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Graduate Studies

THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ON KINDERGARTENERS'
EARLY LITERACY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A Chapter Style Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Education Specialist

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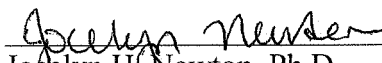
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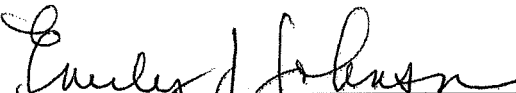
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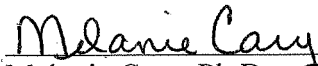
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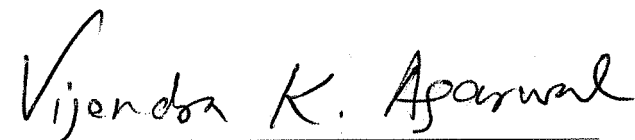

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ABSTRACT

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In 1990, the National Education Goals Panel developed eight goals, one of which identified the need for parental participation in a child's education. Both academic achievement and social skills have been identified as positive correlates with family involvement. The present study investigated the impact of family involvement on early literacy and social skills of kindergarten students. Kindergarten is an important year in a child's academic career, as both literacy and social skills continue to develop, enabling success in school. Family involvement encompassed three dimensions of involvement identified by Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2000): Home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing. Results of the study yielded a small to moderate relationship between school-based involvement and social skills development among kindergarteners, suggesting parent involvement within the school environment is important. However, results did not indicate a predictive relationship between any of the three dimensions of family involvement and early literacy or social development.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF APPENDICES	vii
CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW	1
Introduction	1
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Family Involvement and Academic Achievement.....	7
Parent Involvement in Homework	8
Parent Involvement and Academic Performance	9
Social Skills and Academic Achievement	12
Learning Related Social Skills.....	12
Summary of Literature	14
Statement of the Problem	16
Purpose and Significance of the Study	17
Objectives	17
Definitions of Terms	18
CHAPTER II: METHOD	20
Participants.....	20
Procedures	21
Instruments.....	22
Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	22
Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS)	23

Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ)	25
Hypotheses	26
CHAPTER III: RESULTS	27
Demographics	27
Main Analyses	30
CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION	33
Does family involvement relate to social skills development in Kindergarteners?	34
Is family involvement related to early literacy of development of Kindergarteners?	36
Which dimensions of family involvement are most predictive of early literacy and social skills development?	37
Other findings	37
Implications	38
Limitations and Future Directions.....	39
Conclusion	41
REFERENCES	43
APPENDICES	48

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Dimensions of Family Involvement.....	7
2. Family Demographic Information	28
3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Variables.....	29
4. Intercorrelations for Five Variables.....	31

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	PAGE
A. Informed Consent Form	48
B. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	50
C. Cover Letter for Teachers	53

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Children spend up to 87% of their time outside of school; therefore, parental involvement in a child's education both inside and outside of school has a significant impact (Callender & Hansen, n.d.). Prior to formal education, children develop skills through social learning (or watching others model specific skills); these emerging skills form the basis of a child's ability to succeed both academically and socially. Although research has been able to demonstrate the importance of the parental role in education (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, 2008; Bailey, 2006; Epstein, 1995; Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Jeynes, 2007; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004), a 2004 report from the National Center for Educational Statistics revealed family attendance at school-based events in poverty-stricken communities was less than 50% (Manz et al., 2004). In 1990, the National Education Goals Panel developed eight goals in an effort to provide an improved education system and address statistics such as these. Among the eight goals is one which identifies the need for parental participation in education. This goal suggests parent involvement must be increased through the promotion of school and family partnerships ("National Education Goals Panel", n.d.). This, in turn, will support the social, emotional, and academic development of children. ("Archived Information", n.d.).

The purpose of this study is to further extend current research on the relationship between family involvement and two important skill areas in early childhood: literacy and social skills. Both of these constructs have not been extensively examined within the research, although related areas have been connected to family involvement. Specifically, research shows that increased family involvement in a child's education positively impacts academic achievement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). However, literacy may be of particular importance as it is critical for future academic achievement. "Students in the bottom 25% of the reading continuum have a trajectory of progress that diverges early from their peers who have learned to read successfully" (DIBELS, 2009). By not learning to read, children will continue to struggle in school throughout their educational career. The National Reading Panel reviewed research to determine which literacy teaching methods were most effective and teaching phonemic awareness was found to be one of five major concepts required in a comprehensive reading program. Phonemic awareness is one's understanding that words and oral language are made up of individual sounds (Reutzel & Cooter, 2006, p.180). Phonemic awareness is essential to learning to read and has been found as a strong predictor in reading success (DIBELS, 2009).

Another area that is important to examine in relation to family involvement is social skills. Few studies have examined the impact family involvement can have on a child's social skills development. Similar to the influence family involvement has had on academic performance, social skills have been identified as a positive correlate with academic performance (McClelland, Acock, & Morrison, 2006). Thus studying the relationship between family involvement, early literacy, and social skills could help provide further insight into the importance of involving parents in their child's education.

Furthermore, this study will also investigate different aspects of family involvement, such as school-related home involvement and school involvement, to determine if there is evidence that involvement beyond the school context is also beneficial to social and academic skill development in kindergarten. This may encourage parents to become more involved at home if they are unable to participate at school.

Another important benefit of parental involvement in education is that it can potentially contribute to reducing the achievement gap among minority students in the United States (Jeynes, 2007). Since the kindergarten year is important in the development of several academic and social skills necessary to be successful throughout the remainder of a child's educational career, it is important to demonstrate the significance of family involvement in the early school years.

The minority achievement gap, most evident among cities which educate a diverse population of young students, may be narrowed by providing parents information about the positive impact participation in their child's education can have. The achievement gap has been defined by the U.S. Department of Education as "the difference in academic performance between different ethnic groups" (SEDL, 2009). The results of this study may help provide potential preventative interventions, including types of involvement parents can provide at home prior to formal schooling. This, in turn, may help in an effort to reduce the achievement gap.

