A Dissertation

Entitled

Read with Me! Examining the Effects of a Community Volunteer Reading Program on Preschoolers' Literacy Skills

by

Cynthia J. Carson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education

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An Abstract of

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The purpose of this study was to examine if there was a difference between mean measures of preliteracy skills of preschool children who participated in Creating Young Readers, a volunteer based reading program, and a control group who had not. Unpaid community volunteers were trained in a modified dialogic reading technique, focusing on children's active engagement, strengthening oral language, vocabulary, rhyming, and alliteration. The volunteers read with each child individually two to three times a week, approximately 20 minutes per session, in the preschool classroom during a standard school year. The ten participating preschools primarily served African-American children from single parent, urban, lower income families who received subsidized daycare. Evaluation of the preschoolers' productive vocabulary, rhyming, and alliteration was obtained through the use of Get It, Got It, Go!, a timed, standardized early literacy assessment. These data were collected in fall and spring over three years, and then divided into a control group and two separate years. ANOVA was used to analyze the data. Children who worked with a volunteer reader showed an increase in scores from fall to spring in all three areas. Only the changes from fall to spring in picture naming and rhyming means were found to be statistically significant in the three groups. The

increase from fall to spring was not statistically significant in alliteration in any year for any of the three groups. Children who participated in the second year of Creating Young Readers were found to have significantly higher mean scores than children in the control group or in the first year. This research did not determine causality, only correlation. Readers are cautioned not to over-interpret the results due to possible variables in adherence to data collection protocol, the preschools, their populations, and other unknown factors. Still, the research provides evidence that unpaid community volunteers may positively affect the literacy skills of disadvantaged preschool children. Further longitudinal research is needed to determine if gains are retained over time.

I dedicate this work:

To my parents, Jacob and Janet Carson, who spent years modeling how reading brings joy to life.

To my siblings, Barbara, Suzanne, Chuck and Mike, who introduced me to Superman, Batman, Mad Magazine, National Geographic, science fiction, and much, much more.

To my husband, Steve Tenney, and children, Gwendolyn and Steven Drew Tenney. Your love and encouragement helped me persevere at this seemingly unending task.

To my friends, Pat Gase and Susan Frazier. Susan, you can now say that you had a doctor shoveling your manure for you. Pat, you are the best example of what a good friend can be.

To those who have provided reading joy throughout my life, including Dr. Seuss, Millie Benson, Madeline L'Engle, Isaac Asimov, Ken Follett, and Conn Iggulden. Maya Angelou wrote, "Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him." I agree, with joy.

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My nephew, Jesse McNaughton, helped with editing and formatting. His support allowed me to focus on writing.

At Read for Literacy, I was supported by the entire staff. Sara Mattson shared everything I asked for and more, and checked my work for accuracy. Jim Funk provided insight into the beginning of Creative Young Readers. Diana Bush and Marci Fuller listened to my gripes, encouraged, and supported me. Judy Patberg was instrumental in starting Creating Young Readers. She gave generously of her time.

At the preschool sites, I was welcomed warmly by every director and teacher with whom I spoke.

This project would not have been possible without the many dedicated volunteers who read with the preschool children every week

Thank you all.

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List of Abbreviations

CYR……... Creating Young Readers

GGG……...Get It, Got It, Go!

RFL…… Read for Literacy

NAEYC……. National Association for the Education of Young Children

ZPD…… Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Improving Preparation of Young Children for Kindergarten is Critical

Preparing young children for formal instruction in U.S. elementary schools is a matter of increasing importance in an era of high stakes testing and higher expectations (Meisels,1989). Well prepared children entering kindergarten have a distinct and substantial advantage over less prepared peers in terms of being able to benefit from classroom instruction (Entwisle & Hayduck, 1988). Even though over a trillion dollars are spent each year on education in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), children who are not 'ready to learn' are not likely to keep pace with or catch up with their peers (National Education Goal Panel, 1995). According to Entwisle and Alexander (1993), by the age of five, children substantially differ in their success in reaching adequate linguistic and cognitive skills, and these early differences affect a child's schooling, limiting or enhancing learning success. Additionally, large differences still exist between the levels of school success for children from less and more advantaged backgrounds (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006). Money alone cannot alleviate this problem; children need to have experiences that promote basic literacy skills in order to benefit from formal education by having high quality experiences *before* kindergarten (Durkin, 1966).

In 1985, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson) was published, and soon became the seminal work on developing literacy. Among its primary findings, two simple pronouncements were clear and focused:

- "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children."
- The commission found conclusive evidence to support reading aloud not only in the home but also in the classroom: "It is a practice that should continue throughout the grades."

These points support the idea that reading is not founded primarily on classroom instruction, but on exposure to books before formal schooling. This is supported by Trelease (2006), who noted, "the first step to literacy is simply being immersed, through conversation and storytelling, in a reading environment; the second is to read a lot and often." Currently, the idea that reading to children should begin before kindergarten is a well-accepted doctrine of early childhood education.

Yet, many parents still do not read to their children on a regular basis. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in a cohort of children born in 2001, fewer than 40% of American 4 year olds are read to in a typical week. Even fewer, less than one in four, are told stories at least weekly. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics about the percentages of 9-month, 2-year and 4-year old children read to, sung to, or orally told stories found that two year olds are more likely to be read to than either 9-month olds or 4 year olds (45.3% of 2 year olds vs. 32.5% of 9-month olds and 38.6% of 4 year olds. This trend was consistent among children living in and out of poverty, although the percentages of children in poverty being consistently read to are disturbingly

low with families' responses indicating that only 22.3% of 9-month olds, 27.9% of 2-year olds and 21.3% of 4-year olds in poverty being read to daily. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Interestingly, the data above shows that two year olds were more likely to be read to, told a story, or sung to than four year olds! If this trend continues throughout childhood, it would be likely that children entering kindergarten would be sharing fewer books and hearing even fewer stories than four year olds. Such a trend would not allow children to develop a strong foundation of stories and books needed for success in reading.

Children are sung to more than they are read to, with a singing pattern similar to the pattern of reading whereby 2-year olds (67.6%) are sung to more than 4-year olds (49.7%). Encouragingly, percentages of children in poverty being sung to are almost identical to these overall percentages. This is encouraging because singing can be related to preliteracy experiences in multiple ways, including the development of phrasing, fluency, and sequencing. One area of particular note related to this research is the relationship of singing to phonemic awareness, including rhyming and alliteration. Children are more likely to encounter rhyming through song than other common methods of discourse they encounter in their formative years.

1.2 Preschools as Preparation for Literacy Acquisition

Some may assume that children would receive adequate exposure to books and stories when children enter preschool. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 52% of three and four year olds were enrolled in some type of schooling in

2009 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2009). While this sounds promising, being in formal school is not the fix-all that prepares children to benefit from formal education.

An image of quality preschools, and the reading experiences and skills they produce, are emerging after years of research. Participation in early childhood programs is linked to higher academic and social readiness for school, with higher quality programs linked to greater gains, particularly for the most disadvantaged children (Garces, Thomas, & Currie, 2000; Gormley, Gayer, Phillips, & Dawson, 2005). Some studies (Gormley et al.,2005) examined the effect of preschool programs on outcomes before or at kindergarten entry or later, and found significant positive effects on measures of school readiness and cognitive outcomes (letter-word identification, spelling and applied problems). Cognitive gains for disadvantaged children (whether defined by poverty status, low maternal education, single parent headship, or mothers who do not speak English) are larger and longer lasting. A large study in the United Kingdom following children aged 2 or older who attend center-based preschool shows similar results (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2010).

1.3 Use of Adult Volunteers

It is evident that good preschools do make a difference in measures of school readiness. Yet even high quality preschools do not have the resources to devote a great deal of one-on-one time to children who need enriching experiences. One possible way to provide children with frequent book reading experiences is to invite community volunteers to step into this role. Research has shown that volunteers can make a difference in improving children's literacy, even though most studies on adult literacy

volunteers have been completed with students in elementary and middle schools. There is little published research available on the efficacy of volunteers working with preschool children; most of what exists is anecdotal. Such a lack of research does not mean that volunteers cannot make a difference in the literacy lives of preschoolers, but simply that such evidence has not been documented as of this date.

Adult volunteers can provide some of the one-on-one reading and storytelling time that many children simply have not experienced in their young lives. With a few hours of training, volunteers can move beyond a simple read-aloud model, and help children increase their vocabularies, learn about working with words, and discover the pleasures of reading books.

It is upon the premise that such volunteers can make a difference that Creating Young Readers (CYR) was developed.

1.4 Development of Creating Young Readers

Creating Young Readers is a child-oriented program offered by Read for Literacy (RFL), the largest nonprofit volunteer based literacy organization in the United States. For many years after its founding, RFL focused on matching volunteers with adults who wanted to learn to read or improve their current reading skills. CYR was a step in a new direction: helping to break the cycle of low levels of literacy in families by helping children acquire pre-reading skills before entering formal schooling in kindergarten.

All the preschool sites involved in CYR serve children from low income families, and all were supportive of the idea of using adult volunteers to read one-to-one with children who might not otherwise have such an opportunity on a regular basis.

The primary stated goal of CYR is to prevent illiteracy by providing literacy opportunities to children in low income families before they started kindergarten. The method was dialogic reading, which makes reading a story into an interactive experience by asking simple questions and talking about the pictures in the storybook. Further, children are encouraged to be actively involved through discussion and retelling stories instead of sitting quietly and listening as an adult reads to them.

The program started with 85 volunteers and 90 children in autumn of 2009. As described later in this dissertation, dialogic reading remains the essence of the CYR program to the time of this writing. For more information about the genesis of CYR, see Appendix A. It is upon this foundation that these research questions have been formulated.

1.5 Research Questions

My interest lies in exploring if adult volunteers can help children in preschool catch up with their more advantaged peers through developing conversations about reading while reading aloud one to one in preschool settings. Thus, the questions I examine are as follows:

1. Using the Get it, Got it, Go! (GGG) assessment, is there a measurable difference between children who have completed one year of the Creating Young Readers (CYR) program and similar children who have not?
2. If any differences in GGG scores are evident, are the differences in all three assessed areas: picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration?

3. Is there a difference between students who participated in the pilot year and those who participated in the second year of the program?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The research in this paper explores how adult volunteer readers can help preschool children be prepared to benefit from formal education in kindergarten and beyond. This is significant because what little information is currently available about volunteers in preschools is generally descriptive. These results will help broaden the research base to help volunteer agencies and early childhood educators determine where they may want to direct their efforts in terms of using volunteers to improve literacy preparation. In addition, the results will determine if dialogic reading is a logical choice for volunteers to use is preschools, and suggest considerations for implementation in future applications.

1.7 Summary

This chapter begins by describing the problem of children not being adequately prepared to attain literacy skills in formal schooling. As described in this chapter, the purpose of this study is to determine if there is an effect in literacy preparation as determined by a standardized assessment when children have the opportunity to read one-on-one with adult volunteers using a dialogic reading method in preschools. To wit, the fundamental question examined in this dissertation is whether there is a difference between the scores of children who have participated in CYR and those who have not? To research this, GGG scores of 160 children were analyzed in three areas: picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration, to determine if there was a difference in their scores.

This study is necessary as there is minimal research on the use of trained volunteers in preschool and literacy achievement of children. Research on the use of dialogic reading by volunteers in preschool is also sparse, and should be enhanced by this addition.

1.8 A Preview of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter 2 is a comprehensive literature review detailing and describing the theoretical foundation for children's learning in a socio-cultural context, the use of adult volunteers in literacy development, and the method of dialogic reading as a tool to enhancing children's learning. Chapter 2 also describes current viewpoints of what children are expected to know and be able to do based on current preschool standards, the influence of home environments, and a discussion of the relationship between these topics.

Chapter 3 describes the research design, settings, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis. Chapter 4 discusses data analysis, assumptions, and statistical tests. Chapter 5 concludes with a summary, discussion, limitations and recommendations for future research and implications. Last, references and appendices are included.

Chapter 2

Related Literature

From their earliest days of life, children find themselves surrounded by language and the meaning represented by that language. As children grow, they learn about language in many ways: from their siblings and other children, to be sure, but primarily from the adults who nurture them.

This section introduces a socio-cultural view of learning: the idea of more knowledgeable people guiding less expert learners. This view, based on the works of Lev Vygotsky (1931, 1997), provides the theoretical underpinnings of this study. Second, research about volunteers acting in the role of more knowledgeable other in literacy is examined. Next, dialogic reading, an interactive method of supporting children's language and literacy underpinnings is explored. This is followed by an examination of current viewpoints of an ideal model of what children should know and be able to do before starting kindergarten, based on the U.S. preschool standards existent today. Next, I explore the relationship many researchers have found between children living in poverty and arriving at school with less proficiency with tasks associated with later school literacy success with a focus on the knowledge and skills most likely to not be addressed in that population. Last, I argue that based on the expectations inherent in education today, research supports the possibility that the use of unpaid volunteers in preschools

may be able to make a contribution to kindergarten readiness in preschool children with disadvantaged backgrounds.

2.1 A Sociocultural View of Learning

From a sociocultural perspective, learning is fundamentally a social activity. Children learn with and from the people they encounter in daily life: generally their families, teachers, and peers. Internalization is the process by which children develop their own mental tools by emulating external cultural behaviors. For example, children may ape the actions of an older sibling when they see that a behavior yields positive feedback for the sibling from others. Once the younger children receive similar feedback, they may internalize that behavior as part of their routine because they are desirous of similar responses. Thus, cognitive development is considered the result of participation in social activity.

These social interactions are developed through the use of language. Language provides a means for children to understand, communicate, and build meaning in a social context, as well as an internal tool that can be used to build and organize knowledge for themselves. Language represents thoughts, as identifiers, such as labels for concrete objects, as well as abstract concepts, such as ‘happy’ or ‘angry.’ Using language results in the development of higher mental functions, which essentially transform the structure of children’s cognitive activity (Kozulin,1986).

2.2 A Vygotskian Perspective

Vygotsky's theories stress the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition as he believed that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning" (Vygotsky, 1931, 1997). His concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) examines human development in relation to individuals' interactions with others around them over time (McNamee, p. 287, in Moll, L. C., ed.1990). The ZPD has been defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers″ (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). For example, a child who has not encountered a tiger may build the idea of a tiger through problem solving with a more knowledgeable other, who can help the child connect the idea of a housecat, the movie *The Lion King*, and an orange and black striped fabric. This is an example of a concrete concept, but thinking processes can be developed in a similar fashion. One can learn how to handle a book correctly or consider various problem solving methods through connections with a more knowledgeable others as well.

The ZPD is considered to have three fundamental characteristics (Moll, 1990, p. 7). The zone includes:

1. Establishing a level of difficulty. This level, assumed to be the proximal level, must be a bit of a challenge for the student, but not too difficult.
2. Providing assisted performance. The adult provides guided practice to the child with a clear sense of the goal or outcome of the child's performance.

3. Evaluating independent performance. The most logical outcome of a ZPD is the child performing independently.

When reading with children, adults generally consider the level of difficulty of the text when matching the child to the book. A preschooler will not be expected to read a new book on a first encounter, but she may be encouraged to join in a repeated chorus after a few encounters. For example, *Run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me; I'm the Gingerbread Man*, can be recognized quickly, and the child invited to join in. Assisted performance is provided by the adult through use of chanting, pauses, voice modulation, and other means. *You can't catch meee…* invites the child to join in. Once the child understands the concept of repetition in the text and participates, the adult quickly evaluates and concludes that the child understands the idea that some stories repeat the same phrase on different pages. The child may take on the task of chanting those lines when she sees cues in the book or hears the change in voice tone of the adult.

For literacy development, this implies that written language is a social-cultural construct whose development is highly related to people, their patterns of communication, and their use of written language to mediate activities in day-to-day life (McNamee, p. 288, in Moll, 1990). This extends into social communities as well, with children becoming active participants in the community of readers as they take on the concepts and language of books with the help of more knowledgeable others. This social community invites the child to become a member through the use of interesting, child-friendly texts, support and encouragement to participate, and development of challenges that are achievable with support. Children are most successful in acquiring knowledge

and constructing meaning when they are actively engaged in authentic, valued practices within a community with which they identify (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The role of more knowledgeable other is assumed by different people in different situations. For preschool children, in terms of literacy, this role is frequently filled by parents and teachers. In many cases, however, it is unlikely that early childhood educators in most preschool classrooms have sufficient time to provide a substantive level of individualized interaction for all children in their classroom (Lonigan, Allan, & Lerner, 2011). Parents may not be active participants in their children's literacy community if they do not perceive the importance of this community, or lack the skills, time, and inclination to do so.

When the role of more knowledgeable other in literacy is abdicated by adults, a community of readers and writers is not likely to develop. This deficit of supportive role models yields children who are likely to remain relatively stagnant in their ZPD. Instead of allowing for no or little progress in children's literacy learning, the role of the more knowledgeable other may be filled by another resource, other people who are also knowledgeable about reading: volunteers.

2.3 Research on Efficacy of Volunteers

Until the dawn of the current millennium, there was little work documenting the effectiveness of adult volunteers as reading tutors (Wasik, 1998, Invernizzi, 2010), and even less documenting the effectiveness of volunteers working with preschoolers. Research over the last decade has allowed volunteer based programs to be considered for efficacy, in parallel with other programs and methodologies. Overall, in terms of

measurable outcomes, the effectiveness of trained teachers is substantially above that of volunteers or paraprofessionals, despite any training or oversight on the part of the volunteers or paraprofessionals (Wasik, 1998, Invernizzi, 2001). However, the demands on teachers' time and limited school budgets make the use of volunteers worth considering in many situations.

Research on the use of volunteers in preschool is spotty, at best. In the quest to connect volunteers, literacy, and early childhood, articles about volunteers who read to children in physicians' waiting rooms and provided books therein are most common. A few describe a growing library outreach program that educates pediatricians about early literacy and places books in pediatric offices in low SES areas through the program called "Reach Out and Read" (Christopher & Duggar, 2008, Zuckerman, 2009). For these, one frequent goal was to model good read aloud techniques to parents (High, Hopman, Lagasse, & Linn, 1998, Canadian Paediatric Society, 2002, Zuckerman, 2009). Other professional articles discussed librarians reading to children in libraries and other social situations (Christopher & Duggar, 2008). Additional professional journal articles discuss library centered story-times that use parent volunteers (Arnold & Colburn, 2004), family literacy that may or may not include preschoolers (Sherow, 2000), and placing pre-service teachers in Head Start classes (Conner, 2004). Arnold and Colburn (2004) described Create a Reader Early (CARE), in which volunteers were trained to read to infants and toddlers up to 18 months old in a day care center. The volunteers read simple books, sang, and did finger plays with the infants. In this short (1 ½ pgs.) descriptive article, no evidence of efficacy was presented.

A study by Porter DeCusati and Johnson (2004) compared preschool children working with volunteer parents in small groups on emergent literacy performance to a control group in the same preschool. Children in the treatment group outperformed comparison-group children on post-treatment measures of word, but not letter, recognition. Porter DeCusati and Johnson also noted the importance of considering parents' attitudes and prior experiences toward education, and the need for trust and openness in the project. Thus, there appears to be a dearth of research of volunteers in preschools.

The research base for early literacy has shifted over the last decade. No doubt, 'scientifically based reading research' (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2003) has had an effect on the types of research and methodology undertaken. In effect, this means that more of the studies, at least with elementary school children, are using quantitative data. With younger children, descriptive research still appears to be the norm. With very young children, surveys of parents' attitudes or 'how-to' descriptions that connect to standards are most common. It appears that early childhood research has not quite caught up to the demands of scientifically based reading research.

Certainly, some of the descriptive articles were interesting and informative, but they hold little relevance to the topic of this dissertation. Therefore, the search for use of volunteers in childhood literacy reveals a focus on early elementary school. Here too, the most frequent use of volunteers is with the upper age range of students; it appears that the research base is most plentiful in the use of volunteers in the upper reaches of early childhood, mainly 2nd-4th grade. Researchers frequently noted that volunteers were used to help students who were behind their classmates, and the identification of such children

was not likely until they had a few years of schooling under their belts. Some of the most influential volunteer models in lower elementary school are considered below.

2.4 Howard Street-Based Tutoring Model

The Howard Street Tutoring Program started in Chicago in 1979. Developed to help second and third grade students who were reading below grade level, the tutoring was based on the elements of Reading Recovery®, a first grade intervention. Tutors were unpaid volunteers, and ranged from undergraduate college students to retirees and other community members. Their training is based on an extremely curtailed version of Reading Recovery training. First, the volunteers observe a tutoring session, and then discuss the interactions that took place in the lesson. Then the volunteer tutors a child while the supervisor observes. Again, the session is discussed after completion of the lesson. The supervisor typically observes and provides feedback for two or three more sessions before the tutor is considered to be adequately trained. The supervisor, generally a trained reading specialist, continues to create the lesson plans to be used with the student. A tutoring manual is also used, although it is designed more for the supervisor than the tutors. Because the program was based on Reading Recovery, the sessions typically include reading at the child's instructional (not grade) level, working with words for about ten minutes, and fifteen minutes of writing (Morris, Shaw, & Perney (1990). This program is still in existence, serving 20 students per year (Harvard Family Research Project, 2011).

At the beginning of the 1986-87 school year and the 1987-88 school year, 2 second grade teachers and 2 third grade teachers were asked to identify the lowest 50 readers in

their classrooms. These 50 children served as the study sample for evaluation. The 50 identified students were screened on their word recognition abilities, their spelling, and their reading. Children were matched into pairs, based on their word recognition abilities. These pairs were split, with one was randomly assigned to the control group, and the other, the treatment group. Students assigned to the treatment group were given the opportunity to participate in the Howard Street Tutoring Program. On average, these students received 50 hours of one-on-one after-school reading tutoring over the course of the year. Students assigned to the control group were not given the opportunity to participate. In late May of each year, students were again screened on the reading and spelling skills.

Measures of reading letters and words, oral reading fluency, and spelling were adapted from standardized measures, but not standardized themselves, and then administered during this study (Wasik, 1998). Students assigned to take part in the Howard Street Tutoring Program received an average of 50 hours of one to one instruction in reading. They made significantly greater gains than did students assigned to the control group. Nearly half of the students assigned to the control group made less than half of a year's gain in reading achievement over the course of the school year and only 20% of control students made at least a full year's gain. By contrast, nearly half of the students assigned to take part in the Howard Street Tutoring Program made at least a full year's gain and only 23% made less than half of a year's gain. 34% of tutored students made more than a year and a half's gain, whereas only one non-tutored child showed such growth (Morris, Shaw, & Perney, 1990; Ritter, Barnett, & Albin, 2009, Harvard Family Research Project, 2011;).

