PICTURE IT, DADS!

ENGAGING RURAL FATHERS AND FATHER FIGURES IN CHILDREN'S EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

RESEARCH REPORT
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If you have any questions or thoughts about the information contained in this report or would like more information about hosting *Picture It, Dads!* workshops, please contact Dr. Jane Baskwill, at janebaskwill@gmail.com

"Daddy is happy because he is going to read me a book." (Dennis, age 4)

INTRODUCTION

The majority of studies of parental involvement in children's academic learning have focused on mothers' involvement, particularly with young children (Fan & Chen, 2001). Thus far, and although limited in scope, research on involvement, education and support programs for fathers, has shown that children do better academically when fathers are involved in literacy-related activities. However, fathers' perceptions of their role and responsibility in children's literacy development, particularly in early childhood, impact on the extent to which fathers take up that role (Lynch, 2002; Levine, Murphy & Wilson, 1993).

The aim of the *Picture It, Dads!* (PID) formative research project was to involve fathers and father figures, from one rural Nova Scotia community, in a series of literacy workshops designed using a community of practice framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They were provided with literacy materials and guided practice, along with a cohort of support. PID created a learning community in which fathers and father figures, along with local facilitators, collaboratively expanded their knowledge of the importance of their involvement in children's literacy learning, created a repertoire of father-friendly strategies, and raised participants' confidence in their ability to engage in such activities and provide support for others.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were to:

- examine the impact of the application of a "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998) workshop delivery model on participants' confidence, knowledge sharing, and knowledge transfer to other home-school literacy activities
- identify implications for the future design and implementation of family literacy programs in rural areas, particularly those that want to attract male participation.

It is hoped that this research will assist those who plan and develop programs and activities for fathers and father figures (N.B. Due to a desire to be inclusive and to expand the definition of "father" beyond that which refers to biological status, the word "father" will be used in this section to refer to both fathers and father figures.) and will open up a space within and among these groups in which to consider how a community of practice (CoP) framework can provide supports, remove barriers and positively impact fathers' perceptions of their involvement in children's literacy development.

Research Design

Caspe, (2003) identifies several guiding principles to keep in mind when developing and implementing family literacy programs, among them:

- trying to understand parents' literacy strengths and reinforcing their knowledge and skills;
- engaging participants in opportunities to actively contribute to their own learning;
- asking parents and children to reflect on their everyday literacy practices;
- recognizing that all parents have some literacy memories to bring to the table;
- considering the needs of participants and responding to their interests;
- documenting their experiences and learning from them.

Caspe also argues that more research is needed to determine the programmatic factors that have a positive impact on changes in family literacy practices. The present research draws from Caspe's guiding principles, along with the literature on communities of practice, in its program design. It

is important in that it contributes to knowledge in the field about how a communities of practice model can positively impact on fathers' involvement in children's early literacy development.

The design of this study incorporated ethnographic design elements, along with formative action research (Newman, 1999) in order to build in naturalistic opportunities that allowed context and setting to be used in the search for a deep understanding of those informing the research (Patton, 2002). Multiple qualitative data collection methods (survey, interview, artefact analysis, participant observation) were used to determine what worked, why it worked, and what underlying principles might guide an intervention, or others like it, in the future and, recorded in detail, the various nuances of the intervention.

This emergent design flexibility acknowledges that the research is a work in progress and that openness to adapting the inquiry, as understandings deepen or situations change, is an important design feature. The researcher was thus able to build into the present research design an active collaboration, as well as an on-going evaluation, with the fathers through the creation of a community of practice workshop setting and the use of the PID Workshop Feedback Interview and with key community-based stakeholders (e.g. Picture It Dads Advisory Committee) and to respond to their suggestions, needs, interests and understandings to more effectively reach the established program goals.