Academic accomplishment and standardized achievement tests are shaping school culture in the United States (Osterman, 2000). As a result, expectations for kindergarten students' social and academic skills have risen (Angle, Porter, & Rhodes, 2007). Social skills are expected to be relatively well developed when students enter formal schooling

in the fall of their kindergarten year, as the learning standards are becoming more focused on academic outcomes with less emphasis on social skills. Unfortunately, for teachers who have students with underdeveloped social skills, more time may be spent dealing with disruptive behavior rather than formal academic instruction (Logue, 2007). When surveyed regarding essential characteristics of incoming kindergartners, teachers indicated that social and behavioral skills were particularly important. Specifically, 84% of teachers felt children needed to be able to verbally communicate their wants, needs, and thoughts, and 60% felt following directions, not being disruptive in class, and being sensitive to other students' feelings were important for incoming kindergarteners (Lewet & Baker, 1995). While these social skills represent only a few of the requisites to succeed in an educational setting, they were considered the most important to many kindergarten teachers.

Academically, not all schools require incoming kindergarten students to know numbers and letters, as this is traditionally part of kindergarten curriculum. However, a longitudinal study by the National Association of Education Statistics (2000) revealed that most incoming kindergarteners can recognize letters of the alphabet by name, both uppercase and lowercase. In addition, children can typically count to ten, identify simple geometric shapes, and recognize single-digit numbers (Zill & West, 2001). Therefore, many children enter kindergarten with some combination of academic and social skills already present. With the different combinations of skill sets of incoming kindergarten students, classes can be very heterogeneous. Recently, researchers have sought to determine how family involvement in a child's education can positively impact the

development of children's academic and social skills, ensuring all children possess necessary skills to succeed in school.

Theoretical Framework

Many scholars have attempted to delineate the impact and importance of family involvement in education. Epstein (1995) states, "If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school...If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and community as partners with the school in children's education and development." (p. 701). Many developmental theories indicate that several individuals impact children's development throughout their lifetime. One such theory is Albert Bandura's social learning theory. Bandura proposed that much learning is obtained through watching others, known more specifically as observational learning. A child watches his or her parent model a particular action or skill and then can learn to engage in the particular skill independently (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2004).

Parents influence their children's development through direct and indirect interaction. Directly, parents nurture, guide, and teach their children the skills necessary to be successful in life. In addition, the way in which parents interact with the world around them has an indirect influence on their children, as children are constantly watching parents as role models (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2004). Parents can further the growth of their child by fostering the development of academic and social skills necessary to be successful in school.

To illustrate the many factors, direct and indirect, that impact a person's development, Bronfenbrenner (1977) developed an ecological systems model. Like other ecological models, Bronfenbrenner's model (1977) suggests, "human development is inseparable from the environmental contexts in which a person develops" (Kail & Cavanaugh, p.21). The interconnected levels include people such as parents and friends, and other elements, such as the parent's social network and historical events. All of these can influence the child's development. However, the current proposed study will focus exclusively on the microsystem level, which is comprised of those closest to the child, especially the parents. The microsystem level includes both the home and school, suggesting that the interaction among people within this level could significantly influence the development of academic and social skills.

To specifically examine the interaction between the home and school components of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) microsystem, Epstein (1995) developed a classification framework to identify different ways families can be involved in their child's education. The framework consists of six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community.

To measure the family involvement constructs outlined by Epstein (1995), Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2000) worked with parents and teachers to develop a multivariate scale of family involvement. Epstein's model was discussed with parents and teachers to determine which constructs of the framework seemed most significant. Three factors were identified as being most relevant: home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing. Home-based involvement, in which parents provide opportunities for their child to learn outside of school, most closely relates to

learning at home. School-based involvement is identified as parental involvement within the school community, such as volunteering. Finally, home-school conferencing is much like communicating, focusing on the interaction between teachers or other school personnel and home (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on Fantuzzo et al.'s (2000) framework of family involvement.

Table 1

Dimensions of Family Involvement

Dimensions of Family Involvement (Fantuzzo, et al., 2000)	Description
School-Based Involvement	Activities in which parents participate within the school community such as through volunteering and fundraising.
Home-Based Involvement	Opportunities that promote learning which are provided at home or within the community.
Home-School Conferencing	Communication between families and school personnel regarding the child's education.

Family Involvement and Academic Achievement

Currently, there are many studies that have examined the impact of family involvement on academic outcomes across various age levels (Arnold et al., 2008; Bailey, 2006; Epstein, 1995; Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2004; Jeynes, 2007; Manz et al., 2004; Van Voorhis, 2003). Findings are strong and consistent suggesting that parental involvement is beneficial for the child and his or her academic success. Using Fantuzzo et al.'s (2000) framework for parent involvement, several

questions have been addressed regarding the impact family involvement can have on a child's academic outcomes. Notably, many researchers have focused on home-based involvement through studying parental involvement in homework.

Parental Involvement in Homework

An important component of parent involvement is the role parents play in helping or assisting their children with the completion of homework assignments. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) conducted an extensive literature review of parental involvement in student homework examining a variety of ages ranging from first grade through high school students. Based on this review, it appears that parental participation in homework positively impacts academic outcomes. Children can learn from their parents' modeling of appropriate skills, attitudes, and knowledge as well as receive feedback and reinforcement (Hoover-Dempsey et al.). Modeling was found to be particularly powerful depending on the child's perception of the parent and his or her abilities. In addition to modeling appropriate behaviors and skills, parents who participate in their child's homework are opening up the opportunity to teach their child through explaining new information and answering the child's questions. Reinforcement is a very powerful consequence associated with a behavior, likely resulting in the behavior being maintained. This review suggests that if parents use positive reinforcement, children are likely to continue making an effort to engage in their homework thus creating good homework completion patterns. The findings from this review provide evidence that home-based involvement, through activities such as homework, can positively impact students' academic performance (Hoover-Dempsey et al.). Homework may look different in kindergarten, being more accurately described as assisting the child in learning their

basic math and reading facts by practicing identifying numbers, letters, shapes, etc. However, although “homework” may look different in these young children, the influence of parental involvement at home may be similar.

In addition to examining the impact of parental involvement on homework, there is interest in identifying the types of homework which can facilitate the interaction between parents and children. Bailey (2006) examined how parent training programs, designed to facilitate parent-child interaction during homework, impacts student reading ability, using children in grades three through nine. These workshops, which taught parents how to facilitate interaction during homework, in concurrence with interactive homework assignments provided by teachers, were related to an increase in students’ reading skills. Van Voorhis (2003) also observed the impact of interactive homework on student achievement for students in sixth and eighth grade. Both interactive homework models encouraged increased family involvement, but only for the subject in which it was provided. Involvement was not as high for subjects in which the interactive homework was not provided. Although the contexts of these studies differ from the current study, in that kindergarten classrooms often do not have the typical homework assignments upper grades would, this study may elucidate the need for more teacher-directed opportunities for home-based involvement in kindergarten.