2.5 SMART

Start Making a Reader Today (SMART) is a large volunteer tutoring program in the state of Oregon that started in 1992. Unusual for a large scale literacy program, SMART was conceived and developed by former Oregon Governor Neil Goldschmidt (Baker, Gersten, & Keating, 2000). It provides training and supervision to help community volunteers succeed in tutoring struggling readers in kindergarten, first and second grades in schools where at least 40% of children receive free or reduced lunches. Children considered at-risk by their teachers are tutored 30 minutes a day, twice a week through first and second grade. Tutors use a handbook with simple strategies for reading with children. In contrast to the Howard Street Model, tutors in the SMART program had one to two hours of training. Volunteers were asked to rely primarily on their judgment and instincts to tutor struggling readers (Baker, Gersten, & Keating, 2000).

Evaluation by Baker, Gersten, and Keating (2000) compared a control group to SMART students over two years. First graders in 24 classrooms in 6 schools were randomly assigned to SMART (n=43) or a no-tutoring control group (n=41). The children were in their respective treatment/non-treatment group for two years. At the end of first grade, adjusting for pretests, children in the SMART group scored much higher than controls on Woodcock Word Identification (ES=+0.60), Woodcock Passage Comprehension (ES=+0.47), and Oral Reading Fluency (ES=+0.52), for a mean of +0.54, as compared to a comparable randomly assigned group of students from the same schools who received no treatment. At the end of second grade, differences again favored the SMART students on Woodcock Word Identification (ES=+0.62), Passage Comprehension (ES=+0.36, $p<.067$), and Word Comprehension (ES=+0.46, $p<.025$), as

well as Oral Reading Fluency (ES=+0.54, p<.014). The average of the second-grade effect sizes was +0.50 (Baker, Gersten, & Keating, 2000, Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2009).

SMART is still in existence today, and has served over 100,000 children. The program also provides students with two new books a month to encourage families to read together (U.S. Dept. of Education, What Works Clearinghouse, 2011).

2.6 Experience Corps

Experience Corps is a large national program that brings adults over age 55 into elementary schools to tutor at risk children. Based on a 1988 concept paper by John Gardner, former Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, in the summer of 1995, an 18-month pilot was conducted in 12 schools in Philadelphia; the South Bronx; Minneapolis; Portland, Oregon; and Port Arthur, Texas (Morrow-Howell, Jonson-Reid, McCrary, Lee, & Spitznagel, 2009). Tutors, who receive stipends of up to $278 a month, are trained from 15 to 32 hours in order to use a structured curriculum. The curriculum is not consistent from one site to the next, but includes Book Buddies, Reading Coaches, or Brigance, based on site preferences. Tutors receive training and monitoring from program coordinators. Each Experience Corps project provides training for both initial and ongoing support of its volunteers.

Once trained, tutors work with children approximately 2-3 times a week over the course of the school year for 25–45 minutes a session. Experience Corps members are not limited to literacy tutoring alone; they mentor, provide homework help, and give attention to those children most in need. In addition, members work with teachers, school leaders

and youth workers to develop projects, such as parent involvement campaigns, health awareness activities and library book drives (ibid). Using the Woodcock Johnson word attack subscale (WJ-WA), the Woodcock Johnson passage comprehension subscale (WJ-PC), and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary test (PPVT-III), an assessment by Morrow-Howell, Jonsen-Reid, McCrary, Lee, and Spitznagel (2009) found evidence of student improvement for word attack and comprehension for participating first through third grade students, compared to a control group. The 825 students were randomly assigned to either the treatment group or the nonparticipating control group. The effects were greater for students who had received over 35 sessions with an Experience Corps volunteer.

Because the implementation of Experience Corps varied substantially from place to place, it may be that the most important finding from this work is that older adult volunteers using structured curricula can help students make gains on general reading skills.

2.7 Book Buddies

Book Buddies is another tutoring program with unpaid community volunteers. Volunteers are primarily white, educated females. Based in Charlottesville, Virginia (Invernizzi et al., 1997), volunteers are recruited to work with struggling first graders who receive 45-minute tutoring sessions 2-3 times a week for about 10 weeks, a total of 40 lessons. The model is based on the Howard Street model with some elements of Reading Recovery (ibid). The Book Buddies program was developed by Invernizzi and Meier (Invernizzi, 2010), and includes re-reading familiar books, word study, writing,

and introducing new books. Tutors are guided by supervisors, who write lesson plans, observe the tutoring sessions, and provide feedback and guidance throughout the year. In one study, Invernizzi et al. used a within-program control group research design to judge the effectiveness of the tutoring program. A small group (N=38) of children who received fewer than 40 sessions of tutoring served as a control group within the larger cohort (N=130) who received 40 or more sessions of tutoring. The large cohort who received more tutoring tested higher on a standardized word recognition test (Jastak & Wilkinson, 1984), with an effect size of 1.12. Book Buddies was also judged to be highly effective in a study at Johns Hopkins (Slavin et al., 2009). Interestingly, Book Buddies was not evaluated by the What Works Clearinghouse (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2011), as neither of the studies before 2007 met their standards for inclusion at their time of evaluation. No evidence of why the studies were rejected was provided by What Works Clearinghouse.

2.8 Overview of Volunteers and Early Childhood Literacy

When considering the use of volunteers to improve children's literacy, Slavin et al. (2009) sum up the use of volunteers in lower elementary school well. "One-to-one tutoring is clearly very effective, and when resources are limited, well-structured programs making use of paraprofessionals and volunteers may reach more struggling readers for the same cost as serving many fewer children with certified teachers. Paraprofessionals and volunteers can obtain good results with struggling readers, with a mean effect size across 18 studies of +0.24. The mean effect size for paraprofessionals

was +0.38 in 11 studies, and for volunteers it was +0.16 in 7 studies (but excluding two studies in which volunteers tutored only once or twice a week, the mean was +0.50)."

Evidence shows that there is a range of ways in which tutors are trained, and the length of time in training differs substantially. The general make-up of the volunteer base varies from older volunteers in Experience Corps to white, educated women in Book Buddies, and a wide variety, from college undergraduates to senior citizens in the Howard Street program. Some tutors receive a stipend, others are not financially rewarded. Guidance by a teacher or coordinator varies as well, from substantial amount in the Howard Street Program to very little in SMART. Further, the range of measures used varied from standardized assessments to measures based on standardized assessments developed by researchers. Lessons with children varied in length, frequency, and adherence to a standardized protocol. Yet with all of these variables, there is clear evidence that volunteers can make a difference in the literacy achievement of struggling readers in elementary school.

The next section considers one method that volunteers may use to engage young children in literacy: dialogic reading.

2.9 Dialogic Reading: An Interactive Way of Talking about Books

As detailed above, volunteers can and do make a difference in the literacy achievement of children. It must be noted, however, that the preponderance of evidence supporting the use of volunteers is primarily based on work with children in elementary and middle school. Many of the lessons used with struggling readers in elementary

school are not appropriate with preschoolers; the needs of these youngsters are more basic. Expanding vocabulary, recognizing that words can be manipulated, rhyming, alliteration, and other skills are part of the foundation upon which later literacy growth is built. Volunteers can provide a key role in helping children learn these foundational elements

When considering the shifts in early childhood literacy in the last decade, an emphasis on teachers being actively engaged with children has echoed across recent research. Further, a shift to building a comprehensive early childhood system where families and communities help support the social, emotional, and cognitive growth of children is also more frequently found in early childhood literature. This is reflected in the Early Childhood Task Force's Guide for Preschool Teachers (2002) in which the authors note, "young children need teachers who take time to work with them individually, in small groups, and sometimes with the entire class – to help them develop their cognitive and social skills, their language abilities, and their interest in learning new things about the world" (p.8).

Within this engaged, supportive environment, several instructive approaches are highlighted. These include reading aloud to children, developing listening and speaking skills, teaching about the sounds of spoken language, print, books, letters, and building children's background knowledge and thinking skills (ibid). Happily, all of these approaches can be found in one instructional technique that has emerged from the common practice of storybook reading. That approach is dialogic reading.

Most adults are familiar with storybook reading. As many readers remember, a child sits with an adult, typically a parent, and listens while the adult reads a children's

book aloud. While this method is time honored, another method of paired child/adult reading, known as dialogic reading, has evolved in order to encourage children to take a more active role in this literacy activity (Serafini & Ladd, 2008). In dialogic reading, the role of the reader and listener shifts over time, as the child takes on the role of the storyteller. The adult becomes an active listener, asking questions and prompting the child to become a more skillful storyteller. This is accomplished through the use of open ended questions, not simple yes or no questions. "For example, the adult might say, 'What is Eeyore doing?' or 'You tell me about this page' instead of 'Is Eeyore lying down?'" (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, p. 680). As children become more experienced with dialogic reading, questions begin to focus more on the narrative or connections between the text and child. Repetition, modeling, and conversational turn taking occur within the context of the book (Ezell & Justice, 2005). Based on the literature about dialogic reading cited above, I have created the table below comparing the major elements of traditional storybook reading and dialogic reading.

As described in Table 1, traditional storybook reading may have wide variations. Adults may read a book straight through, with few or no interactions with the child. Discussions may be sporadic or overly detailed; vocabulary may be addressed or ignored. In contrast, dialogic reading is not about reading a book cover to cover, but about using the book as a springboard to have genuine, developmentally appropriate conversations with the child. Books are purposefully selected to encourage these conversations about illustrations, vocabulary, and other concepts.

The evidence in favor of using dialogic reading over storybook reading is compelling. Experimental studies using dialogic reading have reported generally positive

effects on vocabulary. Valdez- Menchaca and Whitehurst (1992) found that 20 two year old children of low income parents attending public day care in Mexico who were read to for thirty sessions with dialogic reading had higher assessment scores on standardized language assessments and some measures of language production than a control group who did not participate in the reading sessions.

Table 2.1: Comparison of Traditional Storybook and Dialogic Reading

Elements	Storybook Reading	Dialogic Reading
Book selection	Any children's books	Books with: Simple narrative plots Supportive illustrations May be predictable Concepts such as rhyme and alliteration
Interactions	May be limited or absent; story may be read beginning to end with no discussion or explanation	CROWD is suggested. Questions and prompts may include: **C**ompletion **R**ecall **O**pen-ended **W**h- questions (who, what, when, where, and especially why) **D**istancing questions
Adult Responses	May be limited or absent	Are based upon child's ZPD as evidenced by child's responses
Scaffolding	May be limited or absent	Adults attempt to develop children's understanding in a small way based upon the child's language

Use of Illustrations	Picture walks are common, where illustrations and design are often reduced to serving as prompts for reading the written text[1]	Illustrations are used to introduce and enhance vocabulary, further the story, and develop comprehension
Sounds and Spoken Language	May be addressed or neglected	Language is used as a gateway to understanding and vocabulary. Attention is frequently drawn to rhyme and alliteration as appropriate in the context of the chosen texts.
Vocabulary development	May be limited or absent	Vocabulary receives focused attention though explanation, elaboration, and helping children develop connections to known concepts

With slightly older children, in a small group version of dialogic reading, Hargrave and Se´ne´chal (2000) examined the effects of storybook and dialogic reading on the acquisition of vocabulary of 36 Canadian preschoolers. The children were 3-5 years of age, and averaged 13 months behind their peers in expressive vocabulary. In the

first group, each of 10 books was read twice in groups of 8 by the preschool teacher over a four week period, using dialogic reading. In the second group, 10 books were sent home and read by parents in shared-reading. A separate third group served as a control group. The children in the shared book reading group learned new vocabulary, but children in the dialogic-reading condition made significantly larger gains in vocabulary introduced in the books, as well as gains on a standardized expressive vocabulary test, than did the children in a shared book-reading situation or those in the control group.

Se´ne´chal (1997), and Se´ne´chal, Thomas, and Monker (1995) found that children who answered questions about target words during shared reading comprehended, and produced, more of those words than did children who listened to a story in which the reader emphasized the target words by repeating and pointing. This seems to suggest that children's active participation enhances learning.

More recently, Swanson, Vaughn, Wanzek, Petscher, Heckert, Cavanaugh and Tackett, (2011) compared 29 storybook read-aloud interventions and found that dialogic reading had the most causal evidence to support its effects on children's literacy outcomes. Their meta-analysis indicated moderate to large mean effect sizes for dialogic reading interventions on phonological awareness, print concepts, reading comprehension, and vocabulary for preschool children. Interestingly, they also found that the type of storybook read-aloud was not a major factor in the efficacy of the intervention. As they wrote, "the meta-analysis indicates that other unknown factors beyond the provided intervention explain significant amounts of variance in child outcomes on each of the measures. Currently, the strongest evidence comes from dialogic reading interventions, suggesting that incorporating extended child–adult dialogue and questioning around

storybooks is a valuable practice in educational settings" (p. 273). It must be noted, however, that the storybook reading interventions were with elementary children, not preschoolers.

Not all studies showed such positive results. In a large Head Start program, dialogic reading produced positive effects for 4 year olds that were maintained through kindergarten, but the positive effects were not sustained until the end of second grade (Whitehurst, Epstein, Angell, Payne, Crone, & Fischel, 1994; Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998). McKeown and Beck (2003) concluded that, "numerous studies have indicated that dialogic reading enhances expressive language and emergent literacy skills in children from all socioeconomic status groups, even after relatively brief – for example, 4-week – interventions" (2003, p. 283).

Overall, the research base supports the use of dialogic reading with young children. The research examined various aspects of one-on-one reading and small group reading. Preschool through third grade studies were also scrutinized, and dialogic reading appears to be an effective method of improving childhood literacy. As McKeown and Beck (2003) and Swanson et al. (2011) noted, the practice of adults and children talking about books together with extended chances for children to take on storytelling tasks has value.

The value of jointly enjoying and discussing books is associated with the development of many skills during the toddler and preschool years (Raikes, Alexander, Luze, Tamis-LeMonda, Brooks-Gunn, & Constantine, 2006). These skills include vocabulary development (Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pelligrini, 1995: Sénéchal & Cornell, 1993), knowledge about print and book handling skills (Clay, 1979), and the exposure to

story structures and conventions necessary for story comprehension and positive attitudes about book reading (Lonigan, 1994). Knowledge is co-constructed in a social setting as adults and children negotiate meaning together (DeBruin-Parecki, 1999). These skills and others are important in children's literacy development, and are considered the foundation upon which conventional literacy are built.

Dialogic reading was chosen as the method of interaction for Creating Young Readers (CYR), the program under examination in this dissertation, because it has a strong research base, and can be used by volunteers with minimal instruction. The typical volunteer enjoys reading and is cognizant of the need for children to have a strong literacy foundation. With a few hours of instruction and practice, volunteers have demonstrated the ability to add in the primary features of dialogic reading – discussion of concepts and words, for example – based on the child's responses. In practice, volunteers are happy to learn techniques that make their time reading with children more powerful. Many volunteers mention that they intend to incorporate dialogic reading into their family readings as well.

One other point in favor of dialogic reading as a method used by volunteers is that it is infinitely adaptable, and gives the adults freedom to follow the child's lead. Since the adults read to one child at a time, they have the ability to fine tune questions and comments to the needs and responses of each child. For a teacher with a group of children, this is a difficult task; for a trained adult with only one child, it is a somewhat less intimidating undertaking.

The next section discusses how some of the components of dialogic reading are related to literacy standards on a broader scale.

2.10 Preschool Literacy Standards

Children's emergent literacy skills are generally subdivided into several components; these components are strongly correlated with children's later conventional literacy abilities (Justice, 2006, Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008). The key emergent literacy components found by the National Early Literacy Panel [NELP] include:

1. alphabet knowledge (AK): knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters,
2. phonological awareness (PA): the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning,
3. rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of random letters or digits,
4. RAN of objects or colors: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of repeating random sets of pictures of objects (e.g., "car," "tree," "house," "man") or colors,
5. writing or writing name: the ability to write letters in isolation on request or to write one's own name, and
6. phonological memory: the ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time. (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008, p. vii).

These skills are not the only ones necessary for literacy acquisition, but are considered the foundational pieces upon which strong literacy is constructed. They were found to have medium to large predictive relationships with later measures of literacy, even when other factors, such as SES or IQ were considered (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008). Therefore, a great deal of inquiry has been and continues to be performed on these particular areas. Further, much of the legislation at both the state and national levels are based upon these areas, as well as guidelines disseminated for personnel involved with preschool children. These six components will be revisited later in this paper as they relate to the CYR project.

National legislation currently mandates reading proficiency for all children. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 amended the existing Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to "ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2003, p. 15). Reading proficiency is defined as the ability of children to meet grade-level expectations for annual achievement based on state mandated assessments (NCLB, 2003). As a result, major educational agencies and organizations carefully consider the quality of their early literacy instructional programs during early childhood (Phillips, Clancy-Menchetti, & Lonigan, 2008). Beginning "reading instruction" during the preschool years may seem counterintuitive to some people. However, as noted above, early reading and writing abilities are linked to later reading proficiency. Learning about letters, sounds, print, pictures, words, and sentences are all prerequisites to reading (Bodrova, Leong, & Paynter, 1999). Children with

frequent exposure to crucial skills are more likely to experience reading success. These experiences should be meaningful and naturalistic throughout the child's day (Justice & Kaderavek, 2004). Quality preschools strive to base much of their curriculum on these findings.

2.11 Young Children and Early Literacy Instruction

2.11.1 Ohio Preschool Standards. Just a dozen years ago, Ohio, like most states, had no preschool standards. In 2001, Ohio's Amended Substitute House Bill 94 provided for the creation of such standards. From that beginning, in 2004, Ohio adopted Early Learning Content Standards for preschools, and then revised them in 2006. In April of 2011, the previous arrangement of organizers and indicators for preschools was dropped in favor of standards. The standards will be effective when newly aligned assessments are implemented in 2014-2015 (Ohio Dept. of Education, 2011). These standards are centered on six key areas:

1. Reading standards for literature,
2. Reading standards for informational text
3. Foundational skills
4. Writing standards
5. Speaking and listening standards, and
6. Language standards.

These six standards overlap and support each other. For example, under the first, reading standards for literature, one guideline states, "Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text." This is embellished under the standard for informational text as, "With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text." This concept of vocabulary is further addressed in the language standard as, "determine the meaning of unknown words with assistance or cues from an adult (e.g., providing a frame of reference, context or comparison)." Clearly, development of vocabulary is acknowledged as important in preschool!

The intertwining of these concepts is noted in the newly adapted standards to an extent not apparent in the previous incarnation. A model curriculum for preschools is being developed at this time. Based on the early versions currently available, the curriculum encompasses several standards within the same lesson, and frequently within the same book.

> During the preschool years, with appropriate guidance and curriculum experiences, children turn conscious attention to print. They acquire concepts about print such as linearity and directionality and learn to write their names and recognize and write some alphabet letters. They develop early phonological awareness through hearing stories and rhymes and playing games with rhyming words and alliteration. In addition, young children learn to listen to and talk about books that are read aloud to them. They construct understandings about a variety of kinds of books and print in the environment and begin to develop a concept about story. The young vocabularies grow as they acquire understanding of new words through their experiences, including experiences with books. (Ohio Department of Education, 2004, accessed at http://www.ode.state.oh.us).

2.12 Connecting Dialogic Reading and Content Standards

There is a logical relationship between the elements of dialogic reading and content standards. In dialogic reading, the adult promotes alphabet knowledge through brief discussions and references to letters and their sounds. Books chosen for Creating Young Readers such as *Each Peach Pear Plum* (Ahlberg & Ahlberg, 1986) have suggested discussion points and activities that volunteers can use. For example, pointing out that *peach, pear,* and *plum* start with the same sound can be easily incorporated into a brief discussion on the letter P, incorporating both phonics and phonological awareness. The child's vocabulary can be expanded as well in this simple book, as a comparison of these fruits may occur, and the child learns that plums are a tasty fruit. Through discussion, the child has the opportunity to expand his phonological memory, as he remembers and recounts spoken information in the book. Retelling is common, and the child may be encouraged to sequence the story, use vocabulary words, and draw conclusions about the book. In another book, rhyming may be addressed because the chosen book easily lends itself to that task.

Volunteers are happy to encourage children to connect to and discuss the books each visit. They can see the growth in the children's literacy, as the child enjoys the individual attention and the book.

2.13 Standards and the Home Lives of Children

Ironically, and somewhat sadly, the time and effort put into creating and disseminating Ohio's literacy standards will not affect the majority of poor children eligible for preschool in the state. In Ohio, only 4.7% of preschools are state accredited; the national average is 9.8% (Ohio Dept. of Education, 2011). Ohio enrolled fewer children in tax-funded preschool last year than it did a decade ago. In 2010, Ohio served 3,535 of eligible 4-year-olds, dropping nearly 75% since the 2001-2002 school year. In 2010, Ohio enrolled 2% of eligible 4-year-olds in the Early Childhood Education program, which serves children in families up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level (Candisky, 2011). That's by far the largest drop of any of the 40 states with programs, according to The State of the Preschool (2010), the annual analysis by the National Institute for Early Education Research (Barnett, Epstein, Carolan, Fitzgerald, Ackerman & Friedman, 2010).

Obviously, having state standards for preschool will not be effective if children are not enrolled in preschool. I next turn to an examination of some pertinent research about the home lives of children in poverty, including those who are not enrolled in quality daycare facilities.

