parent night workshop. *FS* began in the middle of September and concluded the first week in May. The classroom teachers sent home a *FS* poem and activity page each week (one lesson per week). Parents were asked to do the *FS* lesson with the weekly assigned poem two evenings each week. The program was implemented over 29 weeks, so the total number of lessons that parents were asked to engage in with their children was 58. Parents recorded the days that they engaged in the *FS* lesson on a weekly log. Parent and teacher surveys were given at the end of the school year to help improve the following year's implementation. Given the limitations in staffing, we chose to follow the progress of one of our Grade 1 classrooms that implemented *FS*.

During the 2009–2010 school year, we improved the program by copying and stapling the poems and activity pages for the classroom teachers. We also revised the parent log. One log was developed for each 9-week period in order to make it easier for the teachers and parents to record participation and maintain records. Poster size copies of the poems were displayed in the school hallways and were changed weekly in order to coordinate with the poem that was being sent home. We gave friendly reminders to the teachers on which poem to send home and what day. Our principal bought special *FS* folders for each student. We sent home the parent survey at the end of April. Again, we tracked the progress of one of our Grade 1 classrooms using *FS*.

During the 2010–2011 school year, we continued to do much of what we did during the 2009–2010 school year. *FS* was also introduced to four kindergarten classrooms and families. The kindergarten poems and activity pages went home on Mondays and were returned on Fridays. The parents chose which two nights to do *FS*. The Grade 1 poems and activity pages went home on Tuesdays and were returned on Fridays. The first-grade students read their poem and activity page with their parents on Tuesday and Wednesday nights. Poems were copied and stapled for the classroom teachers to distribute to families. *FS* posters were displayed in the hall and changed weekly to match the poem that went home with the students. A different log was used for each of the four 9-week periods in order to track parent-students' use of *FS*. At the end of the school year every kindergartener and first-grade student was given a reward to thank them for doing *FS* during the year. We were able to track the progress of two Grade 1 classrooms and four kindergarten classrooms during this third year of implementation.

We have been able to implement the *FS* program for 3 consecutive years with parents. The simplicity and time efficiency of the program makes it something that parents can easily implement and enjoy with their children. The results of yearly assessments indicate that *FS* has made a substantial difference with our students. It is well worth the time and effort. The gains we have seen as well as the increasing level of parent participation over the years leads us to continue to employ and revise *FS* in our school.

Assessments

In the first 2 years of the program, a Grade 1 class was given a pretest and a posttest using the *Three Minute Reading Assessment* (Rasinski & Padak, 2005), a curriculum-based measurement of word recognition and fluency, skills identified by the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2012) as foundational for reading achievement. A second Grade 1 class was tracked in the third year of the study. First-grade students were assessed in September (beginning of the year) and May (end of the year) in each year of the study. The assessment involved students' reading a Grade 1 narrative passage. Students were instructed to provide their best reading of the passage. Teachers listened to students' reading, marked any uncorrected errors in word recognition, and noted each student's position in the text at the end of 60 s. From this a fluency score (words correct per minute [WCPM]) was calculated. Reading rate on grade-level material has been found to be an excellent predictor of readers' fluency and overall reading achievement in the elementary grades (Deno, 1985; Rasinski, 2004).

In year 3 of the study, four kindergarten classrooms were also tracked for progress in reading. Rather than assess literacy development through a measure of reading rate, the kindergarten children's reading was assessed through a list of 31 high-frequency words they were asked to read in the final month of the 2010–2011 school year.

Results

Tables 1, 2, and 3 summarize Grade 1 student performance in years 1 (2008–2009), 2 (2009–2010), and 3 (2010–2011). Several tentative findings can be inferred

TABLE 1. First-Grade Student Reading Performance (2008–2009)

No. of <i>FS</i> completed	Student <i>n</i>	Mean WCPM May 2009	Gain in WCPM from September 2008	Mean weekly gain in WCPM
0–10	9	73.8	43.3	1.49
11–22	11	79.4	61.7	2.12

Note. *FS* = *Fast Start*; WCPM = words correct per minute.

TABLE 2. First-Grade Student Reading Performance (2009–2010)

No. of FS completed	Student n	Mean WCPM May 2010	Gain In WCPM from Sept 2009	Mean weekly gain in WCPM
0–10	11	68.4	45.0	1.55
31–50	7	80.4	67.0	2.31

Note. FS = Fast Start; WCPM = words correct per minute.

from these results. First, in all 3 years, parent participation in FS lessons was associated with higher student reading achievement as measured by students' fluency (reading rate) scores and in higher gains in reading achievement from the beginning of the year. The more parents engaged in FS with their children, the more the children gained in reading. Indeed, in all 3 years of the study, students who engaged in FS at home exhibited reading fluency performance that was substantially above the 53 words read correctly per minute norm for first-grade students at the 50th percentile identified by Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006). Students who engaged in 31 or more FS lessons at home in years 2 and 3 exhibited levels of reading fluency associated with the 75th percentile or better (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006).