Parental Involvement and Academic Performance

While much research has focused on the influence of home-based involvement through homework, Jeynes (2007) sought to provide further insight into other areas of involvement by conducting a meta-analysis, consisting of 52 studies, specifically looking

at the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement of secondary students in an urban setting. These results suggested that parental involvement has similar outcomes across diverse populations, including urban and minority children. In addition, it seemed that although school programs developed to increase parental involvement are successful, voluntary parental involvement has a stronger impact on academic outcomes among children in secondary school. Implications of this finding may suggest that schools must attempt to not only provide opportunities for parental involvement, but must also make such opportunities appealing to parents. Furthermore, Jeynes's analysis revealed that all facets of parental involvement have a positive relationship with academic outcomes, even in subtle aspects such as parenting style and expectations. Parent style and expectations were found to have a greater impact on student outcomes as compared to parental participation and attendance; however, all of these aspects of involvement had an impact on student's grades (Jeynes).

Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, and Childs (2004) expanded research on the three dimensions of parental involvement described by Fantuzzo et al. (2000) (home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing). Specifically, Fantuzzo et al. further examined the differential relationships between the three dimensions and early childhood outcomes. It was hypothesized that the dimension that would have the strongest relationship to learning outcomes for students would be home-based involvement. Using 144 predominantly African American preschool children, Fantuzzo et al. concluded that the different dimensions of family involvement have varying relationships on early childhood outcomes. Home-based involvement was found to be related to decreased levels of behavior problems within the classroom. The

implications of such a finding could potentially lead to the inference that home-based involvement impacts social development, which could then result in decreased problem behaviors within the school environment (McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000).

Arnold et al. (2008) investigated the influence of family involvement among early childhood students, specifically assessing the relationship between parent involvement and preliteracy development among preschool students. Using standardized vocabulary and academic skills assessments for measures of preliteracy development, Arnold et al. found parent preschool involvement was positively related to children's preliteracy development. Teachers rated the extent of involvement among different families, rather than using the parents' perception of involvement. Arnold et al. argued that further research in preschool and early childhood is necessary because essential skills emerge during this time period.

Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, and Bradley (2003), also examined the relationship between family involvement and the academic and social success of children. Specifically, the authors asked kindergarten teachers to rate family involvement using the *Parent and Teacher Involvement Measure* (Conduct Problems Research Group, 1995). This measure dichotomized family involvement into attitude questions, which provided insight into how the teacher perceived each families' feelings about the education the child was receiving, and activity questions, which asked questions regarding the parents' actual involvement in school activities (Rimm-Kaufman et al.). Using a primarily Caucasian sample of kindergarten students, results suggested that more family involvement was correlated with increased school competency, increased math and language arts achievement, and increased social interactions with peers. Furthermore,

Rimm-Kaufman et al. found that parent attitudes toward a child's education may be more important than family involvement in activities since teacher's ratings of family attitudes was a more consistent predictor of a child's behavior competency.

Social Skills and Academic Achievement

Social skills also show a strong correlation to academic achievement (McClelland et al., 2006). Social development helps children function within the school environment, performing tasks such as complying with teacher requests, cooperating with others, and following classroom routines (Logue, 2007). Since social skills are lifelong skills, they are an important aspect of a child's development. Therefore, it is imperative that further research identify the extent to which family involvement impacts social skills development. School-based social behaviors, otherwise known as appropriate learning-related social skills (i.e. listening to and following directions), are a specific subset of social skills that appear to be particularly important in contributing to success in school (McClelland et al., 2006). McClelland et al. (2000) identified several problems, including peer rejection, behavior problems, and low academic achievement that can result from a students' lack of learning-related social skills.

Learning-Related Social Skills

Learning-related social skills are distinct from other aspects of social behavior. McClelland et al. (2000) identified learning-related social skills as a combination of both interpersonal skills and work-related skills. Although interpersonal skills include interaction with others such as cooperative play or sharing, work-related skills include behaviors necessary for learning in school, such as following directions or being able to

take turns in a group. (McClelland et al.). Learning-related social skills promote future academic success as they “‘set the stage’ ...by providing the foundation for positive classroom behavior” (p. 309).

McClelland and Morrison (2003) examined the emergence of learning-related social skills in preschool children. This study discussed the practical implications of understanding learning-related social skills in preschool children. The purpose was to help understand the construct of learning-related social skills, specifically when these skills emerge and how early differences in children’s skills can be distinguished. Using a population from six preschools, children’s learning-related social skills were assessed. Results suggest preschool children can have varying levels of learning-related social skills, with the construct being more developed in some children. Because the transition into kindergarten can be difficult for some students, especially those who have not had the opportunity to be a part of a structured environment such as preschool, it is important that both parents and teachers help children develop the necessary learning-related social skills to succeed in school (McClelland et al.)

In supporting the influence learning-related social skills can have on academic outcomes, McClelland, Acock, and Morrison (2006) conducted a study to better understand the relationship between learning-related social skills in kindergarten and elementary school academic progress, specifically in the areas of reading and math. Participants in the longitudinal study included 260 children between kindergarten and sixth grade, to determine how the learning-related social skills children have in kindergarten can influence success in reading and math throughout elementary school. In analyzing the children’s learning-related social skills, it was found that these skills are

predictive of academic development throughout elementary school. Kindergarten learning-related social skills predicted growth in both reading and math from kindergarten to second grade. Specifically, children who were rated as having higher learning-related social skills in kindergarten demonstrated significantly more reading and math growth than children who had lower rated learning related social skills over the course of kindergarten through second grade. Subsequently, examination of these two groups of children from third through sixth grade revealed that this discrepancy continued, but did not increase. These findings support those of McClelland et al.'s (2000) earlier study which found that learning-related skills in kindergarten were predictive of academic achievement at the end of second grade. The results of these two studies suggest a greater importance for social skills, specifically learning-related skills development in early childhood in relation to academic achievement in school.