Participants

Participants were fathers and father figures (i.e. stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, and male partners) and their pre-school children (3-5years old) from the rural geographic area that makes up the Lawrencetown Consolidated School District of Annapolis County, Nova Scotia (see p.16). Posters inviting fathers and father figures to attend an information session were distributed through family resource centers, libraries, daycares, pre-schools, church groups and public schools, along with advertisements in the local newspaper. At the session, a more detailed explanation of the research and what participation would entail was provided. The information letter and consent forms (see Appendix E) was explained, the workshop structure described, as well as the questionnaires for fathers and their children and the thirty minute feedback interviews to be conducted by the researcher or assistant. Questions were answered. Contact information

was also provided in the event there were additional questions. A signed consent form was obtained from the fathers for their participation and their child's. The option of signing and handing in the forms at the information session was given or they could be sent in a self-addressed stamped envelope that was provided. The procedure researchers would use to maintain confidentiality was also explained.

Fathers were assured that neither theirs nor their child's participation would impact negatively on either. The nature of the project did not allow for complete anonymity, as the research involved fathers and their children from a small community. However, the focus of the research was on the effectiveness of the PID project and therefore the focus would be on that aspect when discussing the results. A pseudonym was used for each participant (fathers and children) throughout the project. If direct quotations were to be used in any reports or publications, care would be taken that there were no identifying characteristics. Findings were shared throughout with participants and an opportunity given for feedback. Permission was also sought to photograph and video-record the sessions.

Following the information session, the research team (the researcher and research assistant) contacted potential participants by phone or in person (depending on fathers' preference), and reiterated the explanation of the research and what was expected of their participation. Two cohorts were recruited with a maximum of 15 parent-child participants in each cohort, Fall, 2007 and Winter, 2008. The scope of this study did not allow for more participants. This provided the researcher with a sampling of convenience.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability type of sampling in which subjects are selected from populations or regions that are the easiest for the researcher to access (Best & Kahn, 2006). By using this type of sampling, it is possible, and even probable, that not all individuals from the original target population are represented. However, in situations where it is not possible to access the complete target population (as is needed for simple random sampling), this is a common form of sampling to use. Caution was used when extrapolating the findings of this study to the broader population. In addition, demographic information has been provided in order to help develop an understanding of the population under study.

Data Collection

A variety of qualitative research methods were used to collect data from and with participants:

1. Interview *Fathers and father figures:* Interviews were held with the thirty fathers and father figures who lived in the target area and who volunteered to be participants in the study. Part I of the interview engaged fathers in a discussion of their own childhood literacy memories. Each participant was invited to bring any artefacts that might help them represent or describe their literacy memories (photos, picture books, letters, children's toys, etc.). The questions served as "grand tour" questions (Spradley, 1979) that asked participants to generalize their experiences and talk about patterns of events, in this case, their childhood literacy experiences. The research team interviewed participants in Part I of the interview using a semi-structured format in order to allow the research team to explore responses in greater detail.

   Surveys were administered in Part II of the interviews. The instrument used was the Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (SFLRP)[i]. In Part A of the survey (see Appendix A), fathers were asked to respond to statements about aspects of early literacy learning and their own knowledge and skills about these aspects. Part A used a Likert scale ranging from 1-5, strongly agree to strongly disagree. Part B of the survey asked fathers to identify, from a pre-determined list, the printed materials present in their home, the writing activities in which their child engaged, the reading behaviours they observed in their child, along with the reading behaviours they observed when they read to their child. There were no fathers who said they did not read with their child.

   The SFLRP was selected because of its applicability to both fathers and father figures. It was also administered in order to gather information about the perceptions of fathers about their capability and role in young children's literacy development and to identify the ways in which they may already be engaged in literacy activities with their children. A member of the research team read the

survey orally and recorded responses for each participant. This was done in order to accommodate the potential range of reading and writing abilities among participants and to allow the researcher to ask for clarification or further information when responses warranted.