Second, Tables 1–3 demonstrate that over the 3 years of the study, parent involvement in FS increased. In year 1 no parent did more than 22 lessons with his or her child. In year 2, 39% of parents engaged in 31–50 lessons with their child. And finally, in year 3 participation at the high range of lessons completed rose to approximately two thirds of parents.

Examining normative data, Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Walz, and Germann (1993) suggested that a weekly gain of 2 WCPM in reading rate would be considered realistic progress for first-grade students. Data from Tables 1–3 indicate students receiving the highest number of FS manifested weekly fluency gains that substantially exceeded Fuchs' et al. realistic expectations.

Participation in the parent lessons and their effect on children's reading can also be viewed through Table 4,

TABLE 3. First-Grade Student Reading Performance (2010–2011)

No. of FS completed	Student n	Mean WCPM May 2011	Gain In WCPM from Sept 2010	Mean weekly gain in WCPM
0–10	7	82.7	67.7	2.33
31–52	20	90.8	70.4	2.42

Note. FS = Fast Start; WCPM = words correct per minute.

TABLE 4. Mean Fast Start Lessons Employed by Parents (2008–2011)

	n	M	Mean gain in student WCPM
2008–2009	19	11.10	51.5
2009–2010	19	18.79	53.7
2010–2011	36	31.00	57.5

Note. WCPM = words correct per minute.

which reports on the average number of parent lessons provided per family for all Grade 1 families. In year 1 each family provided on average approximately 11 lessons to their children during the year. In year 2 the average number of lessons increased to over 18. In year 3 the average number of lessons per family increased to 31. Moreover, these results indicate that the parent participation increased and that with increased participation, student achievement in reading also increased.

Data from all 3 years (four classrooms) of FS implementation was combined in order to determine the relationship between level of involvement and student achievement gains in reading (WCPM). A moderate, but statistically significant ($p < .01$), correlation of .34 was determined between the number of FS lessons implemented by parents and student reading achievement gains; the greater number of FS lessons implemented was associated with higher levels of and greater gains in reading achievement. Approximately 11% of the variance in student reading achievement can be explained by the implementation of FS. Although the amount of explained variance is modest, keep in mind that the intervention implemented by parents was itself modest—10–15 min twice a week. It is fair to conjecture that had parents and students engaged in the FS intervention 4–5 times per week, the impact of the intervention on student reading achievement would have been markedly higher.

In order to determine if the increase in parent participation in FS was significant and a sign of the sustainability of the program a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the level of parent participation in FS per year (Table 4). ANOVA results showed that there were statistically significant differences among the use of FS according to years $F(2, 71) = 9.629, p = .000$. Post hoc comparisons using the Scheffé method indicated that the mean participation score for 2010–2011 ($M = 31.00, SD = 18.49$) was significantly different from 2008–2009 ($M = 11.10, SD = 6.79$). Moreover, the 2010–2011 participation score ($M = 31.00, SD = 18.49$) was significantly different from 2009–2010 ($M = 18.79, SD = 19.49$).

Even though parent participation in the brief FS lessons had a positive impact on children's reading achievement,

TABLE 5. First-Grade Parent Response to Using *Fast Start*

Year	Percent of parents indicating their children benefitted from <i>Fast Start</i>
2008–2009	82
2009–2010	95
2010–2011	91

parental perceptions of the value of the lessons is critical to their continuation. Table 5 addresses this question. In year 1 of the study slightly over 82% of all parents surveyed reported that the *FS* lessons had a positive or somewhat positive impact on their children's literacy development. In years 2 and 3 the percentage of parents indicating a positive or somewhat positive impact on their first-grade students' literacy development rose to over 90%.

Table 6 reports the kindergarteners' performance on the 31-item word recognition assessment by the number *FS* lessons provided by parents. Over a quarter of the families engaged in 31 or more lessons with their children. The general trend indicates that student performance increased with the number of lessons provided by parents. A correlation analysis was run between number of times parents engaged in *FS* with their children and children's word recognition gain scores; a low but statistically significant ($p < .01$) correlation of .20 was determined. We must note that this correlation is constrained by the fact that 22 of the 72 kindergarten students achieved a ceiling score of 100% on the word recognition test in May. Of these 22 students 19 (86%) engaged in 19 or more *FS* lessons with their parents.

Kindergarten parents were also surveyed about their perceptions and their children's perceptions of the lessons (Table 7). Well over 90% of 117 parents surveyed indicated that both they and their children enjoyed the *FS* lessons; slightly over 90% of parents believed that their children benefitted or somewhat benefitted from the lessons.

TABLE 6. Kindergarten Students Word Recognition Performance (2010–2011)

Number of parent lessons	Student <i>n</i>	Percent of students achieving 100%	Mean percent of words read correct
0–10	29	6.8	72.2
11–20	12	41.7	80.1
21–30	12	33.3	81.3
31–40	15	53.3	95.9
41–50	4	75.0	99.3

TABLE 7. Kindergarten Parent Response to Using *Fast Start* (2010–2011)

	%
Children enjoyed parent reading lessons	99
Parents enjoyed parent reading lessons	94
Children benefitted from parent lessons	91

Discussion

The results from this study allow several tentative conclusions to be made. First, parent involvement in children's early literacy learning can have a substantial impact on their children's literacy development. For each year of this study, children whose parents implemented the *FS* parental literacy lessons with them made gains in foundational literacy achievement (reading fluency) over those children whose parents implemented fewer lessons or did not implement the lessons at all. Differential and positive gains in foundational measures of literacy achievement (word recognition) were also experienced by kindergarten children whose parents implemented *FS*. Moreover, parents of both kindergarten and first-grade students perceived value in the lessons they provided their children.