As previous research has demonstrated, family involvement is positively related to academic achievement in children. In addition, social skills development has been found to be related to academic achievement. Research from the present study will provide evidence regarding the influence of family involvement on the development of social skills and providing a common link between the three variables.

Summary of Literature

Family involvement in education seems to be a particularly strong predictor of academic outcomes among children. Another significant predictor of academic performance is social skills. It is necessary for students to possess learning-related social skills such as verbally communicating wants or needs and listening to and following

directions. Research regarding the influence of family involvement on academic outcomes has focused on students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and age ranges; however, there is still a need for research among early childhood populations (Arnold et al., 2008). The emerging skills young children develop early in their life are highly influenced by their parents or other primary caregivers as most of their time is spent with these individuals (Callender & Hansen, n.d.).

While Epstein's (1995) framework of family involvement focused on six types of involvement, Fantuzzo et al. (2000) narrowed the classification down to three types of involvement: home-based, school-based, and home-school conferencing. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) suggest home-based involvement can impact students' academic success. This dimension of involvement has been found to have the strongest relationship on early childhood outcomes (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Furthering the research on family involvement in homework, Jeynes (2007) focused his research on older students in secondary education settings, finding that parental involvement does positively influence academic outcomes among students from various backgrounds. Little research has focused on the impact of family involvement on academic outcomes for younger ages, specifically early childhood. Arnold et al. (2008) indicated further examination is necessary as they found that early pre-literacy development was positively related to family involvement.

While family involvement has been deemed a significant predictor of academic performance, especially at older levels, social skills have also been positively correlated with academic outcomes. Specifically, learning-related social skills have been related to academic development in preschool (Arnold et al., 2008; McClelland et al., 2003;

McClelland et al., 2006). Positive academic trajectories have been associated with social skills in early elementary school children, particularly with math and reading skills (McClelland et al., 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers and parents must understand the various ways in which parents can be involved in their child's education, as well as the implications of such involvement. For teachers, recognizing opportunities to include parents in their child's education through home-based as well as school-based activities may help alleviate the low involvement some school communities experience due to various barriers. Researchers have identified several barriers to family involvement in education, including: limited skills and knowledge of teachers in how to effectively collaborate with parents and families, psychological and cultural barriers, and restricted opportunities for involvement (Morris & Taylor, 1998). Other potential barriers to family involvement might include schedules and transportation. Additionally, if parents had a negative experience as students in school, they may be hesitant to participate and be a part of their child's education (Padgett, 2006). Finally, socioeconomic status is an identified barrier of family involvement, in that parents from low socioeconomic status are less involved in the school than families from high socioeconomic status (Jeter-Twilley, Legum, & Norton, 2007). These factors are important to consider in a school's planning toward family involvement so that parents can become partners in improving children's educational outcomes.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

While current literature supports the notion that family involvement is an important aspect of a child's education, the purpose of this study is to further extend research on the influence family involvement has on early literacy and social skills development of kindergarten students. This study will analyze the relationship between family involvement, early literacy skills, and social skills to gain further insight regarding the importance of including parents in their child's education and development. Kindergarten is an important year in a child's academic career, as several academic and social skills are developed which enable to succeed in school; thus, it is necessary to further study the significance of family involvement on these constructs in these early school years.

Objectives

In understanding the significant positive role family involvement has in student academic performance, this study examines family involvement in kindergarten in relation to early literacy and social skills development. This study will focus on the following objectives: (a) Does family involvement relate to social skills development in kindergarten students? (b) Does family involvement relate to early literacy development of kindergarten students? (c) Which factors of family involvement described by Fantuzzo et al. (2000) including home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing, are most predictive of early literacy and social skills development of kindergarten students?

Definition of Terms

Several terms that are important in the consideration of this topic include family involvement, social skills, and early literacy skills.

Family involvement has been defined as parental participation in a child's educational experience (Jeynes, 2007). It has been conceptualized by Fantuzzo et al. (2000) as three different constructs including school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school conferencing.

School-based involvement includes parental activities in the school context such as volunteering in classrooms or participating in parent-teacher conferencing (Fantuzzo et al., 2000).

Home-based involvement is defined as family members creating opportunities which promote learning within the home and community such as providing materials for homework or visiting the library (Fantuzzo et al., 2000).

Home-school conferencing encompasses various forms of contact between families and school staff, including conferences, telephone conversations, and notes (Fantuzzo et al., 2000).

Social skills are "learned behaviors that promote positive interactions while simultaneously discouraging negative interactions when applied to appropriate social situations" (Gresham and Elliott, 2008, p. 1).

Learning-related social skills are behaviors specific to school such as following directions, participating appropriately in groups, and cooperating with others (McClelland et al., 2006).

Early literacy skills in this study are defined as kindergarten students' phonological awareness as measured by the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) subtest of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

Phonological awareness is one's ability to understand that oral language and words are comprised of individual letter sounds (Reutzel & Cooter, 2007, p. 180). Students must demonstrate this understanding by correctly segmenting three- and four-phoneme words into their individual phonemes on the PSF subtest of DIBELS.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Research has demonstrated the positive impact of parent involvement in a child's education. However, further research is necessary to provide more insight into the relations between family involvement and students' academic and social skills development. The development of emerging academic and social skills in early childhood is crucial for future successes; therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the influence family involvement can have on the development of such skills in kindergarten.

Participants

Participants for this study were taken from three elementary schools in two different school districts in Wisconsin. In total, seven classroom teachers volunteered to participate. All schools are located in small rural communities with limited racial and cultural diversity. Demographic information was collected from participating families including: Relationship to the kindergarten student, primary language, ethnic identity, age, highest degree of education obtained, marital status, household income, how many children attend school in the household, and how many children began attending school prior to the current kindergartener.

Procedures

Initial approval for this study was sought from the UW – La Crosse Institutional Review Board (IRB) and participating schools. After approval, a consent form was sent home to all families (Appendix A) informing them of the purpose and requisites to the study. In addition to the consent form, the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ; Perry, Fantuzzo, and Munis, 2002) and a demographic questionnaire were sent home to be completed by parents. It was determined that family involvement should not be measured at the beginning of the year because of the lack of opportunities for involvement prior to the start of the academic year for kindergarten parents. Parents of older students may generalize their involvement to their younger students; however, it is assumed that parents of a first child attending school would not have had as many opportunities to participate in their child's education. For this reason, forms were sent home in December.