A one hour follow-up interview was held in November of the year following the fathers' four month involvement in a cohort to document new and continuing literacy activities at home, as well as to document the type and amount of father involvement at pre-school and school, and their continuing involvement with cohort members and activities following PID participation.

Children: The children were between the ages of 3 and 6 and had not yet been enrolled in school. All of the children attended organized programs for pre-school age children held at nursery schools, day cares, or family resource centres. The instrument that was used was adapted from Nutbrown and Hannon's (2003) *Survey of Pre-School Children's Perspectives On Family Literacy* (SPCPFL) to include a drawing component. Each child was engaged in a one-to-one conversation in response to eight questions (see Appendix C). Children were also invited to draw what the literacy event identified in the questions looked like. This provided the researcher with another view of each child's perceptions of their fathers' involvement in literacy activities. The survey was re-administered at the end of the children's involvement in the Fall or Winter cohort to see if there were any changes in responses.

2. Fieldnotes Fieldnotes of workshop observations, conversations and parent-child interactions during the workshop sessions were kept by the research team. In addition, workshops were video-recorded.

3. Fathers as Ethnographers: Borrowing on a technique developed by Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), the fathers were asked to contribute to the data through the

use of digital photography and journaling. Technological assistance was provided by local volunteers for those who needed support.

4. Artefacts: Fathers were asked to collect artefacts that were examples of literacy practices they engaged in with their children in their homes or in the community. The artefacts were used to talk about literacy practices in greater detail during follow-up interviews. In addition, artefacts were collected by the research team and consisted of items such as games, books, recipes, etc. produced for the project by the fathers and children during the workshops and at-home. Accompanying the items were the research team's notes following informal discussions with participants during the workshop sessions about the items and the team's responses to the items, along with their reflections on the process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began on the first day and continued throughout as the research team sought recurring themes that could be explored in greater depth and could help inform changes to practices and content during workshops. Fieldnotes were transcribed, along with survey data and the video recordings of the workshops and audio recordings of the interviews, and analyzed for common themes which were then cross-referenced. Thematic analysis focused on identifiable themes and patterns of experiences and/or behaviours. Patterns were also listed from direct quotes and by paraphrasing common ideas. Next all data that related to the already classified patterns were identified and placed with the corresponding pattern. Then related classifications were combined and catalogued into sub-themes to form a comprehensive picture of participants' collective experiences. Direct quotations from interviews and fieldnotes were also used to illustrate theoretical connections to the data and provide a rich description of participants' experiences.

In addition, throughout the research process, participants were asked to give feedback which was then incorporated in the themed content analysis. Exit interviews were also conducted with each participant within a month following their completion of the last workshop.

The use of a variety of methods, more than one researcher/analyst, along with respondent validation allowed the researcher to check the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the findings.

WHY STUDY FATHERS? WHAT THE RESEARCH HAS TO SAY

Although it is possible to piece together an initial portrait of fatherhood in Canada from national surveys (see: Vanier Institute, Profiles of Families II), these often do not take into account the diversity that the term now encompasses and often do not take into account absent fathers, single fathers or father figures.

Being a father in today's Canadian society is a social construct, rather than solely a biological one (Dubeau, 2002). As such, its definition has changed over time in response to social and cultural factors, along with the roles fathers and father figures are expected to take up. Although research shows more involvement on the part of fathers and father figures in raising children (Pleck, 1997; Snary, 1997), their involvement in children's early literacy development, along with their involvement in school-related literacy activities, is relatively unexplored (Gadsden, 2003).

