

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

This dissertation examines involvement of parents by schools in the process of teaching children to read. Chapter 1 looks at the effects of home background both on children's broad academic achievement and on their literacy acquisition, and considers aspects of parental involvement. Chapter 2 describes the Haringey Reading Project in the UK, two small-scale Irish studies and American Family Literacy Programmes.

In Chapters 3 and 4 a study undertaken by the researcher in a large urban primary school in Cork is described and analysed. Parents of children in their second year at school were involved in a home reading programme with their children. The programme, which lasted six weeks, contained reading, language, writing, phonic, drawing and word-game components. The children were pre- and post-tested in language, letter-, sound- and word-recognition, reading efficiency and writing. At post-testing, the intervention group showed more accelerated gains than their controls in the areas of language, reading efficiency and writing. However, it was not clear whether this resulted from the home reading programme or from an increased competence in these areas to begin with.

A parent interview and questionnaire yielded valuable information on literacy practices in the home, as well as parents' views on reading. Parents expressed satisfaction with the reading programme, and felt that their children's reading had improved as a result. Though the test results were inconclusive, it was concluded that parents have a valuable contribution to make to their children's reading, and that schools could enrich their literacy teaching by involving parents.