Upon return of the consent form and additional forms, the Social Skills Improvement Scale (SSIS; Gresham and Elliot, 2008), was given to the kindergarten teachers to complete for each student whose parents provided consent. In addition, the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) was administered to students, a typical classroom assessment procedure at the targeted schools. The Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) score from the winter benchmark assessment was obtained for the purposes of measuring students' early literacy skills.

Instruments

Four instruments were used for the purpose of this study including a measure of early literacy skills, a social skills scale, a questionnaire evaluating family involvement, and a demographic questionnaire.

Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills

To assess early literacy skills of kindergarten students, data from curriculum based measures were obtained. This data included results from the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The purpose of DIBELS is to measure early literacy indicators predictive of later reading proficiency. DIBELS can be given three times a year, in the fall, winter, and spring, for students in kindergarten through sixth grade. DIBELS probes are one minute assessments which monitor early reading skills, and are intended to determine whether sufficient progress is being made in a particular skill area by testing students on the same material throughout the year. Benchmark goals are minimum levels of performance which students should attain in order to have the ability to read. By using benchmark scores, as well as comparing students to others in his or her class, teachers have the ability to identify students who struggle with early literacy skills. This allows teachers to target intensive instruction on those skills which are less developed (“DIBELS Data System,” n.d.). DIBELS measures have been researched and have been found to have good reliability and validity. Further descriptions of the subtests given to kindergarteners can be found in Appendix B.

The National Reading Panel identified five main ideas in early literacy: phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Phonemic awareness helps children blend sounds of letters into words and has been found to be a strong predictor of early reading success in children (“DIBELS Measures,” n.d.). For the purposes of this study, the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) subtest of DIBELS, which measures phonemic awareness, will be used. The technical adequacy of the PSF subtest has been well documented (“DIBELS Measures,” n.d.).

Social Skills Improvement System

To measure social skills of kindergarten students, the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS; Gresham and Elliot, 2008) was administered. The SSIS is a revision of the Social Skills Rating System (Gresham and Elliott, 1990). The SSIS is used as an assessment measure of three domains: social skills, problem behaviors, and academic competence. For the purpose of this study, only the social skills domain was used.

The SSIS can be used to screen for problem behaviors and identify students who may be at-risk for social deficits or poor academic performance, identify the progression of social skills as a result of an intervention, identify social skill strengths, and track progress of social behavior development (Gresham and Elliott, 2008). These scales are used for children and adolescents ages 3-18. The SSIS assesses seven subdomains within social skills: communication, cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, engagement, and self-control.

The SSIS rating scales have three forms: teacher, parent, and student. For the teacher and parent forms, raters must indicate the frequency of a particular social skill or problem behavior. The frequency is measured on a 4-point Likert scale of *Never*, *Seldom*, *Often*, and *Almost Always*. Raters must also indicate the importance of each social skill

using a 3-point Likert scale of *Not Important*, *Important*, and *Critical*. The administration of the SSIS takes approximately 15-20 minutes for the rater to complete (Gresham and Elliott, 2008). The teacher form was utilized for this study as a measure of kindergarteners' social skills mid-year.

The reliability and validity of the SSIS is well documented. To examine reliability, authors reported internal consistency, test-retest, and interrater reliability. The internal consistency reliability of the Social Skills scale was high, with a coefficient alpha in the mid- to upper .90s. For test-retest reliability, individuals were rated twice by the same teacher. The correlations between the two ratings ranged from .68 to .86. Interrater reliability measures the consistency of scores across two raters rating the same individual. For the teacher form of interrater reliability, the individual was rated two different teachers. The interrater reliability coefficients ranged from .36 to .69.

Validity was also found to be good for the SSIS. Examination of internal validity reports included in the SSIS manual indicates that the intercorrelations of the Social Skills scale and Problem Behaviors scale is moderate and negative. Coefficients range from -.42 to -.65. Among Social Skills subscales, correlations are positive and moderate to high. The SSIS was also correlated with other established measures of social skills: Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; $r = .75$), Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition Adaptive Behavior Scale (BASC-2; $r = .78$), and Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Second Edition (Vineland-II; $r = .67$) (Gresham and Elliott, 2008).

Family Involvement Questionnaire

To measure the construct of family involvement in a child's education, the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ; Perry, Fantuzzo, and Munis, 2002) was used. The purpose of the FIQ is to provide a measure of a family's involvement in their child's education based on three dimensions of involvement as defined by Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2000). The three dimensions of family involvement include: school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school conferencing. The measure contains 42 items encompassing these domains, answered on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *rarely*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *often*, 4 = *always*). The measure takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. The school-based involvement dimension measures family involvement in within-school activities (volunteering, fundraising, etc.), and includes items such as "I attend parent workshops or trainings offered by my child's school" or "I volunteer in my child's classroom." The home-based involvement domain measures a parent's provision of learning opportunities at home or within the community, and includes items such as "I take my child places in the community to learn special things" or "I spend time with my child working on reading/writing skills." Last, the home-school conferencing scale measures communication between school personnel and families and includes statements such as "I talk to my child's teacher about my child's accomplishments."

The reliability and validity of the FIQ is well documented. All three constructs have been found reliable. The internal consistency measured with Cronbach's alpha: School-based involvement (.85), Home-based involvement (.85), Home-school conferencing (.81) (Perry et al., 2002).

Hypotheses

H1: A positive relationship between family involvement and social skills development among kindergarten students will exist. Students' whose families report higher family involvement in their education will have higher social skills.

H2: A positive relationship between family involvement and early literacy skills among kindergarten students will exist. Higher family involvement will be related to higher literacy skills.

H3: In kindergarten, home-based involvement will be most strongly predictive of social skills development and literacy skills as compared to school-based involvement and home-school conferencing.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The current study was designed to further examine the impact of family involvement on kindergarten students' social skills and literacy development. Previous research suggests that family involvement positively impacts a child's education; therefore it was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between family involvement and both social skills and literacy development. Furthermore, based on relevant research, it was hypothesized that, of the three dimensions of family involvement measured (home-based, school-based, and home-school conferencing), home-based involvement would be most strongly predictive of kindergarteners' social skills and literacy development scores.