Involvement of Fathers

While the majority of studies of parent involvement in children's literacy learning have focused on mothers' involvement, particularly with young children (Fan & Chen, 2001; Nichols, 1994), research thus far, although limited in scope, on the quality, impact, and type of literacy involvement of fathers and father figures in their children's learning, is gaining increased attention. This may be due to a growing body of international evidence that suggests gender is a significant factor in literacy achievement (Gambell & Hunter, 2000; Katz & Sokal, 2003). Concern is being raised by educators and school policy makers in Canada and worldwide with regard to boys' disengagement with literacy learning and resulting in boys' underachievement and lower test scores as compared to girls (Marks, 2008). This concern has prompted countries such as the UK and Australia to initiate a concerted effort country-wide to address the issue

(Marks, 2008; Richmond & Miles, 2004). It has also been suggested that the lack of male role-models in literacy activities, during early childhood, contributes to the decline of boys' school achievement in language arts (Millard, 1997).

A review of the few studies that have focused on father involvement in children's literacy development supports the idea that fathers are an important, yet relatively, untapped family literacy resource (Debeau, 2002; Gadsden, 2003). Research on the impact of involving fathers, on children's learning outcomes, has shown that children do better academically when fathers are involved in literacy-related activities (Flourri & Buchanan, 2004). Researchers have also found that involving fathers early with their child's learning results in benefits to children in other areas: increased cognitive abilities, higher self-esteem, greater social competence (Gadsden & Ray, 2002; Ortiz, 2000).

It has also been found that fathers' reading habits influence children's reading habits, choices and interest, and shared literacy activities strengthen the father-child bond (Gadsden, 1998; Stile & Ortiz, 1999).

Ortiz (2000), in a study of Mexican American fathers, found that although the fathers in his study participated in literacy activities with their young children, participation varied according to individual interests, needs, and their perceived marital role. In other words, when fathers shared child-rearing practices with their spouse, literacy activities were more likely to become part of their regular routine.

Stile & Ortiz (1999) strongly suggest that carefully designed programs that involve fathers can significantly impact on children's literacy learning, father-child bonding, and enhance fathers' self-esteem. Gadsden (2003) argues the importance of deepening the understanding of father involvement in family literacy and calls on researchers to consider how family literacy programs can respond to the diverse needs of fathers.

Studies also showed there were differences between mothers' and fathers' literacy involvement (e.g. Hiebert & Adams, 1987; Ortiz, Style & Brown, 1999). Bus et al (1997) found that fathers

were less certain than mothers about expected reading behaviours, had less experience reading to children, and were less inclined to participate in conventional print-related activities.

Nichols (2000) reported fathers less likely to recognize the importance of early exposure to books, more likely to read at bedtime rather than throughout the day, and reading by fathers was often delegated and supervised by mothers. Nichols also found fathers were more likely to report a history of school literacy failure, a dislike of reading aloud, and more likely to use strategies to shorten time spent reading.

Fathers' Perceptions

Levine, Murphy & Wilson (1993) suggest that how men view their role with respect to child-rearing influences father-child relationships. Therefore, it may be the case that fathers, who perceive their role through a more traditional lens, may see early literacy activities (i.e. storybook reading and early writing) as the role of the mother or female caregiver. Stile and Ortiz (1999) found that, even fathers involved in literacy activities, report being uncertain about how and where to begin.

Gee (2001) argues that literacy reflects a larger set of socially constructed norms, attitudes and behaviors. This means that literacy learning is both situated in a variety of social contexts and embodied in/through individual experiences. Therefore, fathers' perceptions of their role and their ability to carry out that role with respect to initiating, supporting and sustaining young children's engagement with literacy related tasks, is dependent on the cultural models they hold about what reading is, what „being a reader' looks like (Gee, 2001), and, likewise, what their participation in early literacy development ought to look like. It is, therefore, important to determine what those perceptions might be and to study them in various contexts (i.e. urban, rural).

Gee (2001) says that cultural models shape reality, limit perceptions and form "'master myths' in which the society encapsulates its favoured wisdom" (p.91). Hence, it is in homes, communities, and classrooms that these master myths are played out through language, routines, and social

interaction. These sites become communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and come to bear on the ways in which parents construct their identities as parents and how they see their role in children's literacy learning. In order to effect change with respect to the involvement of rural Nova Scotia fathers and father figures in children's literacy learning, and to enhance their comfort level when engaging in literacy related child-rearing tasks, it is necessary to re-construct and re-vision these communities of practice.