2.14 Home Literacy Environments of Children from Disadvantaged Homes

The primary setting of children's language acquisition is the home (Purcell-Gates, 1996, Strickland & Taylor, 1989). Therefore, home life will directly impact on children's

readiness for kindergarten. Home literacy may include the presence of books and magazines, library use, television viewing, and book reading (Griffin & Morrison, 1997). For example, the number of picture books in the home is a strong predictor of children's receptive language skills and expressive vocabulary (Whitehurst et al., 1994), and familiarity with books relates to preschoolers' subsequent vocabulary and early reading abilities (Se´ne´chal, 1997). Based on this research, it is reasonable to conclude that if written materials are not commonly present in the home, it is highly unlikely that children in such homes will enter kindergarten with the book and language skills needed to be successful. Further, in the research of DeBaryshe, Binder, and Buell (1995), parents' literacy habits and abilities were found to be directly related to their children's literacy development. Lower income parents tended to hold beliefs that children need to learn letters and recite the alphabet, in contrast to middle income parents, who stressed literacy as entertainment (Baker, Scher, & Mackler, 1997). These beliefs were born out by the types of literacy related activities parents participated in with their children. Higher income parents tended to promote reading for fun; lower income parents tended to focus on skills. This association was further developed by Burgess et al. (2002), who also noted that young children's alphabet knowledge was related to parents' demographic characteristics. Further, these researchers found that children's oral language, letter-sound knowledge, and decoding abilities were associated with the frequency of shared book reading between parent and child.

Poverty places children at risk for delays in language development, learning, school readiness, and academic achievement. By age three, children living in low-income households have smaller vocabularies and delayed language skills when

compared to their more advantaged peers (Hart & Risley, 1995). Moreover, 3- to 5-year-old children living in poverty are less likely to recognize the letters of the alphabet, write their names, read, or pretend to read a storybook, or count to 20 when compared to their classmates from higher income families (Nord, Lennon, Westat, & Chandler, 2000). The lack of these early skills is related to differences in children's subsequent language growth, school readiness, and academic achievement (Denton & West, 2002; Gershoff, 2003; Snow, Porche, Tabors, & Harris, 2007).

In kindergarten, children are estimated to learn 2,500-5000 new words, but there is a huge disparity between children of different backgrounds (Haager & Mahdavi, 2007). Other research by Wasik, Bond, and Hindmanin (2006) indicates that socioeconomic status is the strongest predictor of performance differences in children at the beginning of the first grade, and this gap persists as children progress from elementary to high school.

If children have the added factor of being born to teen mothers, they incur greater elements of risk, including typically lower scores on measures of cognitive competence. Teen mothers are less verbal than older mothers, on the whole (Culp, Applebaum, Osofsky, & Levy, 1988), so their children are less likely to be exposed to a wide vocabulary. This puts the children at risk for obtaining fewer words, both less common, and total number of words, as well as being exposed to less complex oral language patterns. Teen parents tend to have lower reading abilities, and poorer attitudes toward reading and education in general. Because they do not place as high a value on reading and education, they are less likely to provide activities for their children that promote reading and literacy (Burgess, 2005). Their children are also less likely to see reading as valuable, reflecting the attitudes of the adults with whom they live. For example, if they

do not observe their parents reading a newspaper or magazine, they not apt to see the value in devoting time to such pursuits.

The home literacy environment is also the first setting in which children hone their pre-literacy skills. If it is lacking in reading materials, role models who read, and opportunities to engage with print, preschoolers are already behind their peers in terms of having the foundations of readiness for reading. Adams (1990) estimated that middle class children enter school with 1000 – 1700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading, and a child from a lower income family has only 25 hours. Hart and Risley (1995) estimated that a child growing up in a family on welfare could have heard 32 million fewer words than a classmate growing up in a professional family by the time of kindergarten entry. Individual differences in early literacy skills at kindergarten entry tend to be maintained or magnified over school years (Missall, McConnell, & Cadignan, 2006). Further, a child who is behind her peers in literacy concepts in kindergarten is at significantly greater risk for placement in special education in elementary school (Scarborough, 1989). Poor readers are also at a higher risk for overall academic and social failure. They are less likely to graduate from high school, less likely to be employed, work less overall, report lower earnings, and are less likely to have bank accounts (Missall et al., 2006). To use a common sports metaphor, the playing field as children begin school is quite uneven.

Clearly, the environment from which children emerge is an overarching determining factor in their success in formal schooling. The relevance of children's environment to the present study is critical; the sites in which this research takes place are predominantly urban, low income, and subsidized. Seven of nine directors of the

preschool sites reported that the majority of the families served were headed by unmarried women who were quite young when they had their first children.

These families and their progeny frequently live in contrast to the middle class norms and expectations that govern the lives of many of the teachers they will come encounter in their years in school. Any efforts to better prepare low SES children for school entry are worth examining in view of the unlevel playing field they will encounter as they enter the formal educational system.

It makes sense, then, to offer literacy opportunities to the children least likely to receive them at home as often and as early as feasible. This begs a new question, however. How can the effectiveness of such an undertaking be determined? This topic is next in this literature review.

2.15 Difficulty in Assessing Young Children

As assessment has grown exponentially in schools over the last decade, many people have focused on the use of standardized tests to determine children's learning. This method presents difficulties when assessing preschoolers, however. There is tremendous variability in the rate with which children acquire language during their first years of life (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Any standardized instrument used with young children is less reliable than a measure used with older children or adults (Ibid). This is generally attributed to the wide variability of young children, as well as unreliable measures. Even for children in formal education, accountability systems can be characterized as "primitive" (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1994).

When assessing preschool children, developmental skills, such as communication, cognition, motor, adaptive, and social/emotional are generally examined. Yet, measurement of young children's development in ways that mirror subject areas assessment for older children, such as math, reading, and writing, have presented many problems for researchers and policymakers (National Education Statistics Agenda Committee, 1994). Developmental, biological, and situational factors combine to make assessment of young children's development more difficult to accomplish especially when conducted on a onetime basis. Asking young children to attend to tasks for the purpose of assessment for a length of time may not be a reliable way to determine what they know and can do (Neisworth & Bagnato, 2000).

Because of these and other confounding factors, short, focused assessments that attempt to pinpoint one area have become more common in early literacy. In Ohio, at the time that Creating Young Readers (CYR) was developed and implemented, *Get It, Got It, Go!* (GGG) was required in preschools that received a state subsidy. It was selected by CYR because it was already implemented in the participating preschools, and provided information on three areas that were addressed by CYR volunteers: picture naming (vocabulary), rhyming, and alliteration. Although not a perfect fit, it was judged to be a relevant measure that could be used to track change in children who participated in CYR.

2.16 Conclusion

This chapter begins with an overview of the sociocultural view of learning that serves as a foundation for the philosophical base of the research in this endeavor. Based on Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development, language, both oral and

written, are developed through the scaffolding of a more knowledgeable other serving as a mentor and guide. For many children, this is developed by nurturing parents who read with them as a regular occurrence. For others, particularly youngsters who do not have middle and upper middle class upbringings, book reading may not be part of their everyday routine. For these children, a deficit of literacy skills results in their being behind even before they start formal schooling.

One way this deficit may be ameliorated is through the use of adult volunteers using dialogic reading techniques with children. Even with the myriad variations of training, time on task, and methods, the use of volunteers in elementary, middle, and upper school is well documented, with ample evidence of literacy improvement at those levels. Based on this research, it is not a long or difficulty leap to consider that motivated volunteers might be able to make measurable shifts with preschoolers. For children who attend preschools, there generally are not sufficient personnel and time for teachers to read with the children one-to-one or in small groups, so children may still not have the necessary exposure to foundational literacy concepts to develop their cognitive and social skills and language abilities.

The use of volunteers in literacy has a well-researched history in the last few decades in elementary, middle, and high school. Research on the use of volunteers in preschool is scarce, and volunteer efforts in preschool are generally related in qualitative, not quantitative research. This current endeavor attempts to provide evidence that volunteers in preschool, using a modified dialogic reading model, can make real differences in children's preparation for formal schooling. To this end, dialogic reading is compared to the more common storybook reading that is commonly used by parents

and many preschool teachers. It is an apt application. After all, dialogic reading is a logical extension of simple storybook reading: it allows an adult to help a child engage in text at a level appropriate for that child. Further, with directed questioning and follow up, a child can be scaffolded to become a more active listener, reader, and speaker. In all, bringing together children who need repeated exposure to critical literacy skills with adults who are happy to devote the time to do so is a prime example of a community serving the needs of those who are not able to fend for themselves.

Using volunteers with dialogic reading helps develop the language along with other concepts which are the foundation of children's' literacy. They are recognized as imperative in current preschool standards in literacy today. Particularly relevant at this point is the need for children to have an understanding of six key areas determined by the National Early Literacy Panel (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008) : alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits, RAN of objects or colors, writing, and phonological memory. These areas are apparent in Ohio's preschool standards, which center on reading standards for literature, informational text, foundational skills, writing, speaking and listening, and language.

Many children have family backgrounds that may limit their exposure to basic literacy concepts, such as listening and speaking vocabularies, adult models who read books, magazines, and other materials, shared reading, rhyming and word play, and the opportunity to learn about the alphabet, among others. These children are those most likely to benefit from volunteers who engage them in dialogic reading.

The last topic briefly addressed in this chapter is the difficulty in assessing young children in literacy concepts. Despite the wide range of children's development,

assessment is necessary to identify needs and track progress. In this research, GGG, an assessment required by the state is used to determine differences in children's productive vocabulary (picture naming), rhyming and alliteration. This area will be explored in greater detail in chapter 3.

In the next chapter, the methodology of this research, research design, participants, sites, and method of data analysis are explored.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research questions and methods used to examine the Creating Young Readers (CYR) program. The first section provides information on the background of CYR, including the development of the program, changes over time, and information about the sites and participants. In the second section, I delineate the research questions, explain the purpose of the study, the study parameters, and then provide details about the methods of data collection and analysis used in this research.

3.2 Development of Creating Young Readers

Creating Young Readers (CYR) is a child-oriented program offered by Read for Literacy (RFL), the largest nonprofit volunteer based organization in the United States. RFL was founded in 1986, and for many years, RFL focused on matching volunteers with adults who wanted to learn to read or improve their current reading skills. CYR was a step in a new direction: helping to break the cycle of low levels of literacy in families by helping children attain pre-reading skills before entering formal schooling in kindergarten. The primary stated goal of CYR was to prevent illiteracy by providing literacy opportunities to children in low-income families before they started kindergarten.

Please see appendix A for a more complete history of CYR, including modifications to the dialogic reading model used in the program. Appendix B shows a copy of the original proposal for funding for the CYR program.

CYR started with 85 volunteers and 90 children in autumn of 2009. Of those 90 children who started, 62 had data collected in both autumn and spring, and so are included in this study.

3.3 CYR Program Design

CYR matches volunteers with preschoolers who likely will enter kindergarten already at a disadvantage in reading readiness. CYR volunteers read with one child at a time, about twenty minutes each, three times a week in the preschool setting. The children may have up to three different volunteers a week reading with them, (for example, A reads on Monday, B reads on Wednesday, and C reads on Friday) but typically, the volunteers and students stay together over the school year.

The preschoolers were screened using the Get It, Got It, Go! (GGG) assessment, and were ranked in order of achievement. Children with the lowest scores on the picture naming assessment were selected to read with volunteers. The actual numbers of children varied at each site according to the number of volunteers available to visit that site, but in each case, at minimum, the bottom 25% were selected. In some of the preschools, the bottom 40% participated in the CYR program.

The reading method used by the volunteers was a modified form of dialogic reading. See Appendix A for more details on the dialogic reading used.

3.4 Changes over Time

The largest shift between the first and second years was a direct result of feedback from the volunteers. In the first year, a master calendar was set up with tutors divided into first, second, and third readings of the books. For example, Volunteer 1 would introduce a book on Monday. Volunteer 2 would reread the book on Wednesday, and introduce relatively lower level questions about the book. Volunteer 3 would read the same book for the third time on Friday, and ask higher level questions that helped the child to think more about connecting the book with his or her own life. This setup was based on the premise that rereading books would help children develop ownership of vocabulary words and other ideas in the books. In reality, however, volunteers found that children were eager to read new books as well as many of those previously read, and often objected to rereading books in such a prescribed way. The volunteers who were assigned to reread also wanted the opportunity to introduce new books to the children. Further, if a child was absent, it put the whole system into disarray, as volunteers would then read with other children on the list. This left the volunteers who came in at the end of the week unsure of which children to read with, and what books to read. Whereas rereading was achievable with trained teachers who saw the children every day, it became a logistical nightmare for volunteers.

In response to this, in the second year, volunteers were not asked to reread books over the course of a week. They were given the opportunity to introduce new books at any time, but also instructed that rereading was a powerful strategy, and should be encouraged. Reports from volunteers in the second year were more positive, with many

children happy to reread some books, and volunteers happy to be able to be the first reader on a regular basis. This has been the largest shift in the two years of this study.

Also added in the second year was the introduction of a teacher survey in order to consider their feedback in shaping and managing the program (Appendix C). The results of this teacher feedback have generally been logistical, not affecting the content or delivery of the program.

One further change, adding support materials and 'floater books,' will be described under the *Organizing Materials* section below.

3.5 Organization of Materials

Each preschool site had a crate with at least fifty books suitable for dialogic reading. As of the beginning of the second year, each book had a set of written guidelines with suggested vocabulary words to explore, suggested questions to ask from very simple to more complex levels, related songs, and finger plays. These guidelines were developed by Mattson (a staff member at RFL) in order to provide the tutors with an easy reference list that could be consulted before or during reading a book with a child. See Appendix D for an example.

Also provided in the crates for the second year were at least 10 'floater' books. These were books that rotate from site to site, in order to provide some variety in the selections. They were changed every four to five weeks.

In order to keep track of the children who have been read to each week, a chart was developed to track the times that each child has participated in dialogic reading. This

has not been a particularly accurate measure, as volunteers frequently read to children and neglected to list the children's names on the tracking chart. Therefore, no reliable method of tracking the number of readings for each child was in place at the time of this study. This will be addressed further in the discussion chapter. It was estimated by the preschool teachers that the children in the study were read to consistently as long as they were at school on the days the volunteers came. The volunteers were very conscientious, and reliably called the coordinator if they needed a substitute. If a child was present on each of the three days volunteers would visit each week, s/he was virtually guaranteed time with that volunteer. Therefore, children's attendance was the major determinate of time spent with volunteers.

3.6 Training of Volunteers

Training for volunteer readers consisted of a three hour training session at the public library. After a brief introduction and overview of CYR, tutors learned about dialogic reading as well as background about early childhood reading skills.

The largest change in the volunteer training from year 1 to year 2 was to include more detailed PowerPoint slides on dialogic reading as well as more background information about early childhood reading skills. After discussion of these techniques, volunteers worked with children's books to try out the dialogic reading process with others in the training class. Clear handouts about PEER and CROWD were used as references. Appendix F has samples of training materials.

An additional portion of the volunteer training directly related to working with children was about letter identification and the sounds represented by letters. The use of rhyme, alliteration, song, and finger play was encouraged, and volunteers were instructed to focus on only one or two letters at each visit. Working with letters and sounds was a short, integrated part of the dialogic reading session, not a stand-alone activity. Letters and sounds, rhymes, and finger-plays were included on the suggested activity sheets for each book in the CYR crate at each preschool site.

The last portion of the volunteers' training sessions dealt with logistics, state required fingerprinting, and the mandatory background check of volunteers. Volunteers were also required to furnish three signed references from non-relatives before being assigned to a preschool. Last, yet very importantly, volunteers were encouraged to have fun with the children and their literacy interactions.

3.7 The Preschool Sites

The study included ten state accredited local preschool sites. All sites served students from low-income families who receive housing subsidies or other federal aid. These sites are located in urban Toledo, with six primarily serving the inner city; two serving lower to middle income neighborhoods located a few miles from the city core, and two on the border of a more affluent suburb. The individual sites are described below.

Initially, ten preschool sites had CYR volunteers working with children. Site C, with only four children involved, closed after the first year of the program. Because it

was associated with two other sites, most of the children were transferred to site A, which still had CYR readers. The scores of the children from that site were incorporated into site A's database. A second site, H, closed in spring of 2011, not long after the final GGG assessment was given to the children.

The sites can be categorized into three groups based on their organizational affiliation. Sites A, B, and C were sister sites under the same organization. Site D was a stand-alone local community center. Sites E, F, G, H, I, and J are sister sites under a national organization. All sites are affiliated with a nonprofit organization, and all sites accept children from low-income families with government subsidies. Each site is governed by a board of directors, and often has some of the more notable members of the community on the board. At each site, a visitor must be admitted into a locked area, but the level of security varies according to the location and personnel working there. Once inside, parents and guardians must sign children in and out at a designated location. Another commonality is that each site also has extended hours for day care, with several staying open for 12 hours or more per day. Each site has some type of outdoor play area, but these vary widely in size and equipment. Each preschool classroom also has at least six to eight child oriented centers, including, but not limited to, art, music, listening, kitchen, blocks, writing, and reading. Last, each site has some type of parent information area, with brochures, nutritional information, community events, and the like available.

Because specific data about the children who participated in CYR was not available to me, the sites and neighborhood from which they drew participants is described in considerable detail in Appendix G.

3.8 Summary of Preschool Sites

The preschool sites that host CYR are quite varied. Demographically, they cover the poorest areas of the city as well as a couple of lower-middle and middle-class areas. The sites range from almost entirely African-American to predominately White. Oddly, very few children of Hispanic descent are present in these sites, even though Site D has the largest concentration of Hispanic families in the metropolitan area. Preschool directors reported that the Hispanic children are generally tended to at home or by family or friends.

Facilities ranged from dated, worn places to newly remodeled buildings. Most had natural lighting, but two sites in the poorest areas did not have windows directly in the preschool rooms. Further, some sites showed that literacy was a priority; books, writing materials, and written examples were evident in several sites, and minimal in others. In all, these sites range from ones in which I would feel comfortable placing my family members to ones that I would never recommend to a friend. It must be noted that all sites have state accreditation at some level, but there are substantial variations in teacher education, child/adult ratios, and level of education and training of staff.

3.9 Participants

Children in this study are divided into three groups: the control group and CYR participants in each of the first two years. The preschoolers who participated in CYR or were in the control group were overwhelmingly from families who receive some type of government subsidy to attend preschool. They were 3 and 4 years old, primarily from the

inner city or less affluent areas of the city. Most are in households headed by a single parent. The children selected for this study were those who obtained the lowest scores on the GGG. Only data from children who completed the school year and had data for both the beginning of the school year and the end were considered for this study.

CYR participants: These children are divided into two cohorts by school year. They will be referred to collectively as year 1 year (2009/10) and year 2 (2010/11).

The control group consists of students who were at the same preschools the year (2008-2009) before CYR was implemented. They are similar in age, gender, minority status, and governmental subsidies. See Table 3.1.

Because the children in the control group were matched to the CYR participants based on their beginning scores, the similarity in beginning scores is closer for the first cohort than the second. Both cohorts were selected for CYR based on their beginning GGG scores.

CYR volunteers read to well over one hundred children during the two years of the program. The data for this study only includes 118 children who participated in CYR; many others were not included because they were not enrolled in the preschool during the initial assessments in autumn, or left the preschool before the May testing. These children may well have been read to by volunteers, at the request of the preschool staff, but their data was not collected or used for this study.

Table 3.1. Participant Demographic Information

Site code	n Control Group 2008/09	n Year 1 2009/10	n Year 2 2010/2011
A[1]	10	4	8
B	10	6	10
D	6	8	6
E	3	4	5
F	5	6	7
G	7	9	7
H	10	10	2
I	3	10	9
J	8	5	2
Total	**62**	**62**	**56**

3.10 Volunteer Readers

Each year, an average of 68 to 70 adult volunteers read to children in preschools once a week. These volunteers were recruited from the greater Toledo area. The local newspaper, the Toledo Blade, regularly ran notices of volunteer opportunities for Read for Literacy (RFL). Additional notices were placed on Buckeye Cable, the local cable operator. In the first two weeks of the project, 298 inquiries about volunteering were

[1] Includes data from site C because site C closed after year 1: participating preschoolers transferred to site A

received, and 85 volunteers went through the first training sessions. These volunteers self-selected to read to preschoolers, and made a commitment to read for one school year, roughly nine months. They had a background check before starting their volunteer work, and were trained in dialogic reading by the coordinator of CYR. This mandatory training lasted about 3 hours, as noted above. For the volunteers who stay in the CYR program from year to year, refresher training was provided. Most volunteers stayed with the program for a full school year, but approximately 25% left due to health status, transportation issues, or other personal reasons. The majority were retirees, but not trained educators. The typical volunteer is a woman of middle age or older. Many volunteers reported that they had grandchildren, but their grandchildren did not live in this area. They chose to read to unrelated children because they had the time, recognized the need, and were not able to read to their own grandchildren frequently.

3.11 Research Methods for this Study

3.11.1 Research Questions.

The purpose of this study is to explore the quantitative data collected from the preschool sites that use CYR readers. Specifically, three questions were asked:

1) Is there a difference in GGG scores between children who have completed one year of the Creating Young Readers program and those who have not?
2) If any differences in GGG scores are found, are the differences in all three assessed areas: picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration?

3) Is there a difference between students who participated in the pilot year and those who participated in the second year?

This study makes use of data collected by preschool teachers at each site. The GGG assessment was required for the first year of this study by the state of Ohio for preschools that received government funding. Although that requirement has changed in Ohio, the participating preschools agreed to continue the assessment in order to provide standardized data on children participating in the CYR program. As previously noted in chapter 2, GGG was developed for preschool assessment, and consists of measures of picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration. The data used here is from children's fall and spring scores.

3.11.2 Instrument. The data collected for this study consists of student scores on the Get It, Got It, Go!(GGG) assessment. GGG was used throughout Ohio at subsidized preschools as a standardized instrument at the time of this study, and was developed to screen preschool children's phonological and oral language skills.

GGG is a Preschool Individual Growth and Development Indicator (IGDI) that describes children's growth and development over time. Preschool (IGCIs) are considered quick, efficient, and repeatable measures of components of developmental performance designed for use with children 30 to 66 months of age. Preschool IGDIs sample child performance with a focus on long-term developmental outcomes that are common across the early childhood years. These indicators are functional, and are related to later competence in literacy achievement. GGG was developed at the University of Minnesota and has been widely used in the United States. Currently, it is

being revised into a broader IGDI, and will be disseminated under the name IGDI instead of GGG.

Although GGG is widely used and accepted in Ohio, it must be recognized that any standardized instrument used with young children is less reliable than a measure used with older children or adults. This is generally attributed to the wide variability of young children, as well as unreliable measures. Even for children in formal education, accountability systems can be characterized as "primitive" (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1994).