Demographics

Parents/guardians completed a demographic questionnaire to describe their family characteristics. A total of 123 families received letters of consent, sixty families provided consent and completed the FIQ, and 53 participants were used for analyses after deleting cases with missing data (43.1% of the target sample). Table 1 provides a summary of demographic information describing the families of students in the study. Of the respondents, the majority identified themselves as a mother (approximately 89%), about 9 percent identified as a father and about 1 percent "other." Approximately 98 percent of

the children and families participating in the study were Caucasian and reported English as their native language. Only one family identified themselves as Hispanic and reported Spanish as their native language.

Table 2

Family Demographic Information (N = 53)

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Highest Level of Education		
Grammar school	1	1.9
High school or equivalent	9	17.0
Vocational/technical	14	26.4
Some college	9	17.0
Bachelor's degree	11	20.8
Master's degree	6	11.3
Doctoral degree	1	1.9
Professional degree	2	3.8
Marital Status		
Single	4	7.5
Married	45	84.9
Divorced	2	3.8
Separated	1	1.9
Widowed	1	1.9
Current Household Income		
Under \$10,000	1	1.9
\$10,000-\$19,999	4	7.5
\$20,000-\$29,999	1	1.9
\$30,000-\$39,999	6	11.3
\$40,000-\$49,999	6	11.3
\$50,000-\$74,999	12	22.6
\$75,000-\$99,999	9	17.0
Over \$100,000	8	15.1
Rather Not Say	6	11.3

The means, standard deviation, and range for participant scores on the five study variables are summarized in Table 2. FIQ scores are converted to standard T-scores, with

a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. T-scores that fall between 40 and 60 are considered average, meaning most caregivers completing this questionnaire would obtain a score within this range for each dimension of involvement. As the range of scores across the three dimensions demonstrates (Table 2), the sampled population of caregivers reported their involvement in all three dimensions to be within the average range.

SSIS scores are reported as standard scores with a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 15. The mean for scores of kindergarteners in this sample was in the high average range ($M = 114.34$). The standard deviation of this sample for the SSIS ($SD = 12.34$), when compared to the standard deviation for the measure overall ($SD = 15$) suggests a restriction of range. Taken together with the high average mean, this indicates that this sample of students was perceived as having social skills higher than what would be expected.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Variables

Variable	M	SD	Range
SSIS Standard Score	114.34	12.34	77-129
PSF Score	33.94	16.98	0-63
FIQ Home-Based	44.96	7.69	26-67
FIQ School-Based	45.89	7.78	28-60
FIQ Conferencing	46.30	9.19	10-70

Note: Average score for SSIS is 100, SD of 15. Average score for FIQ dimensions is 45, SD of 10. Average score for PSF varies based on district.

Main Analyses

The main purpose of this study was to examine whether reported family involvement in the three dimensions of home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing, were predictive of kindergarten students' social skills and early literacy development. Prior to conducting main analyses, correlations among the variables were computed (see Table 3). Several significant correlations were found. Based on this analysis, the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) score and Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) standard score had a significant positive correlation, $r(53) = .429, p < .01$. This suggests that students who obtained a higher score on the PSF subtest of the DIBELS were likely to be perceived by their teachers as having more developed social skills as reported on the SSIS rating scale. There was also a significant positive correlation between the students' SSIS Standard score and FIQ School Involvement, $r(53) = .272, p < .05$. This means that students' whose teacher perceived them as having more developed social skills as reported on the SSIS rating scale were likely to have their parent/guardian report more school involvement.

The subscales of the FIQ (FIQ School Involvement, FIQ Home Involvement, and FIQ Conferencing) were all significantly positively correlated with one another. This suggests that parents were likely to rate themselves similarly across the three dimensions of this scale.

Table 4

Intercorrelations for Five Variables (N = 53)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. PSF Score	--	.429**	.076	.001	-.016
2. SSIS Score	--	--	.272*	-.135	-.055
3. FIQ School-Based	--	--	--	.339*	.476**
4. FIQ Home- Based	--	--	--	--	.381**
5. FIQ Conferencing	--	--	--	--	--

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Following the correlation analyses, a multivariate multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if family involvement, as defined by Fantuzzo et al.'s (2000) three dimensions of home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing, predicts kindergarten students' social skills and literacy development. This analysis was chosen because it is recommended in cases where the dependent variables are statistically related (Tabachnick, 2007).

The independent variables for this analysis are the three domains of family involvement, school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school conferencing, as reported by the students' parent/guardian on the FIQ (Perry et. al, 2002).

The dependent variables are the teacher-rated SSIS standard score and the DIBELS PSF subtest score. The means and standard deviations of the variables can be found in Table 2. This combination of variables (the three domains of family involvement) did not significantly predict social skills or literacy development in kindergarten students, Wilks' $\Lambda = .84$, $F(6, 96) = 1.5$, $p = .186$.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the influence of family involvement on kindergarten students' literacy and social skills development. Both family involvement and social skills have been identified separately in previous research as being influential factors in student academic achievement. The goal of the current study was to examine all three variables together to identify the relationship between family involvement, literacy and social skills development, specifically among kindergarten students.

Participants of the study included 53 kindergarten students' families and seven kindergarten classroom teachers from schools located in western and central regions of Wisconsin. All teachers voluntarily participated in the study after approval was granted by the school. A consent form, demographic questionnaire, and the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) (Perry et al., 2002) were sent to all students' families via the classroom teacher. When consent forms and questionnaires were completed and returned, respective teachers completed the Social Skills Rating Scale (SSIS; Gresham and Elliott, 2008).

Three research questions were formulated to guide this study examining the relationships among literacy, social skills, and family involvement. In the following sections, these three questions are reviewed in light of the findings of this study.

Does family involvement relate to social skills development in kindergarteners?

The first objective of this study was to determine whether family involvement related to social skills development of kindergarten students. Results from correlational analyses indicated school-based involvement, as measured by the FIQ (Perry et al., 2002), was significantly and positively correlated with students' social skills development as measured by the SSIS (Gresham and Elliot, 2008). This suggests that students whose parent/guardian reported having increased school involvement (i.e. participating in school fundraising activities, volunteering in a classroom, or attending conferences) were likely to also be perceived by their kindergarten teacher as having higher social skills.