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice, as a model for professional development, have been well documented in the education literature (ibid. Buysse et al, 2001), but are not evident in the literature on family literacy. Nevertheless, a lot has been written about communities of practice as a theoretical frame for learning communities in business, education, health and development.

Wenger identifies three characteristics he considers crucial to a community of practice:

- the domain: a shared interest, commitment, and expertise that is recognizable within the group,
- the community: in which learning occurs through sustained activity among group members over time,
- the practice: a "shared repertoire…of experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems, and sustained interaction" (2005, para. 2).

Gee's (2001) notion of Discourse as "identity kit", that is, a "a tool kit full of specific devices (i.e., ways with words, deeds, thoughts, actions, interactions, objects, tools and technologies) in terms of which you can enact a specific identity and engage in specific activities associated with that identity (p. 719)" is important to the discussion here as it demonstrates the powerful potential of such communities, particularly the classroom or workshop setting, to reinforce and replicate dominant cultural beliefs and practices or to reconstruct and revise them.

Wenger (1998) argues that communities of practice can promote learning and that the learning is a reciprocal process between the group and its individual members, thus enabling the formation of new identities.

The design of workshops based on the work of Lavre and Wenger (1991) features learning opportunities within a social environment and sees these as highly generative, also providing the supports community members need. Within this framework, learning is sustained through active participation and dialogue in a social setting, not simply through observation. Lavre and Wenger also suggest that learners enter a community of practice from the periphery and gradually move closer to full participation, over time, as they gain knowledge and develop a working understanding of the community's beliefs and practices. This eventually results in participants seeing themselves as a member of the community. According to Lavre and Wenger, the benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of a community of practice approach is the application of new knowledge by its members.

Fathers help each other during Book-Making

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Participants in this research were volunteers from the rural geographic area that makes up the Lawrencetown Consolidated School District of Annapolis County, Nova Scotia.

Lawrencetown & District[ii] is a rural community with a population of approximately 1875 (Community Counts, 2006) and extends over a geographical area of more than 156 km^2 with an estimated population density of 11.5/km^2. In comparison, Nova Scotia has a population of 913,465 which is 0.5% higher than in 1996. This rate of growth is much lower than the overall growth rate for Canada of 9.6%.

The population is relatively stable with 70% having not moved from their current reporting district and 77% of Lawrencetown's population having been born in Nova Scotia. Between 2001 and 2006, 29.1% of Lawrencetown's residents moved. Nova Scotia has 76.8% of its population born within Nova Scotia, as compared to 67.0% of all Canadians born in the province in which they were enumerated.

Age

In 2006, 22.1% of the population of Lawrencetown was under the age of 20 and 17.5% was 65 years or older. In Nova Scotia, 22.8% of the population was under the age of 20 and 15.1% was 65 years or older. In Canada, 24.4% of the population was under the age of 20 and 13.7% was 65 years or older.

Family Structure

There are approximately 39.6% of individuals in Lawrencetown who are married with children and an additional 15% who are single parent families. In 2006, for Lawrencetown, total census families decreased by 0.5% to 555. Married families declined by 7.1% while common law families increased by 63.8% and single parent families decreased by 1.7%. Single female parent families were 7.7% of all families while single male parents were 1.1% of all families. In Nova Scotia, the total number of census families increased 5.3% to 267,415. Married families declined by 1.4%, while common law families increased 43.2% and single parent families increased by 14.1%. Single female parent families in Nova Scotia were 13.9% of all families, while single male parents were 3.0% of all families.