When assessing preschool children, developmental skills, such as communication, cognition, motor, adaptive, and social/emotional are generally examined. Yet, measurement of young children's development in ways that mirror subject areas assessment for older children, such as math, reading, and writing, have presented many problems for researchers and policymakers (National Education Statistics Agenda Committee, 1994). Developmental, biological, and situational factors combine to make assessment of young children's development more difficult to accomplish especially when conducted on a onetime basis. Asking young children to attend to tasks for the purpose of assessment for a length of time may not be a reliable way to determine what they know and can do (Neisworth & Bagnato, 2000).

GGG consists of three parts:

1. Picture naming
2. Rhyming
3. Alliteration

These three parts are recognized as important pre-skills to reading acquisition in formal schooling. When administering the GGG, the three sections can be completed at one time or broken into separate sessions. The testing takes about ten minutes overall because of demonstrations and checks for understanding.

The first section, picture naming, is completed by presenting children with color Pictures (photographs or line drawings) of objects found in their environments: home (e.g., *cake, sink*), classroom (e.g., *glue, book*) and community (e.g., *rabbit, train*). After two pictures (*apple, baby*) as a warm-up, the children are told to name pictures as quickly as possible. The number of pictures named correctly in one minute is the child's score. Figure 3.1 is a sample of the front and back of a picture naming card.

Figure 3.1 Picture Naming Card (University of Minnesota, 2011)

When administering the rhyming assessment, the assessor shows the child a card with a total of four pictures. The stimulus picture is at the top of the card, and under that are three other pictures. One of the bottom pictures represents a word that rhymes with the top picture. For example, a card with a picture of a *house* at the top has pictures of a

mouse, desk and *rake* on the bottom. The administrator models the first two cards, naming the pictures, and then demonstrates finding the rhyme –*house, mouse*. The next four cards are practice cards, and then the task is turned over to the child. The examiner names each picture, and the child is asked to "point to the picture that sounds the same as the top picture." The task continues for a total of two minutes, unless the child is unable to find rhymes for the first four cards, in which case the assessment is stopped. The number of rhymes correctly identified in two minutes is the child's score. Below is a sample of a rhyming card (Figure 3.2).

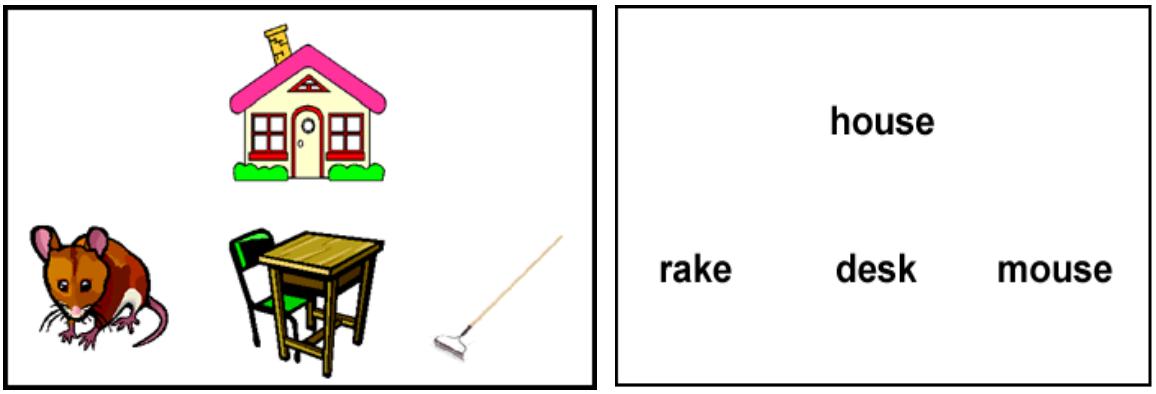

Figure 3.2. Sample of Front and Back of Rhyming Stimulus Card (University of Minnesota, 2011)

Alliteration is similarly assessed. Each card has a picture at the top, and three choices below. The assessor models two cards, finding the words that start the same. For example, one card has *teeth* at the top, and a *phone, tire,* and *blocks,* on the bottom. After modeling two cards, and practicing four more, the child is asked to, "Look at the pictures

and find the ones that start with the same sound." (*teeth, tire.*) The correct score is the total number correctly chosen in two minutes. See Figure 3.3 below.

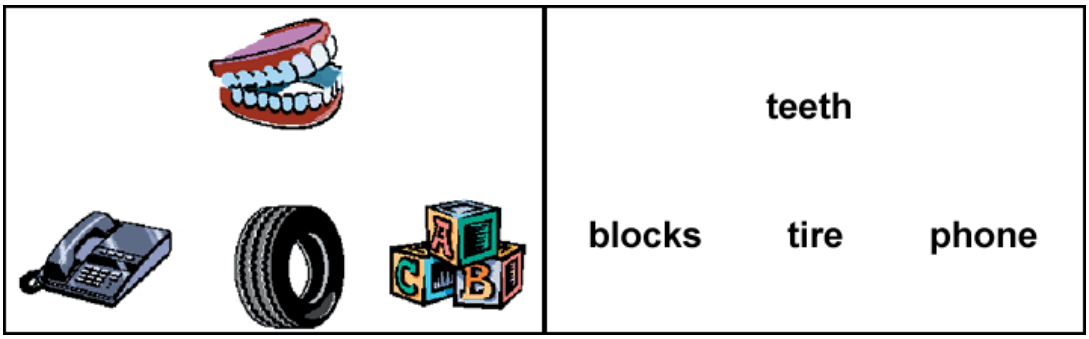

Figure 3.3 Sample of Front and Back of Alliteration Stimulus Card (University of Minnesota, 2011)

In both rhyming and alliteration, if the child is unable to perform the task on the practice cards, the assessment is discontinued, and the score recorded as zero.

3.11.3 Reliability and Validity All information on GGG reliability and validity are taken from data available at The University of Minnesota's website. The reliability and validity was tested by researchers McConnell, Priest, Davis, and McEvoy, and disseminated in a technical report entitled *Psychometric characteristics of individual growth and development indicators* authored by Missall and McConnell (2004) (http://ggg.umn.edu).

Picture Naming scores appear to be relatively stable over time. One-month alternate form reliability coefficients range from r = .44 to .78 (Missall & McConnell 2004).

and test-retest reliability across three weeks is $r = .67$, $p < .01$ for a sample of 29 preschool children (http://ggg.umn.edu/pdf/ecrirpt8.pdf).

Test-retest reliability for rhyming over three weeks is greater than that of picture naming; $r = .83$ to $.89$, $p < .01$ for a sample of 42 preschoolers.

Alliteration scores also appear to be stable over time. Test-retest reliability over three weeks is $r = .46$ to $.80$, $p < .01$ for a sample of 42 preschool-aged children.

For validity, a longitudinal investigation, with approximately 90 preschool children from 36 to 60 months of age, picture naming was positively correlated with the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Third Edition (PPV-3) ($r = .56$ to 75, $p < .001$) and with the Preschool Language Scale – 3 (PLS-3) ($r = .63$ to $.79$, $p < .001$) Concurrent validity has also been established with the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills measures of Letter Naming Fluency (LNF; $r = .32$ to $.37$) and Onset Recognition Fluency ($r = .44$ to $.49$) using a sample of 84 preschool-aged children.

The Rhyming IGDI was positively correlated with the PPVT-3 ($r = .56$ to $.62$, $p < .05$), Concepts About Print ($r = .54$ to $.64$, $p < .01$) and Test of Phonological Awareness (; $r = .44$ to $.62$). With this same sample, examination of concurrent validity indicated moderate to high correlations with Picture Naming IGDI ($r = .46$ to $.63$, $p < .01$) and Alliteration IGDI ($r = .43$).

Concurrent validity has been established with DIBELS Letter Naming Fluency ($r = .48$ to $.59$) and Onset Recognition Fluency ($r = .44$ to $.68$;) for children in preschool.

Alliteration correlates with other standardized measures of phonological awareness and early literacy development. Alliteration was correlated with the PPVT-3 ($r = .40$ to .57, $p < .01$), TOPA ($r = .75$ to .79, $p < .01$), and CAP ($r = .34$ to .55, $p < .05$).

3.11.4 Data Collection. All data were collected by classroom teachers who had been trained in administering the GGG. The data of the children in the control group was collected post hoc from reports provided by the preschool staff. For the two cohorts in CYR, the data was obtained in a similar manner.

Parents of all preschool children involved in CYR provided informed consent for the collection and use of the data used in this analysis. Likewise, all directors of preschools were fully informed that the site visits, GGG scores, and other data would be used in this research. In reality, the directors were pleased to learn that research was being completed on a project they enthusiastically supported. See Appendix H for documentation of informed consent.

Students in the CYR program attended preschool for a typical school year - fall through late spring. Their scores were collected in fall 2009, and spring 2010 for the first year, fall 2010 and spring 2011 for the second year. The table below demonstrates the timeline of the data collection.

Table 3.2 Timeline of Collection of GGG Data for Children in CYR

	Fall Data	Spring Data
Control Group	Fall 2008	Spring 2009
Year 1	Fall 2009	Spring 2010
Year 2	Fall 2010	Spring 2011

The data were collected by teachers within the first month of the fall semester, September, and again in May. The data were provided to the CYR coordinator shortly thereafter. Once the data were submitted to the director of CYR, the student names were coded before being given to me. No members of the preschool staffs who collected these data were known or contacted by me until after the final data collection. No children's scores were ever connected to a name, but I did observe many volunteers reading and talking with children in their preschools.

3.12 Frequency of Sessions

For frequency data for the dialogic reading, data was estimated by the preschool teachers, the director of CYR, and a few regular volunteers. Because of holidays, snow days, student absences, and a few field trips, a conservative estimate was developed by the participants noted above. Volunteers came to the schools three days a week, working with all participating children who were present on those days. For the purpose of this research, given the unreliable nature of the volunteers' reading logs, I have made a quite conservative estimate that each child had the opportunity to read with a volunteer about

two times a week for 20 minutes each session. The reading sessions within this study took place from October through mid-May, which represents the timing bracketed by the pre- and post-assessments. No tutors worked with children during the weeks of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Conservatively estimated, this meant that children read with tutors for 30 weeks. These numbers result in a conservative calculation of sixty sessions per child. At twenty minutes each, this means twenty hours of one-to-one dialogic reading per child.

3.13 Data Analysis

This study looks at pre- and post-treatment scores for children who have participated in dialogic reading with an adult volunteer an average of twice a week for 30 weeks during a regular school year. The analysis looks for a change in the GGG scores of children based on pre- and post-testing. Differences were analyzed to compare the two cohorts who were in the CYR project to a control group who was matched by beginning GGG scores to the first cohort.

Comparisons will be made between participants in CYR and the control group. These data are broken out into sub-scores for, picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration. Between group ANOVA was used to determine differences because there are three independent data sets for each child in each of three cohorts: picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration.

Data were entered into SPSS15.0 statistical software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL) to carry out the analysis, and the analysis was carried out to .05 significant increases.

Frequencies were run for each variable in this study to check the accuracy of the data file. All variables were in their expected ranges.

3.14 Missing Data

The scores used in this research were given to me after elimination of incomplete data; children who were missing either spring or fall scores or one section of the assessment. This resulted in 169 children's scores that were complete with all data from both spring and fall across the three years. One other child's data was partially incomplete: no alliteration scores were reported. This child's picture naming and rhyming scores were included, for a total of 170 scores. No data was collected by anyone other than the preschool teachers; no missing data was filled in.

3.15 Participant Data Deletion

No participants with complete GGG data were deleted from this study. There were dozens of children at the preschool sites who were read to by trained volunteers who were not part of the CYR project, however. Most of these children were not used in this study because they did not stay in the preschool for the entire time of the project. Supervisors from the sites estimated that about 30% of children did not complete the school year, and thus had incomplete data.

3.16 Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the creation of CYR, and the changes that occurred within CYR over the time of this project. Training and information about the adult participants were provided to give pertinent information about CYR. Demographic and other relevant information about the preschool sites were detailed in order to give an encompassing view of the children who participated. An estimate of time spent reading with volunteers was calculated. Finally, the instrument used was considered, and procedures and methods of data analysis were outlined. Data collected from the assessments are described and analyzed in chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the results of the statistical analysis from the data. First, descriptive demographics are presented. Next, the instrument used and resulting data are described. Finally, the research questions will be addressed.

This study addresses the issue of whether or not discernible differences may be found in assessment scores of preschool children who have participated in the Creating Young Readers (CYR) project over a nine month school period. To examine this, children's scores on Get it, Got it, Go! (GGG) were obtained for three groups of children: a control group from the year before the start of CYR in the same preschools, children who were in the pilot year of CYR (Year 1), and children who were in the second year of CYR (Year 2).

4.2 Demographics

The children whose scores were collected for this research all attended one of ten state accredited preschools for the period of September through May in their group. They were three and four year old preschoolers, and were relatively evenly divided between females (53%) and males (47%). Most of the children were from one-parent households and had their preschool fees subsidized through a governmental program. According to

the directors at four of the preschools, African-American or mixed race children constituted 95 – 100% of the student population at those preschools; at the remaining six schools, the number was lower, but in all cases at least 20% of the children were African American or mixed. No children of Hispanic origin were reported by the preschool directors in this population. Preschoolers were selected for CYR based solely on their GGG scores. No other factors such as age, gender, race, or tuition subsidies were considered. For all children who were selected, written parental permission to read with CYR volunteers was obtained, and all participated.

The preschool sites were located in the inner city, lower middle, and middle class areas. Two sites were on the periphery of moderately more affluent suburbs, and two sites reported that many of their children did not live in the immediate neighborhoods. For more information on the preschool sites, please see Appendix G.

The children who participated in CYR in Year 1 were chosen based on their beginning GGG scores. For the purpose of this study, the control group was matched to Year 1 children by their similar beginning scores on the GGG. The *n* for both of these groups is 62. For Year 2, the children who had participated in the prior year were taken first, and the rest of the children were selected based on their GGG scores. For these Year 2 children (n=56), the same control group was used. Nineteen children participated in CYR in Years 1 and 2 of this study. They are not differentiated in this research because of the small *n*, and their scores were not separated out in the data. Further, the children who participated in both years were spread over at least eight sites, and this spread would have resulted in less reliable data, had they been examined separately. In

Year 1 and Year 2, all children who participated in CYR and had both fall and spring scores recorded were used in the analysis. The exception was one child in Year 2, who was missing scores on alliteration only.

4.3 Research Collection and Analysis

The instrument used was GGG, which has acceptable validity and reliability, as presented in chapter 3. The scores obtained from GGG consisted of three measures each for fall and spring: picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration.

GGG was used in the preschools at the time of the project, and was chosen as the assessment instrument because it did not add to the existing workload of the preschool teachers. All scores were collected by the teachers of the preschool children. The data was made available for this research after the final collection via a spreadsheet coded to mask children's names.

A repeated measure ANOVA was used to analyze the data to compare the differences between the mean scores of children in each group from the fall to the spring. In research terminology, reading with CYR volunteers was the factor, with three groups (Control, Year 1, and Year 2). The variables (picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration) have pre- and post-scores, for a total of six data points per child. A repeated measures model was appropriate because the subject (child) is the same in both pre- and post-tests, creating dependent samples for each group (Control, Year 1, and Year 2).

The mean scores of each group are provided in Table 4, below.

Table 4. 1 Descriptive Statistics for GGG Sub-Task Scores

	Group	GGG Picture Naming Task			GGG Rhyming Task			GGG Alliteration* Task		
		M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Fall	Control (n=62)	13.65	5.611	0-25	1.74	3.724	0-16	.60	1.624	0-7
	Year 1 (n=62)	13.08	5.960	0-25	.63	1.681	0-8	.29	.948	0-5
	Year 2 (n=56)	17.16	7.708	0-33	3.68	4.640	0-18	1.09	2.519	0-11
Spring	Control (n=62)	17.32	6.254	0-27	3.42	4.738	0-24	1.32	2.373	0-10
	Year 1 (n=62)	19.31	5.518	7-31	4.71	4.571	0-14	1.82	2.995	0-13
	Year 2 (n=56)	23.02	5.851	11-35	7.04	6.806	0-22	2.89	3.975	0-16

* Note, for Year 2, Alliteration, data was missing for one child; n=55 for these data

It may be noted that in each case, Year 2 had a larger standard deviation than the Control Group and Year 1. Year 2 students also started fall with higher scores across all assessments.

4.4 Research Instrument

The research instrument, GGG, was used in the preschools at the time of the project, and was chosen as the assessment instrument because it did not add to the existing workload of the preschool teachers. All scores were collected by the teachers of the preschool children. The data was made available for this research after the final collection via a spreadsheet coded to mask children's names.

A repeated measure ANOVA was used to analyze the data to compare the differences between the mean score of children in each group from fall to spring. In research terminology, reading with CYR volunteers was the factor, with three groups (Control, Year 1, and Year 2). Post-hoc analyses were performed when the ANOVA resulted in significance. The variables (picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration) have pre- and post-scores, for a total of six data points per child. A repeated measures model was appropriate because the subject (child) is the same in both pre- and post-tests, creating dependent samples for each group (Control, Year 1, and Year 2).

4.5 Research Questions

The three research questions are related and therefore are addressed here using the same data relevant to all three. Since the first question is quite simple, it is summarily answered, with supporting details provided after research questions two and three. Examining questions two and three together allow explanations found in relevant tables to be presented cohesively, rather than requiring the reader to frequently review previously encountered information. This method allows for a clearer, more focused text,

and assumes that the reader prefers to examine data once, rather than three separate times for different questions.

4.5.1 Research Question 1. The first research questions asks, is there a difference in GGG scores between children who have completed one year of the Creating Young Readers program and those who have not?

Yes, there is a significant difference at the .05 significance level between the scores for two of the tasks on the GGG assessment from children who participated in CYR and those who did not. Significant interactions between group and time were found for Picture Naming and Rhyming but not Alliteration. These differences will be elaborated further under Research Questions 2 and 3.

4.5.2 Research Questions 2 and 3. If any differences in GGG scores are found, are the differences in all three assessed areas: picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration?

No, statistically significant differences in the means ($p < .05$ in all areas) were found in two of three areas, picture naming and rhyming.

Is there a difference between students who participated in CYR the first year and those who participated in the second year?

Yes, the mean scores of preschoolers who participated in the second year of CYR showed a significant difference from both the Control Group and those in Year 1.

To elaborate on these findings, the three areas of picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration will be considered sequentially.

4.6 Picture Naming

The between groups test indicates that the variable group (Control, Year 1, Year 2) is significant ($F(2, 177) = 11.193$, $p < .001$). In other words, the scores for Control, Year 1 and Year 2 are significantly different regardless of time (fall or spring). The within subject test indicate that there is a significant time effect; the groups do change in Picture Naming scores over time regardless of group ($F(1, 177) = 151.640$, $p < .001$). The interaction effect is significant indicating that group significantly affects changes in Picture Naming scores ($F(2, 177) = 3.564$, $p = .03$).

In picture naming, differences were found between the means of all three groups, but were considered significant only between the Control Group and Year 2, and again between Year 1 and Year 2. The results in picture naming were not significant between the Control Group and Year 1. Year 1 is slightly better than the Control Group, but not sufficiently so. The Control Group's mean ending GGG scores were significantly lower than Year 2. See Table 4.2.

In reading Table 4.2, the significance provided in the final column is valuable. Only the items with .000 in the column labeled significance demonstrate enough difference to be important. The comparisons with a significance of .750 are not within the required parameter of .05 (.05 < .750). Therefore, when examining rows 1 and 3,

which compare the Control Group to Year 1, the mean difference of -.71 is not valuable, because .750 does not demonstrate adequate significance.

Table 4.2. Tukey HSD for Picture Naming

	(A) Group	(B) Group	Mean Difference (A-B)	Standard Error	Significance
1	Control	Year 1	-.71	.982	.750
2		Year 2	-4.61*	1.008	.000
3	Year 1	Control	.71	.982	.750
4		Year 2	-3.90*	1.008	.000
5	Year 2	Control	4.61*	1.008	.000
6		Year 1	3.90*	1.008	.000

Based on observed means.
The error term is Mean Square(Error) = 29.908.
* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

On the other hand, rows 2, 4, 5, and 6 show significance of .000. These rows compare the Control Group to Year 2, and Years 1 and 2 to each other. Here, important differences do exist, with Year 2 scores significantly higher than scores from the Control Group and Year 1.

From this, one can conclude that statistically significant differences exist in the mean picture naming scores between Year 2 and both the Control Group and Year 1.

The post-hoc test Tukey's HSD (honestly significant difference), used in Tables 5, 6, and 7, allows comparison of pairs, as in the Control Group and Year 1, but can be derived in ANOVA for groups of similar size, such as Year 2. Using Tukey's HSD, the mean difference between Control and Year 1 ($p < .05$) and the mean difference between Year 1 and Year 2 were significantly different ($p < .05$).

Using the Greenhouse-Geisser correction, the partial eta squared was found to be .461, which is in an acceptable range. The partial eta squared gives the contribution of each factor or interaction, taken as if it were the only variable, so that it is not masked by any more powerful variable. The partial eta squared of .461 means that 46.1% of the variability in the dependent variable likely can be explained or accounted for by the independent variable.

This condition indicates that the ranking of the subjects does not change across experimental treatment. This is equivalent to stating that the population correlation (computed form the subjects' score is the same for all pairs of treatments. (Greenhouse & Geisser, 1959, Abdi, 2010).

In Figure 4.1, it can be seen that the Control Group and Year 1 means started in fall with similar scores, while Year 2 started with higher numbers. In the following spring, however, the Year 1 mean is above that of the Control Group, but not sufficiently so. Year 2 is also higher, and an examination of the slopes of Year 1 and Year 2 demonstrates a higher rise than the Control Group.