As several learning theories have proposed, children often learn through observing those around them. Directly and indirectly, parents teach their children how to appropriately act in various situations (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2004). As these results may suggest, the way parents interact with their child's school through school-based involvement may indirectly teach and model for the child how to appropriately act within the school context. Although it was hypothesized that home-based involvement would be the most strongly related to social skills development, results from this study indicated no significant relationship between these two variables. This may be due to the fact that, within the school context, it is more important for students to see first-hand their parent's

prosocial behavior within the school rather than being taught at home. It is possible that this better allows children to generalize the behaviors they have learned within the appropriate setting.

Parental and school expectations may be another important factor in these findings. In a review of related literature, Jeynes (2007) reported that expectations can have a positive impact on student academic outcomes. Although this particular study used secondary students, expectations may also be an influencing factor among younger children, specifically in kindergarten. Similar to academic outcomes, it may be that parental expectations for their child's school behavior impacts whether children develop appropriate learning-related skills prior to entering kindergarten. Specifically, when parents have expectations for their child that are similar to what will be expected within the school setting, and they therefore teach and model these skills, learning-related skills are more likely to be present upon entering school. School-based involvement may facilitate a better understanding of the expectations held by the school. For parents who are actively involved within their kindergartener's classroom and school, it may be more likely the parent will understand what is expected of their child socially, within the school setting, thus being able to encourage such behaviors as well as model them at home. Arnold et al. (2009) stated that parents who are involved in their child's education are likely to be more knowledgeable about school activities, possibly resulting in being able to "complement classroom learning" (p. 77).

Is family involvement related to early literacy development of kindergarteners?

Next, the study examined whether family involvement was related to early literacy development of kindergarten students. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between family involvement and early literacy skills among kindergarten students, as measured by the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) subtest of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The hypothesis was not supported as there was no significant relationship among any of the three dimensions of family involvement (home-based, school-based, and home-school conferencing) and kindergarten students' PSF scores. These findings conflict with previous research indicating that family involvement is significantly related to academic performance (Arnold et al, 2008; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2003). Arnold et al. (2008) found parent involvement was positively associated with preliteracy development among preschool children. Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2003) also found a positive correlation between family involvement and academic achievement, specifically in math and language arts. Although results of the current study do not support previous research, it is important that family involvement still be encouraged as it may have a direct or indirect impact on children's academic skills in later years.

Previous longitudinal studies have demonstrated that learning-related social skills predict development of academic skills over the course of kindergarten through 2nd grade (McClelland et al., 2000; McClelland et al., 2006). It may be that the relationship between family involvement and literacy skills is similar in that it happens over time, and therefore was not yet evident in this study. This leads to implications for future research, which will be discussed later within this chapter.

Which dimensions of family involvement are most predictive of early literacy and social skills development?

The final objective of the current study was to determine whether the dimensions of family involvement were predictive of early literacy and social skills development of kindergarten students. It was hypothesized that home-based involvement would be most strongly predictive of social skills and literacy skills development as compared to the other two dimensions. However, based on the Multivariate Multiple Regression conducted, none of the three dimensions of family involvement significantly predicted the literacy or social skills variables. This may be due to the idea that this is a longitudinal relationship, thus future researchers must continue to investigate whether a predictive relationship exists between various dimensions of family involvement and literacy and social skills.

Other Findings

In addition to findings related to the primary objectives of the study, results indicated kindergarten students' early literacy skills were significantly correlated with their social skills. This suggests that students who obtained a higher score on the PSF subtest of the DIBELS were likely to be perceived by their teachers as having better developed social skills as reported on the SSIS rating scale. These findings are consistent with McClelland et al. (2006), who also found learning-related social skills to be a strong correlate to academic achievement. Learning-related social skills are necessary to promote future academic success. Kindergarteners whose learning-related skills are more developed, such as being able to follow directions or participate in groups, are likely able

to engage more with academically oriented tasks (including acquisition of early literacy skills) more than students who lack appropriate learning-related social skills. Rather than having to be re-directed or taught how to appropriately act within the classroom setting, students with developed skills are able to focus on the instruction.

Implications

Based on the results of this study, it does not appear as though any of the dimensions of family involvement predict children's social and literacy skills. However, it does appear through extensive research, that family involvement is an important aspect of a child's education that must be supported. Correlational analyses from this study demonstrated a positive, significant relationship between school-based family involvement and social skills in addition to a positive, significant relationship between social skills and literacy development. It may be that the mediating factor between family involvement and literacy is social skills. More specifically, future research may find that at young ages, dimensions of family involvement (such as school-based involvement) influence social skills, which in turn is predictive of academic achievement (and literacy) in later years. It is important that future research be longitudinal in order to examine the influence of family involvement over the course of the educational career.

Because school-based involvement appears to be significantly related to social skills development, school administrators should place further emphasis on increasing parental involvement within the school setting. Barrera and Warner (2006) described three components essential to programs successful in involving families within the educational setting: climate, collaboration, and communication. Schools must create a

welcoming and positive school climate which will foster a positive relationship and encourage involvement. Open communication between the school and home is essential to promoting a positive partnership between families and schools. Communication should be both ways, in that teachers as well as parents feel comfortable communicating with each other regarding the child's education and development. Last, the school must promote collaboration by including families and community organizations to help improve the school and home environments. Schools should strive to ensure these three components are present, which could potentially improve family involvement within the school setting.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study did have some limitations that must be discussed. First, the sample was limited in its diversity and size. Because of limited diversity, the findings of this study may not generalize to a more heterogeneous population. The participants of this study came from small rural communities, and approximately 98% were Caucasian. In addition, most of the participants came from families of middle to upper socioeconomic status. As Padgett (2006) found, socioeconomic status can influence family involvement in a child's education, particularly within the domain of school-based involvement. Specifically, Padgett found that parents from lower socioeconomic status had less involvement in their child's school than those from higher socioeconomic status. Further research should strive to include a more diverse sample including more variety in socioeconomic status to determine if similar results would be found. Related to the lack of diversity in socioeconomic status, the sample obtained for this study also had relatively high education status. The majority of respondents identified themselves as mothers with

several having attended secondary education. Marks (2008) findings were consistent with previous research that states mother's education and student achievement are related. This suggests findings may not generalize to a population with more variability in terms of education and socioeconomic status levels.

Furthermore, there was a limited sample size, with only 53 participants included in the final analyses. To increase generalizeability, future research should include kindergarten families from larger, urban districts which would most likely have a more diverse population of students in terms of race and socioeconomic status.