Immigration

There were 104 immigrants in Lawrencetown (5.8% of the population), with 98.9% of people in Lawrencetown being Canadian citizens. Compared to the rest of Canada, Nova Scotia has a relatively low immigrant population. In 2006, there were 45,190 immigrants, (5.0% of the population), compared to 19.8% immigrants for Canada. In Nova Scotia, 98.3% of people were Canadian citizens compared to 94.4% for Canada.

Employment

The number of 15 to 24 year olds in Lawrencetown that are not in the labour force is 38.5%, with 10.4% being unemployed. Those 25 and over, who are not in the work force, make up 44.6%, of the population, with those who are unemployed making up 4.0%. In Nova Scotia, 42% were not employed.

Income

In 2006, the median income for individuals in Lawrencetown was $19,397 a year, compared with the provincial median of $24,030, and the Canadian median of $26,917. Families in Lawrencetown had a median income of $45,504, compared with the provincial median of $55,412 and the Canadian median of $63,866.

Education

According to the Community Counts database, in 2006, 35.6% of those 20 and over residing in the community have less than a high school certificate. This is greater than the Nova Scotia average of 31.7% and much greater than the Canadian average of 27.9%. However, 19.7% of those 20 and over have only a high school certificate in comparison to 47.6% in Canada.

Although the literacy needs in the community are high, the strengths lie in having a relatively stable population with strong community ties across several generations. On the other hand, this can also mean entrenched values and belief systems.

Gender Role Perceptions

Researchers have written about the gender binary that exists in Nova Scotia (Baskwill, 2003; Sherman, 2000). The social construction of gender as „women's ways' and „men's ways' is embedded in local cultures and structures and contributes to society's „common sense' notions of how gender effects the performance of various roles, from educational administration to child-rearing and, therefore, who should perform them.

Community Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions

With this research in mind, along with anecdotal evidence from conversations with child care staffs in rural areas in Nova Scotia, prior to beginning the research with fathers and father figures, a telephone survey using the Community Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (CSFLRP)[iii] was administered, by the researcher and two graduate research assistants from Mount Saint Vincent University, to households within the Lawrencetown school catchment area. Though the focus of the research was on fathers and father figures and their participation in the PID workshops, the results of the survey were intended to add to the picture of the research context and the community in which the fathers in this study reside. The researcher wanted to get a sense of the climate and culture in this particular rural area with respect to how the involvement of fathers and father figures in children's literacy learning was viewed by individuals in households in the geographic area.

A quota sampling system was used which set the number of respondents at 250. Households were selected using the Aliant Telephone Directory, Annapolis Valley West edition, 2007-08. The phone book was randomly opened to a page under the community heading and every seventh household was telephoned until the number set was reached. Upon an initial explaination of the survey contents and purposes, potential respondents were asked to participate. Respondents' names and addresses were neither asked nor recorded, and individual responses remain confidential.

Respondents' ages ranged from 23-83 with 193 of the 250 respondents being female. Calls were made between 6:00 and 8:00 in the evening. The CSFLRP is a sixteen item survey (see Appendix B) that uses a Likert scale ranging from 1-5, strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Questions were identified according to four key elements and a scoring protocol was used to determine the percentage of response for each key element:

Key Element	**Questions**
Literacy is the job of the mother	2, 7, 9, 12
Dads are not interested	6, 10, 4, 16
Dads do not have knowledge/skills	3, 14, 5, 11
Dads need to be more involved	1, 8, 13, 15

Results from the CSFLRP indicated the following perceptions of fathers' involvement in children's literacy development held by respondents within the target area:

- Literacy development in young children is the role of the mother or female care-giver (92%)
- Fathers are not interested in being more involved in children's literacy learning (65%)
- Fathers do not have the skills or knowledge to be involved (89%)
- Fathers need to be more involved with children's literacy learning (96%)

Although a high number of respondents felt fathers needed to be more involved with children's literacy learning, the strong belief that fathers do not have the knowledge or skills may have contributed to the strong belief that literacy development is the role of the mother or female care-giver.