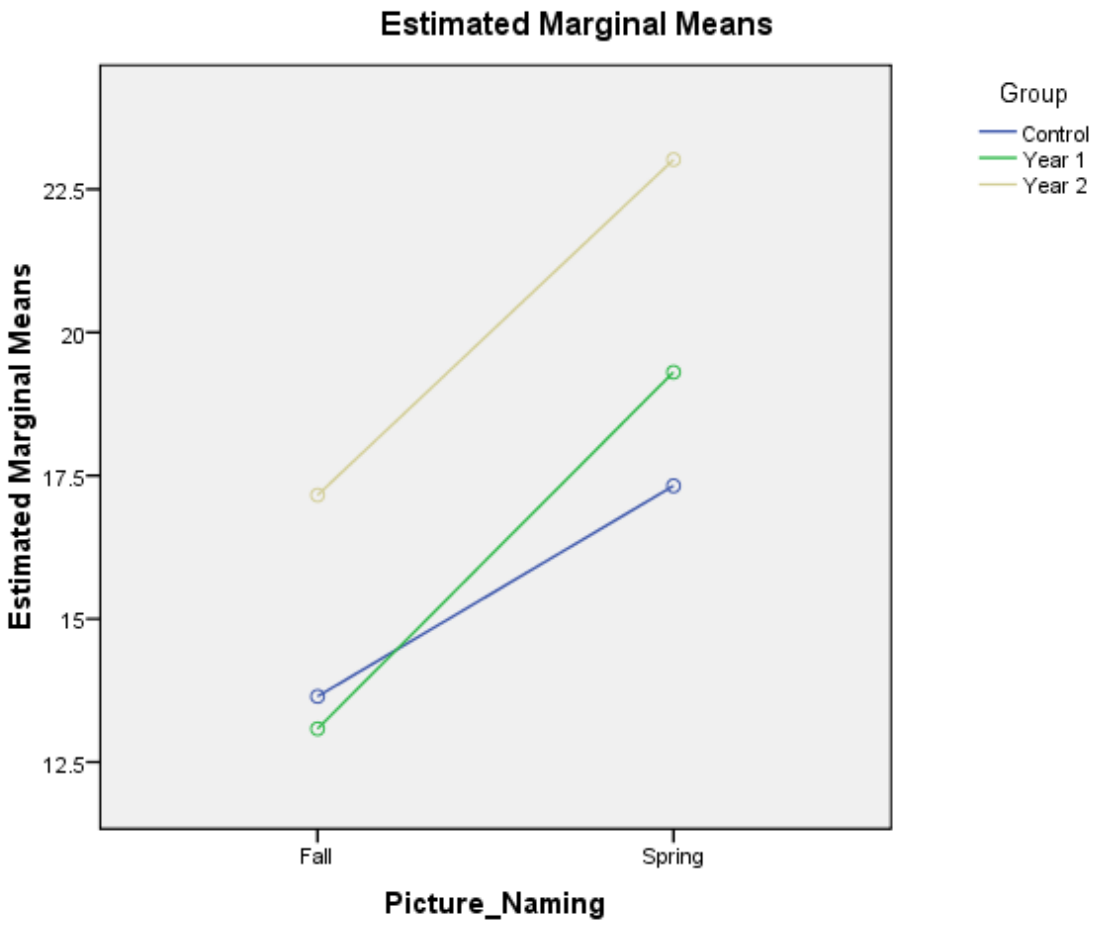

Figure 4.1: Estimated Marginal Means of Picture Naming

4.7 Rhyming

In rhyming, the between groups test indicates that the variable group (Control, Year 1, Year 2) is significant ($F(2, 177) = 11.193$, $p < .001$; i.e., the scores for Control, Year 1 and Year 2 are significantly different regardless of time (fall or spring). The within subject test indicate that there is a significant time effect: the groups do change in rhyming scores over time regardless of group ($F(1, 177) = 151.640$, $p < .001$). The

interaction effect is significant, indicating that group significantly affects changes in rhyming scores ($F(2, 177) = 3.564$, $p = .03$).

Again, there is a significant difference between group means. As seen in Table 6 below, Year 2 was found to be statistically significantly higher than both the Control Group and Year 1. Year 1 was not found to be statistically significantly higher than the Control Group.

Here, with rhyming scores, significance is found between the means of the Control Group and Year 2, and again between Year 1 and Year 2. There is not a significant difference between the means of the Control Group and Year 1, as shown in rows 1 and 3. This is further demonstrated in Figure 4.2, the Estimated Marginal Means of Rhyming.

In Figure 4.2, it can be seen that the Control Group and Year 1 started in fall with similar means in rhyming scores, while Year 2 preschoolers began with higher numbers. In the following spring, however, Year 1 means are significantly above those of the Control Group. Year 2 starts and ends with higher means overall.

4.8 Alliteration

The between groups test indicates that the variable group (Control, Year 1, Year 2) is significant ($F(2, 176) = 4.522$, $p = .012$); in other words, the scores for Control, Year 1 and Year 2 are significantly different regardless of time (fall or spring). The within subject test indicate that there is a significant time effect; the groups do change in alliteration scores over time regardless of group ($F(1, 176) = 33.474$, $p < .001$). The

interaction effect is not significant, however, indicating that group does not significantly affect changes in Alliteration scores ($F(2, 176) = 1.193$, $p = .15$.

Table 4.3. Tukey HSD for Rhyming

	(A) Group	(B) Group	Mean Difference (A-B)	Std. Error	Significance
1	Control	Year 1	-.09	.710	.991
2		Year 2	-2.78*	.729	.001
3	Year 1	Control	.09	.710	.991
4		Year 2	-2.69*	.729	.001
5	Year 2	Control	2.78*	.729	.001
6		Year 1	2.69*	.729	.001

Based on observed means.
The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 15.638.
*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

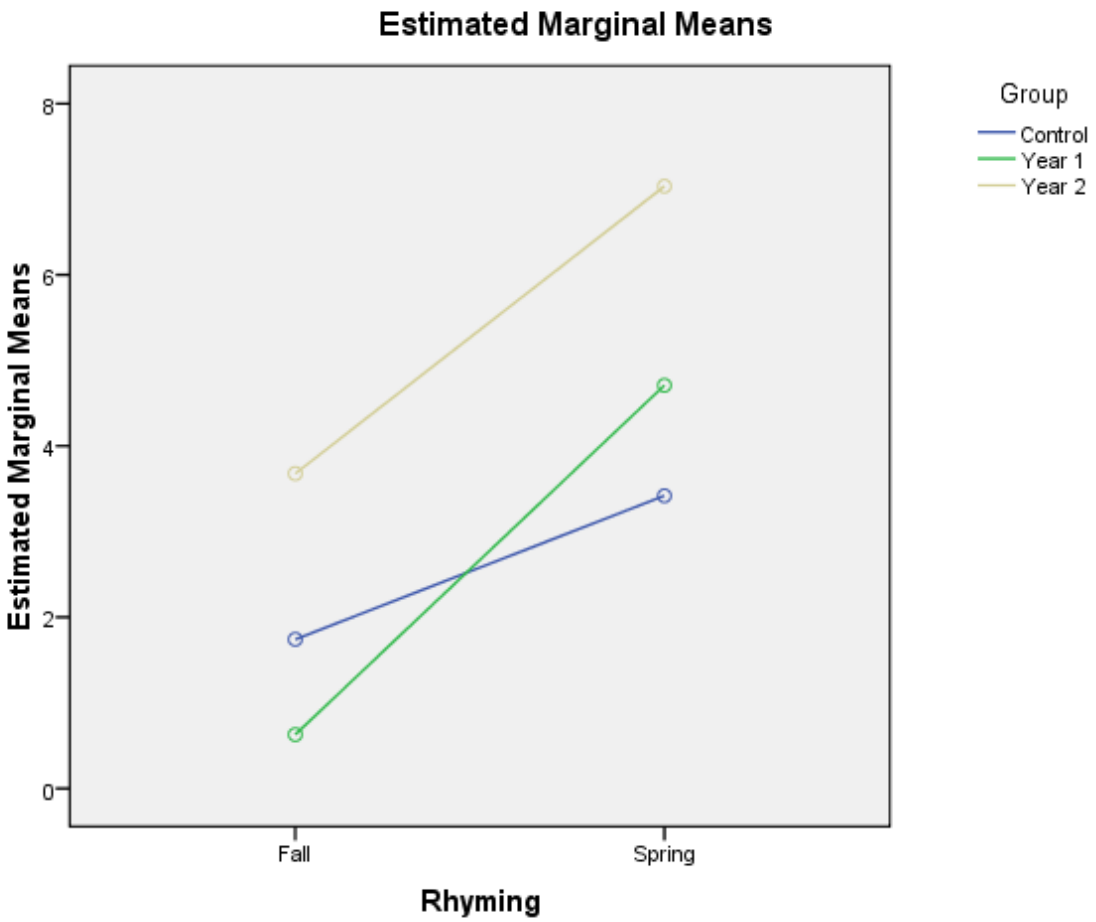

Figure 4.2: Estimated Marginal Means of Rhyming

With alliteration, again, there is a significant difference between the group means, both is fall and spring. As seen below in Table 4.4, Year 1 was not found to be significantly higher than the Control Group. Year 2 was found to be significantly higher than both the Control Group and Year 1. Comparing the two treatment years, Year 2 means were found to be significantly higher than those of Year 1 and the Control Group.

In alliteration, there is no significant difference between the Control Group and Year 1 means. There is no significant difference between Year 1 and Year 2 and the

Control from fall to spring. Year 2 scores are significantly different from those of both the Control and Year 1, but the change in scores in any group is not in itself significant.

Table 4.4: Tukey HSD for Alliteration

	(A) Group	(B) Group	Mean Difference (A-B)	Std. Error	Significance
1	Control	Year 1	-.10	.364	.962
2		Year 2	-1.03*	.375	.018
3	Year 1	Control	.10	.364	.962
4		Year 2	-.93*	.375	.036
5	Year 2	Control	1.03*	.375	.018
6		Year 1	.93*	.375	.036

Based on observed means.
The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 4.102.
* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

This is graphically illustrated in Figure 4.3 below.

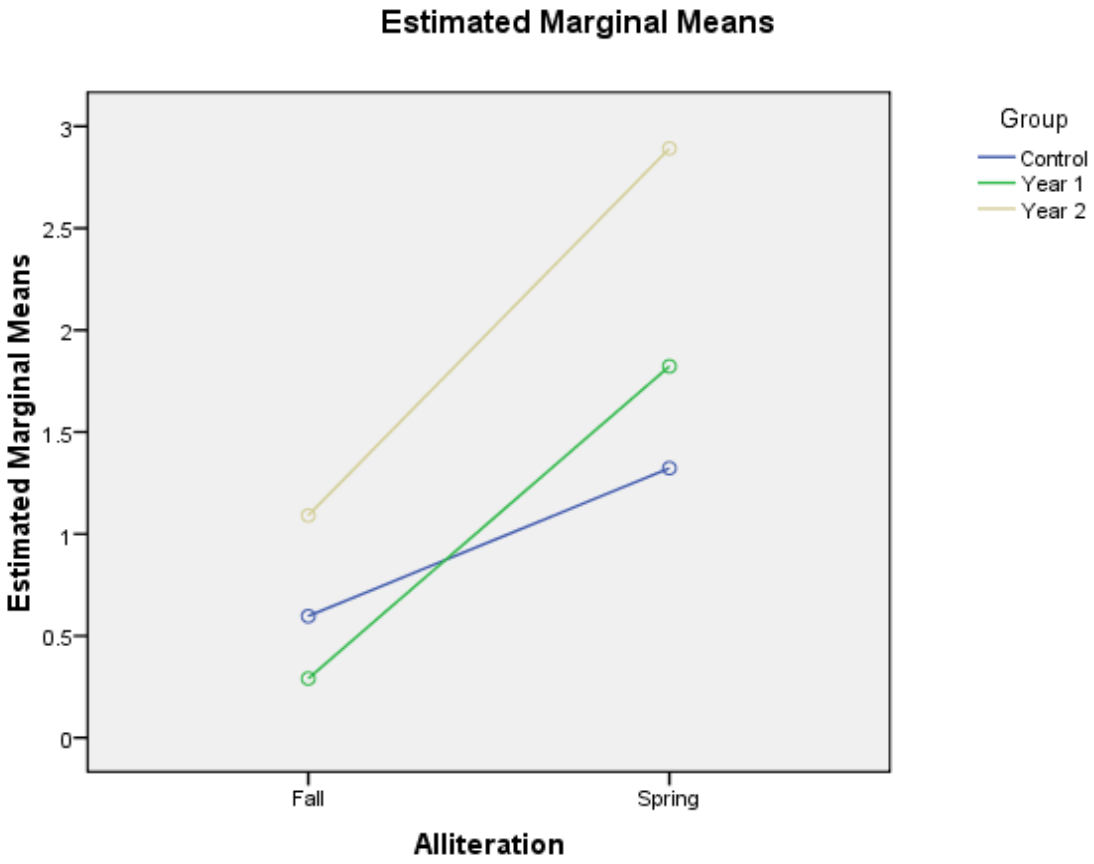

Figure 4.3: Estimated Marginal Means of Alliteration

Again, this figure shows that Year 2 means started above those of both the Control Group and Year 1. In the following spring, Year 2 was significantly above the other groups. Although Year 1 means were lower in fall and higher in the spring

than the Control Group, this increase is not sufficiently significant to be considered beyond that of random variation.

4.9 Summary

This chapter reported the results of the analysis of the data. With all three research questions considered using a 5% significance level, differences were found in each case.

Analysis showed an increase in GGG scores from fall to spring in all three areas, but only the changes from fall to spring in picture naming and rhyming means were found to be statistically significant in the three groups. In Year 2, the increases showed statistical significance at *(p*=.05) in the areas of picture naming and rhyming between both the Control Group and Year 1.

The increase from fall to spring was not statistically significant in alliteration in any year for any of the three groups (Control, Year 1, or Year 2). The interactions between group and time indicate whether the differences in the means among groups are the same over time. The interaction effect is not significant for alliteration, so it cannot be said that any group made statistically significant increases in the mean scores of alliteration from fall to spring.

Year 2 mean scores were significantly different than the Control Group and Year 1, and thus interpretation of the main effects suggest that overall Year 2 scores were consistently higher regardless of time (fall or spring). Further analysis of the interactions

between group and time indicated that the change over time (fall to spring) was not significantly different between the groups (Control, Year 1, and Year 2).

Chapter 5 will provide discussions of findings, conclusions, and implications based on this analysis. Finally, limitations of this study and future research will be discussed.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Discussion

This study offers a perspective on possible effects of a volunteer adult dialogic reading program with children in preschool. The study examines pre- and post-treatment scores on Get It, Got It, Go! (GGG), a standardized, timed assessment required by the state of Ohio at the participating preschools at the time of this investigation. GGG assesses three areas: picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration.

For this research, GGG scores were obtained from three groups of children who attended one of ten participating preschools: a control group from the year before CYR began (2008/09), children who participated in the first year (2009/10), and children who participated in the second year (2010/11). The children's scores were aggregated by year across the ten sites. Only scores with complete fall and spring scores in all three areas were used, with one exception. In Year 2, one child did not have spring alliteration scores, but the rest of the completed data were used. Also in Year 2, 19 children who had been in CYR the previous year and continued in the project were included in the data. The analysis was completed using ANOVA.

This chapter provides statements regarding conclusions, discussions of findings, and implications. Finally, limitations of this study and future research are discussed.

5.1 Conclusions

Children who worked with a volunteer reader showed an increase in GGG scores from fall to spring in all three areas, but only the changes from fall to spring in picture naming and rhyming means were found to be statistically significant in the three groups. In Year 2, the increases showed statistical significance at *(p*=.05) in the areas of picture naming and rhyming between both the Control Group and Year 1.

The increase from fall to spring was not statistically significant in alliteration in any year for any of the three groups (Control, Year 1, or Year 2). The interactions between group and time indicate whether the differences in the means among groups are the same over time. The interaction effect is not significant for alliteration, so it cannot be said that any group made statistically significant increases in the mean scores of alliteration from fall to spring.

Year 2 mean scores were significantly different than the Control Group and Year 1, and thus interpretation of the main effects suggest that overall Year 2 scores were consistently higher regardless of time (fall or spring). Further analysis of the interactions between group and time indicated that the change over time (fall to spring) was not significantly different between the groups (Control, Year 1, and Year 2).

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Potential Skewing of Data. Nineteen children were in CYR for both the first and second year. These children's progress in the first year could have

resulted in the mean of Year 2 starting at a higher point than Year 1 or the control group. Separating their scores out could be revealing. Might two years of CYR produce more significant change in GGG means than a single year? This question remains unanswered at this time.

5.2.2 Correlation, Not Causation. Although the results do not represent causation, and we cannot directly credit the use of volunteers for any increases in GGG scores, the results do support the idea that volunteers using dialogic reading may positively impact preschool children's literacy skills. To support this is a plethora of research that notes the importance of reading with preschool children. "Reading to a child during this critical time, specifically during the preschool years of ages 3 - 5, builds a number of skills that are key to literacy, including phonological awareness, alphabetic knowledge, and concepts about print conventions" (Berk, 2009). The absence of early literary stimulation is recognized as an indication of long lasting educational difficulties (Ibid). This absence may not be recognized by or perceived as important by parents who are not strong readers themselves. As the majority of children whose scores were included in this study had mothers who were less educated teenagers or very young adults at the time of the birth of their first child, these children were less likely to be exposed to a wide vocabulary. This puts the children at risk for obtaining fewer words, both less common, and total number of words, as well as being exposed to less complex oral language patterns (Culp, Applebaum, Osofsky, & Levy, 1988). Young parents tend to have lower reading abilities, and poorer attitudes toward reading and education in general. Because they do not place as high a value on reading and education, they are

less likely to provide activities for their children that promote reading and literacy (Burgess, 2005). Their children are also less likely to see reading as valuable, reflecting the attitudes of the adults with whom they live.

5.3 Vocabulary

Vocabulary deficiencies present before children become conventional readers are rarely closed in later years. Such deficiencies undermine reading development, indirectly through their impact on code-related literacy skills in beginning readers and directly through their impact on reading comprehension in older elementary school children (Biemiller, 2006).

This lack of exposure to many words may not be vastly improved by being enrolled in preschool. Preschool teachers are too busy to interact with children one-on-one at a substantive level (Lonigan, Allan, & Lerner, 2011). This leaves many preschool children still behind in oral language and literacy skills, when compared to their peers who have greater exposure to books and elders with higher vocabularies. If they do not have sufficient vocabularies or the opportunity to use their vocabularies with supportive adults, their cognitive growth may not develop as quickly. Using oral language is critical; the production of language results in the development of higher mental functions, which scaffold the structure of children's cognitive activity (Kozulin, 1986).

5.4 Volunteers

Because many children may not be read to on a regular basis at home, volunteers may be able to provide the critical time on task needed to build vocabulary and other skills. “One-to-one tutoring is clearly very effective, and when resources are limited, well-structured programs making use of paraprofessionals and volunteers may reach more struggling readers for the same cost as serving many fewer children with certified teachers (Slavin et al., 2009).

Because the results of this study found the increase in the mean of picture naming scores from fall to spring to be significant, it is reasonable to conclude that reading with volunteers may have offered preschoolers the opportunity to learn new vocabulary. Further, because the volunteers were trained to support oral language, and “have fifty great conversations, not just read fifty great books” (Mattson, 2011), it may be fair to ascertain that the use of oral language by students when reading with volunteers may have resulted in the development of higher mental functions.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

5.5.1 Study Design. Much of the difficulty present in this work is similar to problems other researchers have encountered. As in this research, many other studies use simple pretest-posttest designs, which provide no causally interpretable evidence. Many studies often did not provide evidence that these groups were equivalent prior to an intervention or represented the same population. Here, the groups were not found to be

sufficiently similar in alliteration to draw any significant conclusions about growth in that area. Group differences may have existed before the start of the intervention, and may not have been reflected in the data.

5.5.2 Measurement Difficulties. In this research, only one source of data– GGG scores – was used. This presents only one facet of CYR; other factors were not deliberated. The evidence presented here does not represent causality, but only correlation. Over-interpretation should be avoided; these data do not prove the effectiveness of dialogic reading with volunteers.

One other concern in interpreting this research is that measurement of growth in young children is difficult and imprecise. The measures used in this study may not be optimal for finding measurable change due to the presence of volunteer readers in the preschool classroom. Any standardized instrument used with young children is less reliable than a measure used with older children or adults (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). This is generally attributed to the wide variability of young children, as well as unreliable measures. Even for children in formal education, accountability systems can be characterized as "primitive" (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1994). Standardized tests are less reliable with younger children than with older children since these youngsters often don't understand the reason for the test, the test directions, and have trouble concentrating because of their short attention spans. Some standardized tests are still biased in favor of white, middle class children, as the language of the test reflects middle class vocabulary, despite genuine attempts to alleviate the problem. Their use can place non-white, and bilingual youngsters at a disadvantage since they may not have the

prior knowledge and experiences needed for successful achievement on the tests (Enz & Morrow, 2009).

5.5.3 Assessing Oral Language. Expanding on the concept of oral language presented above, measuring oral language is not a simple task. Oral language was found to play a bigger role in later literacy achievement when it was measured using more complex measures that included grammar, the ability to define words, and listening comprehension than when measured using only simple vocabulary knowledge (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008, p. *viii*).

The assessments in GGG used in this study were expedient and simple, and did not include grammar, definitions, or listening comprehension. They were intended as screening tools, rather than predictors of future achievement. More complex measures may well have produced different results, but such measures were beyond the scope of this particular research at the onset of CYR. For further research, possibly using vocabulary words directly from the books read with volunteers would be fruitful. Such a move would tie into work by Lonigan and Shanahan (2008), who called for defining words in assessment.

On a related note, while giving children the GGG assessment myself, after the time of this study, I found that children commonly identified a pineapple as 'SpongeBob SquarePants' house', and called a generic starfish 'Patrick'. For them, these identifications made a great deal of sense, but were scored as incorrect. The children often hesitated, and many gave me a look that implied that they knew that there was another word for these pictures. This often took several seconds, which could be

substantial when gauged against the sixty seconds allowed for this part of the assessment. Further, only 1 in 40 inner city children I assessed could correctly identify a goat. Since the cards for this assessment were to be randomized each time they were used, if a child came across these or similar cards at the beginning of the assessment, they were likely to lose precious seconds getting back on track and naming other cards correctly. In my mind, this calls in question the accuracy of the GGG picture naming assessment when used as directed with this population. The randomization of the cards may make it easier for a child who begins with *cake, fish,* and *ball*, and more difficult for one who starts with *goat, pineapple,* and *starfish*.

5.6 What Should be Assessed?

To truly understand more about the effects of volunteer readers engaging children in dialogic reading, other measures of knowledge and related factors must be considered. These will be considered in turn.