Another limitation to the current study is that family involvement was measured through a self-report questionnaire. The parent/guardian completing the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ; Perry et al., 2002) may have an inaccurate perception of their involvement, which is true of any self-report measure. Furthermore, because teachers were chosen to rate kindergarten students' social skills, there may be the potential to rate all students similar on the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS; Gresham and Elliot, 2008). Teachers were chosen (as compared to parents) to rate students' social skills. It was assumed they could more objectively rate the kindergarteners' skills because they are able to compare to other students in the class. However, teachers had to complete several SSIS scales on multiple children in their class, and therefore may have had difficulty not rating all children similarly or positively in the skills they present within the classroom. The mean social skills score (as measured by the SSIS) was in the high average range. Specifically, the mean of the measure is 100 (SD = 15) and the mean for this study was 114 (SD = 12.34). It may also be that the sample chosen for the current study and the families that gave consent actually have higher

functioning children. In looking at the demographics of the sample used, the majority of students were from families in which the parents were married and the majority of parents had at least completed high school. McClelland et al. (2000) found that children with poor work-related skills were more likely to come from families who were single-mother households and lower education levels. Because this was not the case for the current study, it is possible that the children used for this study are higher functioning in their learning-related social skills.

Future researchers should continue to investigate the ways in which family involvement can positively influence children's academic and social development. In addition to needing to examine these variables longitudinally, future researchers could also extend this study to include a more heterogeneous population by including children from urban and suburban schools. Future research may also choose to use other measures of literacy skills besides the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Phoneme Segmentation Fluency subtest. With a larger sample, more variables could have been used in the analysis, potentially using other DIBELS subtests. Literacy skills could also be measured using curriculum based assessments already being administered within a particular school setting. In addition, other forms of social skills measurement could be utilized.

Conclusion

It is imperative that teachers and parents understand the implications of family involvement on children's success academically. In an effort to inform parents and teachers of the importance of such involvement, the present study examined the impact of

family involvement on early literacy skills and social skills development, specifically in kindergarten students. The findings of the present study suggest school-based involvement is positively correlated with social skills development in kindergarteners, and as such, teachers and schools should strive to involve families within the school environment. Furthermore, social skills development was positively correlated with literacy development, suggesting it is important that teachers focus on social skills in addition to academic skills in kindergarten to help promote later academic success. It may be important for teachers to consciously model and teach the skills they expect their kindergarten students to exhibit. Future research should continue to explore the impact family involvement has on learning-related social skills and literacy development in kindergarten students, including observing the relationship longitudinally.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Protocol Title: The Influence of Family Involvement on Kindergarteners' Early Literacy and Social Development.

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- Purpose and Procedure
 - The purpose of this study is to gain a further understanding of the influence family involvement in education, specifically in the kindergarten year, can have on a student's early literacy as well as social skills development.
 - Participation will require me to complete two questionnaires as measures of perceived family involvement and my child's social skills development.
 - By participating in the study, I also provide the investigator access to my child's academic assessment results on the DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency subtest.
- Potential Risks
 - There are no foreseen risks involved in this study.
- Rights & Confidentiality
 - My participation is voluntary.
 - I can withdraw from this study at any time for any reason without penalty.
 - The results of this study may be published, using group data only.
 - All information will be held confidential, with no names attached to the data collected. Rather than names, number codes will be used to help ensure confidentiality is maintained.
- Possible benefits
 - Gaining a better understanding of the influence family involvement has on a child's education.
 - Providing teachers with the knowledge of the influence family involvement has on a child's education, which will allow them to provide opportunities for family involvement if necessary.

Questions regarding the procedures of the study may be directed to Lisa Tloutan (507-421-2201), the principal investigator, or the study advisor Dr. Jocelyn Newton, Department of School Psychology, UW-L ((608) 785-6889). Questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the UW-La Crosse Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (608-785-8124 or irb@uwlax.edu).

Participant _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B

DYNAMIC INDICATORS OF BASIC EARLY LITERACY SKILLS (DIBELS) SUBTESTS USED FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

Initial sound fluency

Initial Sound Fluency is the first subtest of DIBELS, administered to Kindergarteners at the beginning of the academic year and throughout their first year of formal schooling. It is a measure of phonological awareness, specifically assessing a child's recognition and production of sounds. The subtest begins with four pictures being presented to the child. After the examiner names each picture, the child is asked to point to the picture that starts with the sound produced by the examiner. The examiner then asks the child to produce the beginning sound for a word that has been presented orally. The score obtained is the total number of initial sounds correct in a minute ("DIBELS Measures, n.d.).

Letter naming fluency

For Letter Naming Fluency, a page of randomized, upper- and lower-case letters are presented to a child. The child must name as many letters as they can in one minute. Similar to Initial Sound Fluency, the number of letters named correctly in one minute is the score recorded ("DIBELS Measures, n.d.).

Phoneme Segmentation Fluency

For the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency subtest, a child must correctly and fluently segment three- and four-phoneme words into their individual phonemes. Each correctly produced phoneme equals one point (a three phoneme word such as "dog" could potentially receive three points). The total number of phonemes produced in one minute is the total score ("DIBELS Measures", n.d.).

Nonsense word fluency

The Nonsense Word Fluency subtest requires a child to verbally produce individual letter sounds or produce the entire nonsense word (i.e. rav). The child must produce as many letter-sounds or complete nonsense words as possible in one minute (“DIBELS Measures”, n.d.).

APPENDIX C
COVER LETTER FOR TEACHERS

Dear Kindergarten Teachers,

Thank you so much for your help! Here are the envelopes which need to be sent home with each student. To ensure the students' family information is paired with the correct DIBELS and SSIS information (which will be obtained in January), could you please either write the initials or names of each student on the envelopes prior to handing them out? That way when they are returned we know which child it is. There is no place in the packet of information being sent home to the parents that explicitly asks the parents to provide the students name.

Feel free to encourage parents in any way you want to participate. I would greatly appreciate any help you could provide. The parents are much more comfortable with you than they are with a stranger!

Again, the parents have until December 22 to complete the forms, but the sooner the better! The parents have been told to return the questionnaires back to you in the envelopes provided to them. If you could please keep all the completed forms in the large envelope in which they were mailed to you that would be great. I will collect them when I come in January to help administer DIBELS. I will be keeping in touch with you to see how many students have participated.

Thank you,

Lisa Tloutan