The program itself was modified by the teachers using it. Instead of a separate poem and lesson taught daily, students and parents were given one poem per week and asked to engage in the *FS* lesson twice each week with the same poem. Although we can certainly understand and appreciate the need to adapt programs such as *FS* to be congruent with the local community, even greater growth might have occurred if parents and children had engaged in *FS* three or four times per week with more than one poem.

The second guiding question in the study concerned the durability or sustainability of the program—making parent involvement in literacy a multi-year systemic and ever-increasing part of a school's primary grade literacy program. In each succeeding year of the study, as teachers worked to refine the program, more parents participated in *FS*, and they implemented more *FS* lessons with their children. Moreover, with every successive year, first-grade students' gains in reading fluency and word recognition increased. This suggests that a program such as *FS* can be made durable in an actual school setting. Moreover, year-by-year increases in the number and level of parent participation along with year-over-year gains in student reading achievement suggests that teacher implementation of *FS* led to greater parent involvement, which, in turn, led to higher gains in student achievement in reading.

Although this is a small-scale study in one school, and further research in this area is definitely needed, these results do suggest that long-term, systemic parent

involvement in the primary grades is possible and can have a significant impact on children's literacy development even in schools where substantial numbers of students struggle in reading and communities manifesting significant levels of poverty. In all 3 years of the study, students who had the greatest number of FS lessons with their parents, achieved fluency (WCPM) scores that were well above 53 WCPM (the 50th percentile norms for first-grade students reported by Hasbrouck and Tindal [2006]). Indeed, by the third year of the study, students who had received the most lessons were reading at a level between the 75th and 90th percentiles for Grade 1. Positive gains were also evident for children at the kindergarten level as well.

Limitations

A major limitation to the present study is that it took place in one school and was directed, modified, and implemented by the school staff itself. As a use-inspired study (school initiated curriculum innovation; Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003), strict control over the fidelity of implementation at the school and home levels was not possible, nor was statistical control (through control groups) that might allow for a more conclusive determination of the influence of FS on reading improvement of the students. Internal validity is clearly a limitation that must be acknowledged. However, this limitation should be balanced with the relatively high level of external validity (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003). The study/project was not supervised by outside researchers; rather the study/project was led by a literacy coach and implemented by school staff in a school in which a substantial number of students struggle in acquiring proficiency in reading. The fact that the program was owned and implemented by the teachers in Russell Elementary School suggests that it is possible for teachers and other school staff members to create or modify existing parent involvement literacy programs in order to meet the needs of students and improve literacy outcomes of students. Although we do not suggest that the results presented here are definitive, they do add to a converging body of evidence on the value of parental involvement in reading in general and FS in particular for improving student reading outcomes. Moreover, this study provides some preliminary and tentative evidence that school-based parent involvement programs can be sustained over multiple years.

The present study also does not permit a determination of which, if any, factors associated with successful parent involvement identified earlier are responsible for gains in students' literacy development. Until such research is conducted, it may be useful for teachers or schools to use all the principles in designing their own parent programs.

Based on this as well as previous studies on parent involvement in general and FS in particular, we feel that it may be time for school administrators, in consultation

with the instructional staff, to consider the systemic and multiple-year implementation of parental involvement programs in literacy for the primary grades. Further, we recommend the principles outlined earlier in this article and the general procedures used by school personnel in this study to engage, support, and maintain parent involvement be used as a guide for implementation in other venues. All parents want to be able to help their children succeed in learning to read. Most parents, however, do not have the expertise or time to implement highly structured and complex programs that are sometimes offered to parents. Effective parent involvement in children's literacy can be a reality. It simply requires the efforts of informed and dedicated literacy educators using evidence-based methods on a consistent and ongoing basis to make it happen.

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AUTHORS NOTE

Susan Ann Crosby has been a teacher for 30 years. A former first, third, fourth and Reading Recovery teacher, she is currently teaching reading intervention for kindergarten and first grade students at K.R. Hanchey Elementary School in Beauregard Parish School Board, Louisiana.

Timothy Rasinski is a Professor of Education in the Reading and Writing Center of Kent State University. His professional interests include improving literacy outcomes for struggling readers through school intervention and parental involvement.

Nancy Padak is a Distinguished Professor Emerita from Kent State University. While at Kent State, she directed the Reading and Writing Center and was the Principal Investigator for the Ohio Literacy Resource Center. She is an active researcher and writer.

Kasim Yildirim is an associate professor at Mugla Sitki Kocman University in Turkey. He received his PhD in Elementary Classroom Teaching from Gazi University (Turkey). His research focuses on Turkish and English language arts instruction, particularly the reading fluency of elementary school students.