The measure used here, GGG, only assesses three areas: picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration. Other skills, such as those reported by the National Early Literacy Panel (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008, page vii) might be considered for inclusion in further research. These six areas are known to have predictive relationships in literacy for children. A brief description of each is provided below, with notes about how that area is addressed in CYR.

1. Alphabet knowledge: knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters. In CYR, volunteers discuss the letters of the alphabet, but they are not

assessed. This could be altered by asking children to name letters that have been placed in random order, such as Clay's (1993) letter identification assessment.

2. Phonological awareness: the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning. In CYR, this is partially assessed via rhyming and alliteration in GGG.

3. Rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of random letters or digits. This is not addressed in CYR, and thus should not factor into any assessment of CYR.

4. RAN of objects or colors: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of repeating random sets of pictures of objects (e.g., "car," "tree," "house," "man") or colors. This is assessed through the one minute picture naming part of the GGG, although they are not repeating objects. Another assessment may be used instead of the GGG, if it is shown to have reasonable reliability and validity as a measure.

5. Writing or writing name: the ability to write letters in isolation on request or to write one's own name. In CYR, this was not addressed and thus should not be part of the assessment of the program.

6. Phonological memory: the ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time. This is not assessed in CYR, but children are encouraged by volunteers to retell the stories they have shared with the volunteers. Retelling

these stories requires the ability to remember spoken (read) information for a short period of time.

When considering the six factors listed above, four are addressed by CYR. Three of them, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and phonological memory are integral parts of CYR. A fourth, rapid naming of pictures, is currently assessed, but is addressed only as part of the broader area of vocabulary development. The opportunity to have supported conversations with familiar adult volunteers may influence the speed at which children can retrieve words from their long term memories, but this has not been addressed in any CYR research or assessment. Of the other factors, rapid automatic naming of letters or digits may not be a stretch, as letters are addressed by volunteers. The last area, writing letters or one's own name, was not relevant with the structure of CYR at the time of this study. Changes in the program underway since the end of this study may make future writing assessment more relevant to accurate measures of children's literacy development.

There is no agreement on what should be assessed in terms of early literacy competencies. Much research has focused on measureable concepts that have predictive value for later achievement in literacy, such as the six presented above. These areas are by no means comprehensive, however. Children can be competent in one or more of the areas above, yet still not have the desire to read if skills were drilled into them instead of being introduced in a child-centered way. Other ideas of what "being ready for kindergarten" means are not straightforward. For example, Scholastic, (2012) a

respected and well known publisher, advises parents on their website (http://www.scholastic.com/resources/article/ready-for-kindergarten) that enthusiasm toward learning, solid oral-language skills, the ability to listen, the desire to be independent, the ability to play well with others, strong fine-motor skills, and basic letter and number recognition are priorities for being ready for kindergarten. These areas make sense to White, middle class adults. But through the eyes of a person from a different background, they may not fit their cultural norms. For example, the desire to be independent would not be promoted in societies where the collective whole is considered more important than individual people. Similarly, strong fine-motor skills may not be valued by people who are more accustomed to physical labor than sedentary activities. Even the recommendations of the National Early Literacy Panel may not be seen as critical by all preschool parents. If parents value quiet children (children should be seen and not heard), oral language is not likely to be promoted. These skills privilege middle-class (usually white) people's ways of working with texts and language; often to the exclusion of other cultures. These social equity issues should be considered.

Creating Young Readers may also be derelict in considering these issues. Although books are painstakingly chosen to represent children of many backgrounds, there has been no study of its book selections. Further, most, but not all volunteers White, educated females, who have their own notions of what is relevant for children's literacy development. Although volunteers are trained in dialogic reading and given background information about what to expect with the children they will work with, little ongoing support in reading with children from different backgrounds is offered unless

requested by the volunteers. Volunteers are told, "These aren't your grandchildren," and that they should be culturally aware and respectful. This may or may not be sufficient. No problems have occurred with cultural issues as of this writing in CYR. Further, every single parent who was requested to sign a form granting permission for their child to participate in CYR did so without concern or complaint. Many expressed enthusiasm at the prospect. Perhaps that was an indication that those parents have some concept of the importance of reading aloud to children as a foundational part of literacy.

5.7 Other Considerations in Future Research

Along with the tasks of picture naming, rhyming, and alliteration currently assessed in CYR, other factors should be considered as well. Any changes in teachers and parents were not considered in this research. Might preschool teachers have shifted their interactions with children after observing how the volunteer readers worked with children? Did parents reconsider the importance of reading with children when they regularly received notes home that reported that their children read with volunteers? Because the children in CYR received books every few months, did parents take this as an opportunity to read those books to their children? Are there other factors that were not considered as well?

Surprisingly, the preschools who participated in CYR did not alter their instructional methods or curriculum during the time period covered by this research. There were very few changes in the preschool personnel either. These factors are not the only ones that should be considered, however. Were other changes significant? For

example, did children's' interactions with each other or with other adults shift because of CYR? Did children choose to read books more frequently during free choice? Are there relevant examples of children using vocabulary directly addressed in their dialogic reading encounters?

Other considerations that were not well accounted for in this study include the differences in the sites involved, student attendance, and adequate measures of time spent with volunteers. The volunteers themselves were not differentiated in terms of effectiveness; some may have spent a significant amount of time working with letters, rhyming, and modeling alliteration while others did not.

To really understand specific aspects of CYR, perhaps key areas should be selected and used as benchmarks. Volunteers could be observed to determine how much attention they grant to rhyming and alliteration, for example. Words that are directly addressed in reading sessions could be revisited in timed intervals to determine if the children had developed an understanding of previously unfamiliar terms.

Other possibilities for clearer research involve moving beyond direct assessment of the children to examining external changes facilitated by involvement in CYR. As noted above, parents and teachers were not considered in this study, and their relevance to GGG changes remains unknown at this time.

5.8 Volunteers and Research

In considering any examinations of programs similar to CYR, the role of the volunteers is not to be taken lightly. Just as teachers are critical in student learning,

volunteers play a vital role in CYR in order to effect change is student learning. The volunteers, their knowledge, and methods must be carefully considered if a global picture of CYR is to emerge. Additionally, the challenges of working with volunteers in this project necessitated some variations from an ideal version of dialogic reading, as described in most research protocol with teachers. It is not evident if this change lessened the positive effects of dialogic reading or not. Working with volunteers brings in its own set of confounding factors.

Studies in elementary schools with volunteer tutors have shown the need for oversight of those tutors by a reading professional. Because there is a dearth of studies using quantitative data with volunteers in preschool, this may or may not be true in similar situations in preschool. Is dialogic reading simple enough that volunteers can use it effectively with little to no oversight? Further research is needed to determine if such oversight is needed.

Last, does working with volunteers also bring unexpected positive effects in the preschool setting? This has yet to be explored in preschoolers' literacy development.

5.9 Longitudinal Studies

Following children who have participated in CYR over time as they move into elementary school would provide a longitudinal study that could be enlightening. This currently is being strongly considered as volunteers are starting to read with kindergarteners at three central city elementary schools that certainly hold a quantity of

children who participated in CYR in preschool. Tracking would be possible, but logistically difficult without further resources.

Last, one topic I broached only in the title of this research, *Read with Me!*, must be considered. The preschoolers' motivation to read must not be overlooked. Time and again, as I visited the preschool sites after the data collection was completed, I was approached by preschool children who did not know me. Many quickly sized me up as a likely CYR volunteer, and requested, teased, and begged me to read with them. Further, their teachers unilaterally reported that the children loved the attention, the one-on-one time, and the positive experiences enjoyed by the preschoolers and their reader friends. Teachers also noted that children were much more likely to pick books during free time, and pretend read as they examined pictures in books. Children were delighted to receive books for their own personal libraries 'for keeps' at home. None of this information was incorporated in this paper, but the children's motivation was apparent to the teachers, the volunteers, and me time and again. It deserves more attention, as motivation to read is vital.

To summarize considerations for future research of volunteer programs such as CYR, factors not measured by GGG should be addressed. Of the six areas reported by the National Early Literacy Panel (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2008), most are currently relevant to CYR, but not necessarily addressed. The lack of measure in these areas should be considered. Further, other factors, including the role of volunteers, and peripheral changes in parents and preschool teachers are also relevant. Differences in the sites should be considered, as the data in this study aggregated children from multiple

sites. No evidence gathered for this study considered that children at any given site were more or less likely to benefit from participation in CYR. Last, but certainly not least, tracking children's interest in and motivation to read should be considered in future research.

5.10 Last Thoughts

As reported by Sticht (2011), in 1908, Edmund Burke Huey wrote, "the school of the future will have as one of its important duties the instruction of parents in the means of assisting the child's natural learning in the home." At several of the preschools in this study, the preschool directors and teachers noted that a high number of the parents were young, single high school dropouts who likely struggled with their own literacy skills. The preschool staff at all but two sites reported that parents were very unlikely to read to their children at home with any frequency.

Sticht (2011), noted, "Hearing language is the first step in learning to read and write and make sense of the world." He found a difference of 153,000 words per week between what a child from a privileged home (215,000 words) hears, and what a typical child from a family on welfare hears (62,000). Sticht advocates instruction of parents of young children as a means to improving literacy in their children. This concept may be a reasonable extension of CYR. Because CYR is administered by Reading for Literacy, an organization with years of experience working with adult literacy learners, extending the focus to educating the parents along with the children may be a logical next move. There

is growing evidence that multigenerational literacy can expand when parent and children learn together.

5.11 Summary

Chapter 5 provided conclusions based on the findings of this research, discussions of the findings, and future implications. Conclusions included:

- Children who worked with a volunteer reader showed an increase in GGG scores from fall to spring in all three areas, but only the changes from fall to spring in picture naming and rhyming means were found to be statistically significant in the three groups.
- The increase from fall to spring was not statistically significant in alliteration in any year for any of the three groups (Control, Year 1, or Year 2).
- Year 2 mean scores were significantly different than the Control Group and Year 1. Change over time (fall to spring) was not significantly different between the groups.

The discussion included potential skewing of data, considerations of correlations, not causality, along with ideas about vocabulary and the use of volunteers. Limitations of the study included the study design and difficulties in measurement, and assessment issues, including what should be assessed. Other considerations in future research delineated the need for a more comprehensive exploration of the use of volunteers with preschoolers, and consideration of other factors such as motivation. Last, the possibility of educating parents along with preschooler children was raised as a potential next step in improving early childhood literacy.

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Appendix A

The History of Creating Young Readers

Development of the Creating Young Readers Program

Creating Young Readers is a child-oriented program offered by Read for Literacy (RFL), the largest nonprofit volunteer based organization in the United States.[2] RFL was founded in 1986 after a merger of tutoring programs operated by the Junior League of Toledo and the Toledo Literacy Council. For many years after its founding, RFL focused on matching volunteers with adults who wanted to learn to read or improve their current reading skills. CYR was a step in a new direction: helping to break the cycle of low levels of literacy in families by helping children attain pre-reading skills before entering formal schooling in kindergarten.

Jim Funk, the executive director of RFL, was in conversation with the vice president in charge of childhood education of the YMCA when the topic of literacy education of preschool children arose. The local YMCA had recently purchased a new preschool curriculum, but it was not being used by the teachers. The teachers reported that they were simply too busy. After reflecting on this conversation, Funk saw this as an

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[2] The history of Read for Literacy was provided in personal interviews by RFL executive director Jim Funk, Creating Young Readers Coordinator Sara Mattson, Director of Operations Diana Bush, and Judythe Patberg, former Director of Tutor Training/Reading Specialist. I am the current Director of Tutor Training/Reading Specialist at RFL.

opportunity to use volunteers to better prepare the children most at risk of school failure. He created a proposal that used adult volunteers as readers in preschools, and quickly found support for his proposal. When the proposal for funding was submitted to local funders, it was approved with a few additions. The Stranahan Foundation was willing to fund it, if other sites in which they had interest were included, so those sites were incorporated. The local United Way was also willing to support this endeavor, and requested that another site be included. Therefore, the list of preschool sites that would be included in CYR was developed with the input of funders. See Appendix A for the original proposal.

All participating preschools serve children from low income families, and all were supportive of the idea of using adult volunteers to read with children one-to-one who might not otherwise have such an opportunity on a regular basis. In all, funding was provided by the Stranahan Foundation, the Toledo Community Foundation, and the Anderson Foundation. In all, $165,000 was obtained for a three year period (from 2008 to 2011) from these funders. In addition, the Toledo Rotary Foundation provided $5000 for an initial purchase of children's books.

The primary stated goal of CYR was to prevent illiteracy by providing literacy opportunities to children in low income families before they started kindergarten. The method of prevention was to be shared reading. This changed, however, with the contributions of Tutor Trainer/Reading Specialist Judythe Patberg and librarians from the children's department of the Lucas County Public Library. The librarians had been

trained in dialogic reading, and under their guidance, the method of reading with preschoolers shifted from shared reading to dialogic reading.

With initial funding in place, the major local newspaper, the Toledo Blade, started to provide publicity by writing articles and providing advertising about CYR. Buckeye Cable also broadcast information and appeals for volunteers, and between the two media, 298 inquiries were received in the first two weeks. The program started with 85 volunteers and 90 children in autumn of 2009.

Children's librarians from the Toledo Lucas County Public Library trained the first cohort of volunteers, but this training was shifted directly to RFL after severe budget cuts at the library not long after CYR started. At that time, the training was improved and enriched through the efforts of Sara Mattson. As described elsewhere in this discourse, dialogic reading remains the essence of the CYR program to the time of this writing.

Changes in the Preschool Population in Creating Young Readers

At the start of CYR, the participating preschool agencies received federal monies through the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), a federally funded program designed to increase access to high quality early learning programs especially for young children at risk for school failure (http://www.ed.gov/early-learning). This funding was not dependent on parental employment, and a significant number of children at the participating preschools were enrolled with ELI funding. This funding was cut under state austerity moves, as noted in the previous chapter. As a result, the preschools with CYR volunteers lost from one-third to two-thirds of their students by the end of the first year of CYR. This necessitated some changes in program service parameters. At first, there had been an

expectation that approximately 60% of the children served by the volunteers would be in the program at least two years, but that number was reduced significantly, down to about 10% in reality. Second, although some of the children were re-qualified under other government programs, mainly Jobs and Family Services (JFS) funding, in most cases, the parents of those children had to be actively employed and/or attending accredited schools. The JFS subsidies received only covered day care while the parent(s) were at work or in school; so many of those children were not at the facilities during the hours of preschool or while the volunteers were present. As a result, of the children most at risk for school failure were no longer attending preschool because their parents did not qualify for JFS or other preschool subsidies. In many cases, parents would have qualified for subsidies, but neglected to apply or to follow through with their applications. It has been suggested by administrators at some of the preschools that the parents were not sufficiently literate to follow the funding guidelines for some of the funders. Thus, in each preschool, the loss of federal money resulted in fewer students, and in some cases, closing of preschool classrooms as well as two entire daycare centers with preschools. Those students affected by budget cuts would not be present to work with the volunteers. This left a smaller group of children for the CYR program, and may have resulted in a group that was less in need of the help.

As noted above, the first groups of volunteers were trained by children's librarians. With the loss of their services, Sara Matson, a full time coordinator was hired to train and oversee volunteers, provide books, design and implement recordkeeping, and keep the program running successfully. She provided training for all volunteers who

began after the initial group; this included all new volunteers starting in or after January 2009.

Use of the Dialogic Reading Model

People have known how important it is to read to children for a very long time, yet, relatively recent research has found that not all read aloud-styles are equally effective in terms of children's acquisition of pre-reading skills (Whitehurst, Epstein, Angell, Payne, Crone, & Fischel, 1994; Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000, McKeown & Beck, 2006). One approach to reading aloud to children that has been found to be effective is called dialogic reading. The hallmark of dialogic reading is that the adult reading a text stops at important places in a text and engages the readers with questions and discussion about ideas related to the text. As Dickinson has written in a review of read aloud approaches, "research had demonstrated that the most effective read-alouds are those in which children are actively involved asking and answering questions and making predictions rather than passively listening" (2001).

CYR volunteers use a version of dialogic reading that has been modified from the original incarnation developed by Whitehurst (1992). In the original inception, rereading of texts was prominent; the dialogue between the adult and child was geared up in subsequent readings. The requirement of rereading has been shifted to encouraging rereading, as noted in the *Changes over Time* section above, to provide less confusion and more enjoyment for the volunteers. Still inherent in dialogic reading are three main points that occur in the course of reading a book:

- active learning

- adult feedback and modeling, and
- scaffolding.

With volunteers acting as readers, it cannot be assumed that they have the same level of expertise as trained teachers. Therefore, the major points presented to the volunteers were to use two techniques represented by the acronyms PEER and CROWD. In PEER, the adult:

P prompts an exchange about the book,

E evaluates the children's response,

E expands the child's response, and

R repeats the initial question to check that the child understands the new learning. (Whitehurst,1992.)

CROWD is another way of encouraging the child to think about and respond to the book. This acronym represents:

C **c**ompletion (fill in the blanks)

R **r**ecall (remember the story)

O **o**pen-ended questions (expand thinking)

W wh- questions - what do you think? What could happen

Who? What? Where? When? Why/How? (ask questions)

D **d**istancing (relate questions to life experiences in class or home)

(Whitehurst, 2004; Whitehurst et al., 1994)

In using each of these techniques, volunteers respond to the directly expressed speech of the child. There are no required questions or prompts, and readers are free to tailor questions to the individual child.

Appendix B

The original proposal for funding of Creating Young Readers[3]

Creating Young Readers

A proposed pilot project of Read For Literacy
and the YMCA & JCC of Greater Toledo

" … what economically disadvantaged children need to close the achievement gap is a great infusion of knowledge – knowledge of words and their meanings, understanding of the concepts that connect them, and an ability to think critically about what one reads."

Neuman, S. B. & Celano, D. (2006). The Knowledge Gap: Implications of leveling the playing field for low- and middle-income children. Reading Research Quarterly, 41, 35-70.

"It is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and, at the same time, promotes productivity in the economy

[3] Used with permission of Read for Literacy and the creators, Jim Funk & Judythe Patberg

and in society at large. Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy."

James J. Heckman, Nobel laureate in economics in 2000 and professor at the University of Chicago.

Grant Summary

Read For Literacy, Inc., the YMCA & JCC of Greater Toledo and the Toledo Day Nursery seek the support of the Anderson Foundation, along with that of the Toledo Community Foundation and the Stranahan Foundation, for a three-year pilot project.

The project will demonstrate whether it is possible to significantly improve the reading readiness of developmentally delayed children from low-income, low-literacy households by exposing them to intensive reading and reading-related experiences provided by volunteer "readers" over a two-year period.

Read For Literacy will recruit and train up to 75 volunteer "readers" who will read on a one-to-one (or two-to-one) basis three times a week to as many as 150 children who attend ten pre-school programs operated by the YMCA-JCC of Greater Toledo and Toledo Day Nursery.

The volunteer readers will be trained in a technique known as Shared Reading (also known as interactive reading), which has been shown to be effective in helping children develop a variety of literacy-related skills that are predictors of a child's ability to learn to read and write. Those skills include knowledge of the alphabet, oral language skills, an awareness of books and the printed word and phonological awareness.

Purpose and Need

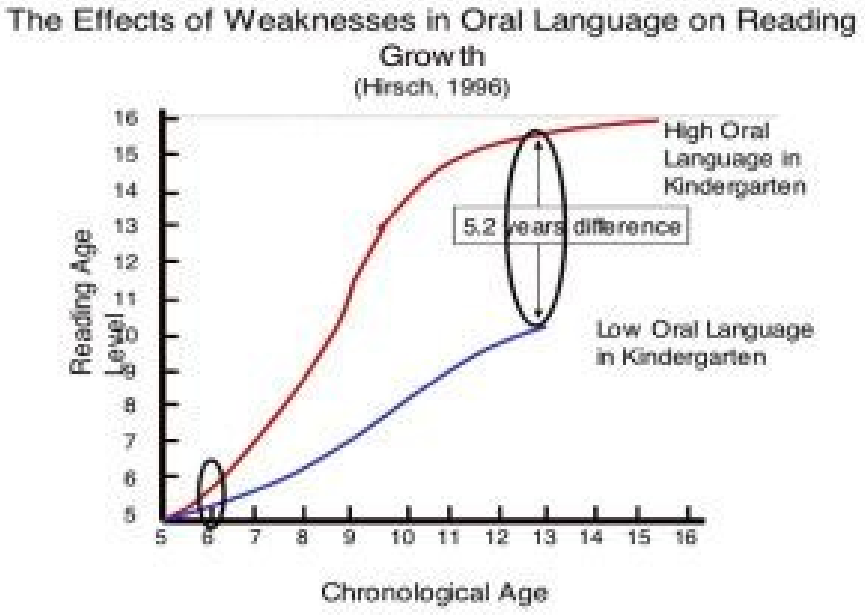
40% of Toledo Children Enter Kindergarten with Low Reading Readiness

All children entering a public school kindergarten in Ohio are required to complete the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Test. As is shown below, nearly forty percent of the 2,082 Toledo Public School kindergarten students who took the test in 2007 scored in the lowest of three tiers.

District	Percentage of Kindergarten Students scoring in the lowest tier on the Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment test in fall 2007
Ottawa Hills	1.2%
Anthony Wayne	5.4%
Perrysburg	7.1%
Sylvania	11.3%
Oregon	11.6%
Maumee	17.3%
Springfield	17.6%
Washington TWP.	18.0%
Rossford	29.8%
Toledo Public Schools	37.8%

Children who start School behind their Peers are Likely to Fall Further Behind

The following graph depicts the long-term impact of low oral language skills on the future learning of kindergarten students. As can be seen, by age 13 students who enter school with low oral language skills can be as much as 5.2 years behind their peers in reading ability compared to students who enter school with highly developed oral language skills.



Hirsch, 1996

Causes of Low Reading Readiness

While low reading readiness stems from many factors, the most important include:

Parental Low-Literacy – 20% of adults in the city of Toledo read at or below what is termed the "Basic" level. In today's information-based society, parents who read at this level are essentially functionally illiterate. They cannot read to their children or help them with their homework. Nor do they typically have reading materials in the household. (1993 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, US Department of Education.)

Socio-economic Level – Low-income parents often lack the cultural and financial resources required to expose their children to enriching experiences that contribute to the development of oral language skills and a broad base of knowledge.

Class-based Parenting Styles – The following graphs are drawn from the book, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*, by Betty Hart, Ph.D. and Todd R. Risley. They document the fact that children in "welfare" households typically have many fewer words addressed to them in the first four years of life than do children from working class and professional homes. The nature of their parents' verbalizations also differs greatly. The discrepancies strongly affect the child's reading readiness.

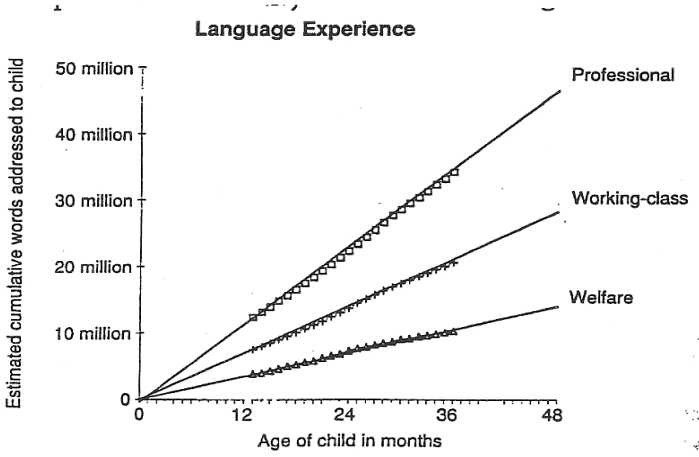


Figure 19. Estimated cumulative differences in language experience by 4 years of age. (See Appendix B for a detailed explanation of this figure.)

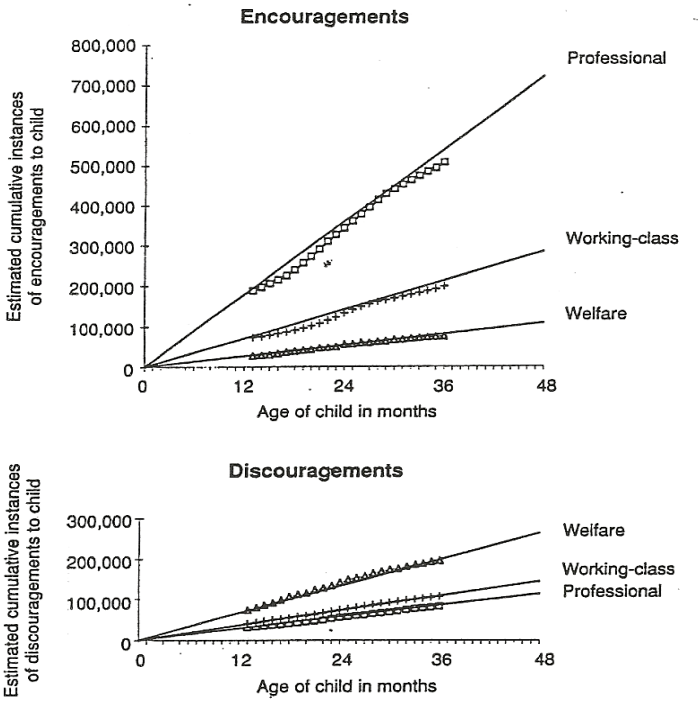


Figure 20. Estimated cumulative differences in confidence-producing experience by 4 years of age. Note the reversal of the lines in the bottom graph, reflecting the prevailing negative Feedback Tone in the welfare homes. (See Appendix B for a detailed explanation of this figure.)

Description of Shared Reading Activities

The staff at all of the pre-school programs frequently read to children on a group or class basis. Unfortunately, research and teaching experience have shown that "group reading" does little to advance the reading readiness of the most developmentally delayed children.

Rather, if developmentally delayed students are to become reading ready, they must receive extensive one-on-one exposure to reading and reading-related experiences. Since they cannot receive such exposure at home, RFL's readers will provide this exposure by reading to the children on a one-to-one or one-to-two basis three times a week. To maximize the impact of the project, an effort will be made to read to each child for two years.

At every session, the volunteer reader will read one or more books or stories using the "shared reading" techniques known to be effective in increasing reading readiness. For example, as they read, the volunteers will point to letters and words and to the pictures the words stand for. Through this process, children will come to understand that letters form words and that words name pictures. They will also learn that each letter has its own sound – important for children when learning to read.

Project Implementation

Time line – The following time line assumes all funding will be committed by December 2008, which will allow a full two-year demonstration between July of 2009 and July of 2011.

Reader Recruitment and Training	-	Dec. 2008 – June 2009
Two year Implementation	-	July 2009 – July 2011
Final Outcomes Assessment	-	August - Sept. 2011

Reader Recruitment and Training - Read for Literacy will recruit, train and oversee a cadre of 50 to 75 adult volunteer readers. Dr. Judythe Patberg, a University of Toledo professor of reading instruction and RFL's Director of Training, will direct the training.

Promotion - We believe that it will be possible to obtain substantial free advertising from community news and advertising media. For example, the Advertising Club of Toledo has volunteered to conduct a volunteer communications project on behalf of the project.

Implementation – The project will be highly cost effective for both parents and the community. Children will be able to receive the service within their regular "school

day," thus eliminating any additional travel or time cost to parents. Because the program will be a collaborative effort between agencies, services will be provided more cost effectively than any of the agencies could do independently.

Project Evaluation

The children who participate in the project will be selected on the basis of their scores on the *Ages and Stages* screening test, teacher observations, and daily attendance. Each year they will be tested in November and April with an Ohio Department of Education endorsed progress-monitoring test called *Get it, Got it, Go*. This test measures the early literacy skills of alliteration, rhyme, and picture naming.

Once the student data are entered into the system, the Ohio Department of Education will create reports for individual children that include an **aim line** (visual description that shows the desired rate of growth for most children over time) and a **trend line** (visual description that shows the actual rate of progress of an individual child). The data we collect on the effects of Shared Reading for these children will allow us to create a third line, e.g., **Shared Reading line** (visual description that shows the progress of the children who are engaged in Shared Reading). With this graph, consisting of three lines, we will be able to determine if the children who are engaged in Shared Reading are making faster progress in closing the achievement gap than those who are not engaged in Shared Reading. The University of Toledo College of Education will be asked to assist in project evaluation. The project evaluation will be directed by Dr. Patberg.

Relationship to Existing Early Literacy Programs

A number of other early literacy programs in Toledo encourage parents to read to their children. As valuable as these programs are, it is RFL's belief that such programs are likely to have little impact on the children of the 50,000 adults who read at or below the "Basic" level. This will be the case because these parents simply read too poorly to become effective readers to their children in the near term.

The United Way's *Let's Read, You and Me* project, and the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library's *Story Hour* program are similar to the proposed project to the extent that both programs send volunteer readers into day care programs. However, because they provide group reading only, neither of these initiatives will address the needs of the most developmentally delayed children.

Project Scale Up and Continuation Funding

RFL believes that if the pilot project succeeds, it will be possible to recruit up to 350 additional "readers" over a five-year period. This would enable the project to be expanded to many other pre-school centers, including potentially Head Start, and could therefore reach a high percentage of the approximately 1,000 Toledo Public Schools' students who each year enter kindergarten with low reading readiness levels. (For

comparison purposes, RFL currently has 1,200 volunteer tutors and 1,300 adult students and is recruiting about 100 new tutors annually.)

Future Support

Because volunteer-based services are inherently cost effective, the program could be implemented on a community-wide basis at a low cost. For example, as the projections below indicate, the annual cost per child would decline from $347 per year during the pilot project phase to approximately $171 per child per year on an ongoing basis. This compares to a cost of $9,000 to $10,000 per year for traditional public school students and $1,700 per student for after-school tutoring in the federally funded Supplemental Educational Services program. Because of the inherent cost effectiveness of volunteer tutoring programs, RFL believes that it would be possible to obtain ongoing funding from a variety of private and governmental sources.

Annual Budget for Three Years of Pilot Project

Cash Expenses	**Pilot Phase/ Implementation/ 150 children**	**Communitywide 1,000 children**
Salary/benefits for 1/2 Time Project Coordinator	$25,000	$95,000 (2.5 FTEs)
Salary to cover increased management time	5,000	22,000
Salary to cover increased training expense	6,000	7,500
Additional cost for YMCA-JCC coordinators	4,000	17,500
Expense for mandated background checks	1,250	2,500
Expense of Physicals for Readers (50 @ $75)	3,750	7,500
Liability Insurance	2,000	4,000
Contingencies/Promotion	5,000	15,000
Total Cash Budget	$52,000	$171,000
Annual "cash cost" per student	$347	$171
In-Kind Donations		
Computer, IT, Internet Services	2,000	$4,000
Office Space/Equipment	2,400	$4,800
Donated Advertising (anticipated)	50,000	$100,000
Value of Readers' time (at $10/hour)	$144,000	$1,008,000
Total In-Kind Budget	$198,400	$1,287,800
Annual return on cash investment when value of volunteers' time included	3.8 to 1	7.5 to 1

Calculations of value of Volunteer Time

Pilot Project Phase - 50 Readers x 6 hours/wk = 300 hours/week x $10/hour = $3,000 value/week x 48 weeks/year = $144,000 value annually

Communitywide Implementation - 350 Readers x 6 hours/wk = 2,100 hours/week x $10/hour = $21,000 value/week x 48 weeks/year = $1,008,000 value annually.

Appendix C

Creating Young Readers Teacher Survey Form

CONFIDENTIAL

TODAY'S DATE: _____ **Your Name** _____

Child's Name _____ **Date Enrolled** _____

Preschool _____ **Home Language** _____

Ethnicity _____ **Birthdate** _____ **Gender** ☐ **M** ☐ **F**

Student Schedule					
What days does the student attend?	M	T	W	Th	F
What time does the student typically arrive at school?					
What time does the student typically leave school?					

How consistent is the student's attendance?

Absent Most Days | Attendance Sporadic | Attends Most Days

Current GGG Scores		
Picture Naming	Rhyming	Alliteration

How often do you see the student engaging in books independently?

Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often

How would you rate the student's participation in circle time stories?

Disruptive | Unresponsive | Somewhat engaged | Highly Engaged

How often does the student ask story related questions during large group story time?

Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often

Does student have any characteristics which we need to take into account when scheduling CYR?

Please Explain.

(For example, is the student non-verbal? Is the student difficult to understand? Is the

student high energy? Answers to this question are used to help match each student to appropriate volunteer.)

How would you rate the student's listening skills?

Below Average Average Above Average

How would you rate the student's verbal skills?

Below Average Average Above Average

Would you recommend this student to the CYR program?

Yes No

Appendix D

Creating Young Readers Book Guide

Example of Support Guide for Children's Book

Bunny Cakes by Rosemary Wells

Vocabulary

- Earthworm
- Grocer
- Yellow
- Sign
- Icing
- Thrilled

Great Questions for Level One and Two

What do you see in the picture?

How many eggs do you see?

What can you tell me about the bunny in the bowl? What is he holding?

What can you tell me about the pitcher beside the bowl?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the picture?

What did Max and Ruby make? Why did they make cakes?

What does Max keep trying to get from the grocer?

Do you think the grocer will be able to read Max's writing this time?

What will happen next?

Great Questions for Level Three

Would you like an earthworm cake? What kind of cake do you like?

Have you ever made a cake? What did you put in the cake?

Why doesn't the grocer know what Max writes on the list?

How do you feel when someone doesn't understand what you write?

Alphabet Knowledge: Talk about the letter C for Cakes. What else starts with C. Trace the C in Cakes with your finger.

Alliteration: Can you think of some words that begin with the /y/ sound like yellow? Yarn, Yawn, Yippee, Yo-yo, Yesterday, Young, Yell, Yip…

Rhyming: Can you think of some words that rhyme with "Bunny?" (Nonsense words are okay.) Funny, Money, Runny, Sunny, Punny….

Writing Prompts:

Write about a time you helped bake or cook something, at home or at school.

Write about your favorite kind of cake? Or maybe about a silly kind of cake?

Write about a time when it was hard to help someone else understand you.

Bunny Cakes

by Rosemary Wells

Patty Cake

Patty cake patty cake,

Bakers man bake me some a cake as fast as you can.

Roll it pat it mark it with a (first initial of child's name)

And put it in the oven for (child's Name) and me

See The Little Rabbit

See the little rabbit go, hop, hop, hop.

See her ears go flop, flop, flop.

See her eyes go blink, blink, blink.

See her nose goes twink, twink, twink.

See her white coat, so soft and furry.

See her run - away in a hurry!

Kitty And Bunny

Here is a kitty. *(make a fist with one hand)*

Here is a bunny. *(hold up other hand with pointer and*

middle fingers up straight)

See his tall ears so pink and funny? *(wiggle the two extended fingers)*

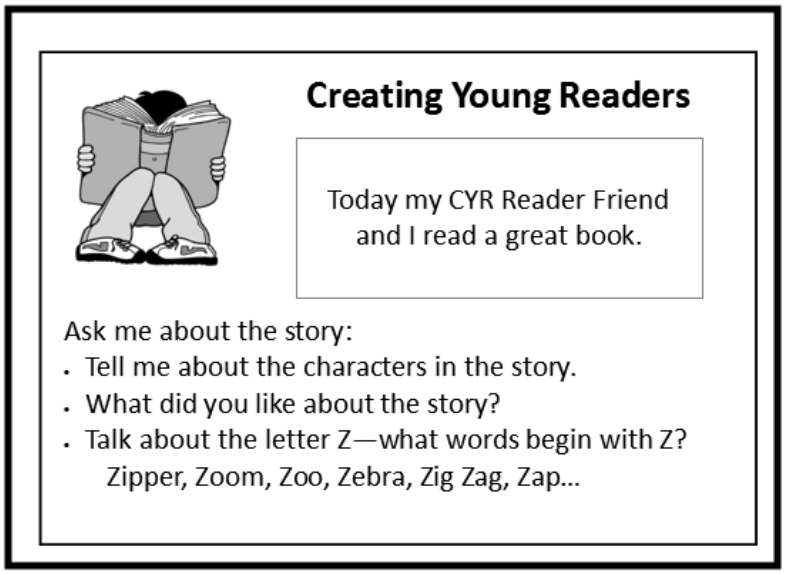
Kitty comes by and licks his face; *(extend thumb and wiggle near the bunny)*

And around and around the garden they race. *(make circular motions with hands)*

And then without a single peep, They both lie down and go to sleep. *(fold hands)*

Appendix E

Note to Parents: Generic Reader Note Sent Home



Appendix F

Sample of Training Materials

Materials adapted from a PowerPoint presentation

LEVEL ONE –	Introduce Book, Focus on Vocabulary
LEVEL TWO –	Work with a book familiar to the student Focus on word sounds – rhyme and alliteration
LEVEL THREE –	Work with a book that is familiar to the student Encourage the student to tell you the story Ask questions that encourage the child to talk about his or her own experiences as they can be related to the story

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Three Principles of Dialogic Reading

- Encourage participation
- Provide feedback
- Adapt the reading style to the child's growth

Review of Dialogic Reading

- Ask *who, what, when, where, why*, and *how* questions
- Ask open ended questions
- Repeat answers and expand them with new words
- Talk about and describe pictures
- Ask what will happen next
- Define new words
- Encourage conversation

Working with Letters

- Point out letters in books
- Letter Matching
- Tracing Letters with fingers
- Begin with letters in the student's name

Rhyming

- Singing songs, reciting rhymes and playing games with words are great ways to help build early literacy skills.
- Not everyone is comfortable singing – and THAT'S OKAY!
- Everyone will find activities that work for them; we provide a lot of options for you to find your own way to Create Young Readers.

Appendix G

Site descriptions

Sites A, B, and C

The oldest daycare in Ohio and the 4th oldest in the nation was founded shortly after the civil war. That daycare now includes preschools A, B, and C. All are governed by a board of 20-25 members. These sites have a three star rating in Ohio's Step Up To Quality Initiative, and are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These sites have teachers with the highest levels of education, and a higher ratio of full time to part time teachers. Overall, these sites aim for a preschool ratio of one adult to every 7-8 preschoolers, the lowest ratio of any preschool with CYR affiliation. These daycares lost about $200,000 in 2010 when the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) was cut from the federal budget. As a result, scores of children no longer attend these schools. Six classrooms were closed, including Site C. Children from that site now attend site A, which is located just a few blocks away. Further cuts are expected at the state level, putting other classes and sites into financial jeopardy.

Part of the organization's mission statement is dedicated to parental involvement. Parents are encouraged to visit anytime, and participate in field trips, lunch, and daily activities. Once a visitor or parent walks into the reception area, they can pick up notes and pamphlets. For example, pamphlets with tips to help children develop socially and emotionally were available. Additionally, information sheets about a summer reading

program at the local university were present. Parental involvement in learning about child care and development is encouraged; for example, parents are given $100 stipends, books, games, and toys if they attend a five week session about parenting skills. In 2010, 10 of approximately 60 parents attended the sessions. Typically, however, about twice that number attend, for about 1/3 of parents participating. The preschool director estimates that without the stipends, parental participation would be down to a small fraction of what it currently is.

Lesson plans at Sites A and B are organized around themes, such as different kinds of gardens. Plans include mathematics, science, English language arts, and science. The plans relate directly to state guidelines, and note the reference on them. An overview of the plan is sent home to parents each week. Individual lesson plans are also developed. One example includes writing the child's name, counting from 20 to 30, rhyming words, and ABCABC patterning. These lesson plans are broken down further, and dates the goals are achieved are noted.

Each student has a binder with developmental milestones noted in it. The goals are based on national norms, and are directly related to kindergarten readiness. For students who have been at the site since infancy, the milestones are noted for the entire time. Ages and stages questionnaires, state standards, medical, and other information are included.

Sites A and B will be discussed separately because of the differences in their location and client base.

Site A

Site A is a one floor building with a small, fenced in play area. As at all sites, visitors must enter through a locked door into a reception area, but Site A also requires that the visitors be viewed before gaining admittance. At this site, there are 15 preschoolers currently enrolled. There are generally 13 students present each day. Students are generally at Site A for 8-9 hours a day five days a week.

The preschool at Site A currently has 2 full time teachers. One has 27 years of experience, and an associate's degree in child development. The lead teacher has a bachelor's degree in early childhood, four years of experience, and was trained in *Reggio Emilia.*

Site A is the only site that is not in or adjacent to a residential neighborhood. It is located in the urban core, across a street from a large hospital. It draws from various areas, including hospital employees. 80% of parents live or work near the preschool, but virtually none walk there. Because this is the only CYR site in the downtown proper, the demographics of the area may not be relevant. Overall, however, 75% of the housing units in the area are rentals, and the average income in the surrounding area is under $15,000, the lowest of any of the sites.

Ninety percent of the parents are single. For the families who have governmental subsidies, parents are required to be working or in school for the hours the children are in school. The current ratio is about half in school, half are working. An estimate of the ethnicity is 60% African American, 20% Hispanic, 12% mixed or other, and 8% white.

The largest difficulties with parents at this site are with requiring parents to pick up ill children and keep them out of school until they are healthier. There are occasional difficulties with parents who object to picking up children in a timely manner. The staff, however, tend to overlook some poor parental behavior because of concerns about what would happen to the children if they were dismissed from the center. They know that many of the children who are no longer attending their school because of government budget cuts are in unlicensed, home based care with family and friends who often lack even a high school diploma.

The classroom has at least ten examples of each student's work on the walls. The work is labeled with names and dates. Children can easily locate their own work. There are centers for reading, writing, listening, art, sand table, computer, and blocks, among others. The centers seem to be well organized: for example, the writing center has lead pencils, colored pencils, markers, and a variety of papers available. Many items in the room are clearly labeled: art easel, light table, writing table, etc. The group time area has an ABC rug on it, along with a few child sized seats. Overall, it is well organized and child oriented.

The literacy materials at Site A outnumber the other sites in sheer volume and organization. Big books are available for children to use on a regular basis. There are other books displayed facing out; these are rotated regularly. Many books are organized by themes or topics. Teacher collections of books are also obtained twice a month from the public library. The listening center also has books regularly rotated in it.

Site B

Site B is located a few miles from Site A, and sits in one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city. The area is over ½ African-American, 1/3 White, and has a substantial mixed population. The majority of the houses are valued under $60,000, with the average house valued just over $53,000 in 2010 (http://www.clrsearch.com). The unemployment rate for this area is twice that of the rest of the state of Ohio, and the median household income is under $29,000.

This site is similar to Site A. The site has similar requirements for student recordkeeping, parental incentives, and attendance. The biggest difference between the two is size – Site B feels more cramped because of the size of the entire facility, not the preschool area itself. The preschool room lacks some of the closed storage of Site A, so the room feels more congested because more of the materials are on open shelves. Centers are similar, with an emphasis on books, literacy, and reading materials. Site B appears to have fewer books overall than Site A, but still has a much greater number than any other site.

The parents at this site are similar to those of Site A: mainly low income, single parents. Again, the staff generally believes that the children are better off at the preschool than elsewhere, so they ignore poor parental behavior when possible. The biggest difference between Sites A and B is that B draws almost exclusively from the surrounding neighborhood. Parents often walk children to school on sunny days at Site B, while Site A has children overwhelmingly delivered by private transportation.

Site C

Site C closed at the end of the first year of the CYR program. It was not available for this researcher to visit.

Site D

Site D is the only site that is not affiliated with any other site. It is located in an aged area geographically isolated from the rest of the sites by a major river. The area has about 43% of the households renting. The average home value is under $45,000, and the vast majority of the homes were built before WWII. Lots are city lots- generally with small frontage. In this area, household income was $25,708 in 2009, about $20,000 below the average in Ohio. The area is about three quarters White, with the remainder split between Hispanics and African Americans. Under 2% of the residents in the area reported being mixed or of another race (http://www.city-data.com/zips/43605.html).

The nonprofit organization that oversees the preschool is itself over 100 years old, and focuses on serving families in the area. Within the same building, senior citizen activities, tutoring for students, after school activities, summer camp, sports, immunizations, GED preparation, cooking classes, and food basket delivery all occur. For infants, a program provides home visits and early interventions. This center is heavily invested in the neighborhood it serves. Their stated goal includes building strong family units, assisting seniors in maintaining independent lifestyles, preparing young people to do well in school, developing and fostering good character, and helping them become productive members of society, coordinating services and cooperating with other

agencies to improve the quality of life in the community. There are two grant writers on staff, but both have myriad duties as well.

The facility itself was purpose built for the center, and is about 35 years old. Owned by the city, it borders a city park, but is very close to the street. Because of the number of programs housed there, space is at a premium. For example, for some time, the preschool was located in the basement of the facility.

In the preschool area, the maximum ration is 1:10 for 3 and 4 year olds, with a maximum of 20 to two caregivers. Preschool classes are held in both the morning and the afternoon, and last 3 ½ hours each, the longest sessions of all the preschools.

There are at least 2 staff members always present in the preschool. There are nine staff members overall. Teachers must have an associate in child development (CDA) or a higher level of education. The lead teachers have an associate's degree or better, one teacher has a bachelor's degree, and the others have at least a high school diploma. Most teachers have 5 or more years of experience. Previously, only a high school diploma was required, but the site standard has been raised. The preschool is working toward a three star accreditation in Ohio's Step Up To Quality Initiative, which requires a higher level of education for new staff.

Many parents receive tuition money through the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services. Some funding is through the Lucas County Children's Services as well. To further complicate the funding maze, the site was a Head Start provider, then an Early Learning Initiative (ELI) site. When ELI funds were cut, half of the funding was lost. The center is once again a Head Start site. For most parents, a co-pay is between $1 and

$220 a month, based on income. At the present time, two parents pay tuition independently for their children.

About 65% of the children in the preschool are part of a family with married parents. This is in contrast to most of the sites, where the majority of the children are from single parent households. Most of the rest live with a single mother, and a few live with grandparents. The population at the center is about 65% White, 20% African American, and the rest are Hispanic or mixed. Two children and three parents are bilingual.

This site is in a neighborhood that has shifted to rental houses over the last few decades, and the families are quite transient. Very few children stay at the center for two years or more. Roughly 5 or 10 of the families who use the childcare facilities own their own homes. Because of this, all individual children's records are sent home at the end of the school year. This is in contrast to other sites, where records are kept until children leave the sites.

The largest parental issue at Site D is lack of involvement. Parents do not show up for activities designed to involve them with their children. For example, in 2009, no parents showed up for Parents Night. After an effort at outreach and changes in the organization of Parents' Night, 75% of the parents attended. For parent communication about students, conferences are held in November and April, with about 80% of parents attending. Newsletters are sent home monthly, and projects go home as they are finished. Daily notes are not used, as the staff found that parents did not read or respond to them often.

The preschool room has high windows on one wall, allowing natural light in. This classroom has objects clearly labeled in many places, and children will see their names in several places in the room. Children's work is posted in several places, on bulletin boards, in centers, and on the walls. There was an example of collaborative writing on the easel on the day of this visit – "My favorite place to visit is…" with a web of the zoo with animals suggested by the children. Music played quietly in the background on the occasion of this visit. Overall, it is a comfortable, organized, inviting place for children.

One thing that makes this site unique is that one of the teachers visits the public library at least weekly and borrows about 100 books at a time. This provides a constantly rotating supply of interesting books for the children. Other sites use the library resources as well, but none reported such extensive usage.

Lesson plans are based on the Creative Curriculum. Major themes are based on children's interests, and common themes. Each theme may last a week or two, and include art, the zoo, adventures, farms, sports, and houses. The center is currently moving toward a more project based approach.

Student recordkeeping is accomplished through a portfolio of student work. Each child's notes are put into a three ring binder. It includes authentic assessments, journals, GGG scores, Ages and Stages (which requires parental involvement), and a pre-kindergarten school readiness instruction packet. The teachers report that the most useful piece in the binder is a developmental continuum with the child's progress noted. This is

helpful for parents to see where their child compares developmentally to others. The binders are updated three times a year, and, as noted above, go home at the end of a year.

This center serves many people in the community, and is a busy place. It is fortunate that the preschool now has a quiet section away from much of the hustle and bustle in the rest of the building. Of all of the centers visited, it ranked highly in terms of having a welcoming atmosphere for the children.

Sites E-J

The last six sites are under the same governance, and part of a national organization. The organization has over 20 day care sites in the area, and is by far the largest local provider. The six sites served by CYR include 5 that are in some of the less affluent neighborhoods in the community, and one in a more middle class setting. The sites associated with CYR are those within the city limits that have preschools. At all of these sites, in preschool, the maximum ration is 1:12 for 3 and 4 year olds, with a maximum of 24 to two caregivers. For a group of all 4 year olds to pre-kindergarteners, the ratio is 1:14 with a maximum of 28. This is the highest child to adult ratio of the preschools with CYR. Student recordkeeping is accomplished through a portfolio of student work at all sites. The portfolios also contain an assessment plan and developmental continuums. The organization maintains a Facebook page, and sends out email newsletters to parents. Conferences are available twice a year, in November and April.

Site E

Site E is located in a residential neighborhood adjacent to a public school. It is in a building that houses an active Christian church. The building was constructed as a church-based elementary school. The area is an aging one, with an average household income of just over $34,000. It is ethnically mixed, with 68% white, 18% African-Americans, and 15% Hispanics in the area. 21% of residents over 25 did not complete high school, 40% did complete high school, and about 19% have an associate's degree or higher. The population is rather transient, with approximately 87% living in the area less than 8 years. The majority of the homes were built before WWII. Just over half of the homes are owner occupied.

During the school year, 12 – 14 preschoolers are generally in the classroom. Last year, before ELI budget cuts, there were two preschool classrooms with 24 children.

The hours at this site are 5:15 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily, with the most open hours of the sites. The preschool administrator reported that many children are at the site for over 10 hours a day.

Visitors must buzz in, and are admitted into a hallway. They then walk up stairs to the check-in area to sign in and out their children. The childcare facility is in average sized classrooms, off a common hallway. There is a playground and room to run in a grassy area outside.

At the time of the last visit, there were 13 staff members in child care. The preschool teacher has a bachelor's degree in Special Education, and is working on her Master's degree. Half of the staff has an associates' degree, and the lead teachers have

bachelors. Because of the long hours the facility is open, at least 4 different staff members will work in the preschool area each day. Teachers work different shifts, with a full time staff member, an aide in the afternoons, and a different teacher from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Site E is in a mixed area with mainly single family residences primarily built in the early 20th century. Many are rentals. Most of the parents of the preschoolers are single. The children are primarily but not entirely White. Typically, 15 of the children are present every day in the preschool. Most preschoolers are at the center for 8-9 hours daily, but a few are there 12-13 hours each day. The children attending this site are about 50% white, 48% African-American, and 2% Hispanic.

The site maintains a Facebook page, and sends out email newsletters to parents. Conferences are available twice a year, in November and April. About half of the parents sign up for conferences. All pre-K parents are requested to attend an exit interview, at which the teachers update the parents on the children's accomplishments, and provide information about the expectations in kindergarten. The older children take one trip a month. The biggest issue this site has with parents is returning paperwork in a timely manner.

The preschool classroom is the size of a typical elementary classroom, with one wall of windows allowing natural light in. The children have cubbies and their own hooks for coats, but only a few are labeled with children's names. The room is divided into centers and a common meeting area.

Children have word books, with short sight words such as *we* and *me* in them. There are no easily accessible models of the alphabet displayed in the room. Few labels are in use, so children do not have frequent opportunities to see common words such as *Reading Center* or *Art Center.* Overall, this site lacks the number of books present in the sites previously described.

Site F

This site is located in an area that was quite fashionable about 130 years ago. The houses here are large and old, with an average of 8.1 rooms, compared to a state average of 6.4. It is densely populated, and 43% of the residents lived under the poverty level in 2009. Half of those live on less than 50% of the poverty level. The area is about 2/3 African American, with the rest primarily White.

The preschool is within a facility that contains health and fitness equipment, two basketball courts, and other family resources. The building itself was constructed about forty years ago, and is sited in a quiet, well lit area. The room housing the preschool is a long rectangle with block walls and no natural light. The room is dated in style, and has a faint smell of locker room. As in many of the preschools, centers are available, and a book area holds a pile of books not organized by category or other means. Children roam around the area frequently; on one visit, several children were observed wandering aimlessly from center to center. Little student writing is evident, and models of the alphabet are not easily accessible. Children who are at the writing center are limited in

the amount of paper available and the number of pencils. Overall, this site has an air of being caught in the 1970's, both in terms of design and attitude.

The students at site F are primarily African American or mixed. The ratio of children from single parent households is over 80%.

Site G

Site G is located in a residential neighborhood, but on a busy road. It is housed in a former retail store, and has little natural lighting. The area is an aging one, with an average household income of just over $34,000

Preschoolers through 12 years old are accepted in the facility, with after school students coming later in the day.

The site has a lead teacher and site director. The hours at this site are 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. They only close for major holidays (7 days/year).

Facility: The building very plain from the front. Parents must park in a small adjacent lot and be buzzed in. Visitors are admitted directly into the large main room that holds the preschool classes. Just inside the door are partitions about 4 feet high that offer cubbies for children's coats and boots. There is a table to the side that offers parents information about activities and events occurring in the center. Like other sites in this organization, there is a rack with brochures and other information available. The preschool facility is in one large room, with other rooms nearby for after-school care. There is a partition running down the middle of the room that is high enough that the children cannot see over it, but adults can keep tabs on the entire space. The room has

one long, narrow horizontal window well above a child's line of sight, but it provides little light or visual access to the outside. The building was previously a retail store with a large plate glass window, but the lower 80 or 90% was covered. This leaves little connection to the outdoors.

Ratios: In the preschool area, the maximum ration is 1:12 for 3 and 4 year olds, with a maximum of 24 to two caregivers. For a group of 4 year olds to pre-kindergarteners, the ratio is 1:14 with a maximum of 28.

Staff: Currently, there are 8 staff members in child care. The lead preschool teacher has a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood. Most have several years of experience in a daycare setting.

Population: Site G is in a predominantly (89%) White area with mainly single family residences built in the early to mid-20th century. It is predominantly owner occupied, with 27% of the population renting, in comparison to a state average of 31% (http://www.city-data.com/zips/43613.html). This area has the highest ratio of whites of any other site in this study (ibid). Interestingly, the area in which Sit G is located reflects typical, average American demographics in almost all respects: age, income, marital status, and household size. The largest variation is ethnic, with 89% of residents listed as White, compared to a national ratio of 72%. The household income is approximately 20% lower than the national average, and houses are valued at about 2/3 of the state average (http://www.clrsearch.com/Toledo_Demographics/OH/43613/). Overall, it is middle to lower middle class area that expanded greatly in the early to mid-1900, and is slowly losing population now.

In the preschool itself, the majority of the parents of the children are single. Several children are in the custody of grandparents or other relatives. Six of the 38 children are African-American or mixed. At this site, the majority, but not all of the children live nearby. For some, their parent(s) work in the area. A few children live a dozen or more miles from the site. Typically, 32 of the preschool children are present daily, out of 38 enrolled. These children are split into two separate groups in the large room. Most preschoolers are at the center for 8-9 hours daily, but a few are there longer.

Parents: The site has a table full of free parent materials just inside the secure area. Among these are nutrition sheets, food program data, family activity suggestions, and educational information. At the table where children are signed in and out are binders with site licensing reports and Ohio's K-6 standards. The biggest issues the site has with parents are in that some parents do not focus on their children's time in the preschool. The lead teacher noted that it is not difficult to tell which parents work with their children and which do not.

Class Environment: There are centers for music, blocks, dinosaurs, science, puzzles, art, writing, and reading. There is also a child sized kitchen area, and two small, clean tanks with tropical fish. There are labels on the children's cubbies, and they have their names in other locations in the room. At the group area, there is a listing of jobs, with names, a weather center, the alphabet, flag, photograph of the president, and other relevant items.

The walls of the room have several examples of student art work on them. There are child made snowmen, snowflakes, and other artwork in various areas. The children's

names are clearly visible on the art. No children's writing is evident, but there is a commercially made alphabet on the wall by the large group carpeting.

Literacy materials: The reading center has a small bookshelf with several dozen books available. They are displayed with the cover facing out, inviting the children to flip through and pick a book. Other books are piled in bins below. The books are rotated regularly, and based on the children's interests. Presently, there are no pillows to sit on while reading due to a lice problem, but that is not the norm. Soft materials will be returned to the room as soon as possible. The writing center has pencils available, with paper, scissors, boards, and other materials present. There are no examples of student writing at the center, but examples were seen in the children's cubbies and elsewhere.

This site was relatively quiet for the number of children present. The teachers had a friendly, welcoming attitude, but were clearly in charge. They encouraged the children to problem solve with their friends before asking an adult for help. "Please" was encouraged and expected as a matter of course, and the children appeared to consider it a regular part of their vocabulary.

This was the only site I visited that had children working cooperatively online at the two computer centers. Thomas the Train website had a few children playing games together. The lead teacher reported that she had taught the children how to get to a few sites, and they were happy to do so.

Site H

Site H was in a predominately white (94%), middle class area. When researching the area by zip code, only 6.6% of the area residents were found to be under the poverty level, and the average family income was $$41,825 in 2004 (http://www.city-data.com/zips/43616.html). These data are likely to be misleading, however, as Site H was located at the edge of the researched zip code, and adjacent to an exit of a major interstate highway. It was likely to draw from neighboring areas with significantly different demographics. The zip code two blocks away, for example, had an average family income of $24,584 in 2004, a substantial difference. That area also has a much larger Hispanic and African American population (about 24%), and much older houses that average about half the price of Site H's zip code. Therefore, it is fair to say that this site drew from a heterogeneous area.

Site H closed the preschool/day care facilities in spring 2011, not long after the final GGG scores were collected. A formal site visit was not feasible, so no description of the site is included in this study.

Site I

Site I is located in a predominately white (87%) area of the greater metropolitan area. It has a higher percentage of high school graduates, at 90%, than any other area in which a preschool with CYR is located (http://factfinder.census.gov, accessed 9/16/11), according to the U.S. census bureau. Still, it has a slightly higher ratio of renters to

owners than the national average. This is likely due to several large apartment complexes nearby. It serves a wealthier area than any other site, as well, with a median household income slightly above the national average. It draws clients from suburban areas in addition to part of the city.

The preschool is located in a one story, separate facility custom built for child care. It is situated between an expressway and a moderately busy road, but is buffered by large green lawns, shrubs, and trees on both sides. Of all the sites with CYR, it is the most visually appealing from both the outside and the inside. To enter the building, visitors enter a vestibule, and then must be buzzed in by an observer in an adjacent office. Once inside, the area opens up into a large room used for afterschool care, with the three preschool rooms located in connecting wings. Children may attend the morning 2 1/2 preschool, or stay for an extended day.

Currently, there are 30 full time preschoolers in two classrooms. There are also 17 other preschoolers who attend part time, three days a week. CYR serves only the full time children. Unlike several other sites, this site has little difference in the number of preschool children during the school year and the summer.

Site I has a two star rating in Step Up to Quality, an Ohio Jobs and Family Services credential. This means that the administrator and at least 50% of teachers have a credential and/or a degree in early childhood education (http://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/docs, accessed 9/17/11). At this site, only the administrator is full time, and she has a degree in Early Childhood. The other 14 teachers are part time, with 9 of those working with preschoolers.

The number of families with preschool fees subsidized is substantially lower than any other site in this study. Approximately 30% of children receive funding from Ohio Jobs and Family Services, compared with over 90% at some of the sites. Site I also was less affected by cuts in the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) than other preschools, losing about 15% of the students, or six in total. In contrast, a few other sites had to close down preschool classrooms due to the loss of ELI.

The population of the children at the site is slightly more mixed than the surrounding area. About 25-30% are African American, 3% are mixed, and 1% are each Asian/Indian and Hispanic. The rest are White. Approximately 70- 75% live in a two parent household, with single mothers the majority of the remaining group. Two or three children live with their fathers only, and about 5% live with other relatives.

Two issues are of concern with regards to the parents. First, the largest issue the school has with the parents is lack of communication. Parents often appear to be too busy to focus on their children's time at preschool. Every day, teachers send home a care sheet, listing the activities and behaviors of the children while in preschool. Additionally, the teachers send home a newsletter of events at least every month. Parent/teacher conferences are held every fall and spring, with about 75% of parents participating. Other family events are used for outreach, including family oriented dances and craft sessions.

The second issue of concern regarding the parents is getting the parents to understand that the preschool teaches; it is not just childcare. Ideally, the parents would support teaching efforts if they were more aware of this role.

Preschool classrooms are well lit, with plenty of natural daylight entering through windows on two or three sides. Instead of wall to wall carpet, area rugs are used in centers. The room colors have recently been changed from bright primaries to more peaceful tans, beiges, and blues. Overall, they appear to be the most visually tranquil classrooms served by CYR. Areas and items are clearly labeled; children can find a bin for each type of block separately identified.

Overall, this site differs from the other CYR sites in a few notable ways. First, the area served is more educated and affluent, and the participants are less subsidized by state funding. Second, it lacks the bright colors and visual distractions of several other centers. For example, bright ABC rugs have been removed from one classroom, and will be replaced by more neutral solids in others. Children's work is not as obvious on the walls; it is limited to specific areas, and much more limited in number. While children will still find their names on the cubbies where their coats and possessions are stored, they will not see it in several places around the classroom. The alphabet is not posted at eye level near the writing center, and no models of writing were seen to be available there either. The director of the preschool commented that all the sites in their organization (including sites E through J) would be moving toward a calmer, less visually stimulating room organization. It is interesting to note that site I is the first site to reorganize this way, and it is also in the most affluent area served.

Site J

This daycare site is located in a 1960's era building that also houses an athletic facility, and has been in this facility for about 11 years. It is in an urban area in the oldest part of the city, and is the only accredited day care in the immediate area. Demographically, it shares the same statistics as Site A, but it is located on the edge of a residential area, and draws almost exclusively from that neighborhood. Parents regularly walk their children to school, and many of the parents have little transportation other than walking or public busses.

Visitors are admitted into a large area, and then must be admitted into a secure child care area. The childcare facility is large, with a common area that houses school aged children when present, with rooms branching off that. One of two preschool rooms is not currently in use. There is easy access to a fenced in play area with newer child sized climbers, slides, and other equipment.

There are six staff members in child care. Of the six, two have associate degrees, and the rest have high school diplomas. Some have several years of experience in a daycare setting. At least two staff members are always present in the childcare area. Being present does not mean working with children; when I entered the facility, one staff member was working in the office, not with children. During my visit, the district supervisor came in to talk with the director. She did not appear to notice that the director was not in the same room as children, or that the mixed toddler/preschool group had a high child/adult ratio.

The loss of Early Learning Initiative (ELI) money has greatly contributed to the downsizing of this site. More than half of the students previously enrolled are no longer at the site. The site itself is to be closed, with the remaining students moving to Site F, the nearest location in the same organization.

Site J is in a mixed/African-American area adjacent to the downtown area. Just under 2/3 of the population are African Americans, ¼ are White, and most of the rest are mixed. This site has the greatest number of children of mixed parentage of any of the sites. The median household income was just over $14,000 in 2010, the lowest of any of the sites with CYR readers. The houses are some of the oldest in the city, and were primarily built in the early to mid-19th century. Many are rentals. Most of the parents of the preschoolers are single parents, and quite young. There are 24 preschoolers enrolled at this site, with about 17-18 students present each day, although during different hours. Typically, 12 of the children are present every day, and the rest are in attendance approximately three days a week. Most children are at the center for 8-9 hours daily.

For parent communication about students, a Daily Preschooler report is sent home. This report has sections for eating habits, a group time report, and choices in play areas. On the reverse is a form for parents to fill in and return about the child's sleeping, eating and other information at home. It is rarely if ever returned to the preschool. Parents are also offered a parent conference twice a year, but only a handful of parents take advantage of that opportunity. In the past, a monthly newsletter was sent home, but this has been discontinued.

The biggest issues Site J has with parents are in dealing with paperwork and payment in a timely manner.

The preschool room is oddly shaped, with an L shaped configuration. This can make it difficult to keep an eye on all children. It was noted that caregivers must move around a lot to keep children in their line of site. The room has no windows, but is adjacent to a large sunny room. There are few labels on the boxes and tubs in the room. At the group area, there is a listing of jobs, but no student names nearby.

The walls of the room have few examples of student art work on them. There are child made kites, butterflies, and dinosaurs in various areas. The art does not have children's names or dates on it. No children's writing is evident, but there is a commercially made alphabet on the wall by the large group carpeting. The children have few accessible places with their names written. There are a few labels with names on cubbies for coats and boots.

The reading center has a small bookshelf with a few dozen books piled haphazardly. There are big pillows to sit on while reading. Children are also encouraged to use library books. These books are chosen by the librarians and rotated every month. The writing center has pencils and clipboards available, but no markers, colored pencils, or paper. There are no examples of student writing or any other writing at the center. All in all, Site J does not appear to have literacy as an important part of its curriculum or mission.

Appendix H

Informed Consent Agreement

Creating Young Readers

Parent/Guardian Permission Form

Creating Young Readers is an exciting new program developed by Read for Literacy, Inc. to help young children be ready to read when they enter school. Research shows that children who are read to at an early age will do better when they get to school. *Creating Young Readers* has put together a group of volunteer readers who want to help your child succeed. *Child's preschool* has been a very important partner in the development of this program.

Your child has been identified through his or her Get It, Got It, Go! scores and teacher observations as a student who could benefit from *Creating Young* Readers. As a part of *Creating Young Readers*, your child will participate in three twenty minute *Creating Young Readers* sessions each week. He or she will enjoy listening to a new story each week and work on skills important for school success like rhyming, picture naming and letter sounds.

In accordance with state and federal laws, all *Creating Young Readers* Volunteers have completed background checks with the State of Ohio and Federal Government and are cleared to work with children. Each volunteer has attended training in the best ways to

read with young children as well as in safe and appropriate ways to interact with preschoolers.

Creating Young Readers is working with your child's teachers to make this experience positive and enriching in order to help your child prepare for kindergarten and the years beyond. In order for your child to participate we ask that you sign and return the form below by *due date.*

If you have any questions about how *Creating Young Readers* will be a part of your child's preschool experience, please feel free to contact Sara _____, *Creating Young Readers* Coordinator, at 419-242-7323 or *school's CYR contact*.

Date _____

I, _____ (your name) am the parent/guardian of _____ (your child's name)

and give my permission for my child to participate in *Creating Young Readers* and for *the preschool* staff to share my child's Get It, Go It, Go! scores with *Creating Young Readers* facilitators.

Signed _____

(Signature of Parent or Guardian)