Fathers and children during Read Together Time

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PID Fathers' Perceptions

In combination, analysis of the interviews, including the survey data from the Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (SFLRP)[iv], revealed three overall themes regarding the fathers' perceptions about their role in children's early literacy development: personal knowledge and skills, expert knowledge and skills, and observational knowledge and skills.

Personal knowledge and skills refers to fathers' awareness of their own childhood literacy experiences, along with reading and writing experiences with their children at home. This category includes how literacy was valued by the participants.

Observational knowledge and skills refers to fathers' awareness of the literacy activities and materials present in their home. This category includes words, phrases and examples from the interviews that referred to or described the use of these materials by the child or another member of the family. This category also includes references to reading and writing activities in other locations (i.e. neighbour's homes, school, church, etc.).

Expert knowledge and skills refers to more formal knowledge, that which might be gained from books, or workshops or lectures by authorities in the field, presentations for parents at local schools by family literacy staff. This category also includes information obtained from TV talk shows, radio broadcasts, internet sites, newspaper articles and locally obtained pamphlets and flyers (i.e. from doctor's offices, churches, etc.).

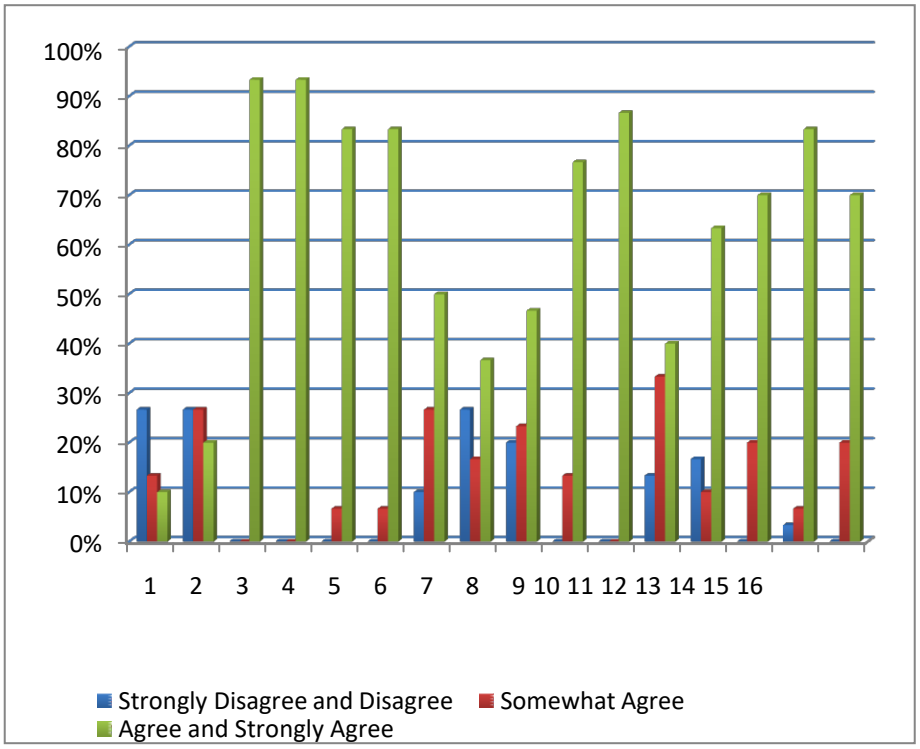
Personal Knowledge and Skills

The fathers in this study were very aware of their own literacy abilities. During Part A of the interview, when asked to recall childhood literacy memories, they talked about their own school experiences. For most, these were in the same community in which they now lived. Both positive and negative experiences were shared. Of those that did not enjoy school, specific examples were recalled of situations where they had been made to feel their reading or writing was poor or inadequate, in particular, when asked to read aloud, to perform during spelling contests, or to display their work. They saw literacy in school as a competitive enterprise where their ability and performance was measured against that of others.

Childhood literacy memories also included examples of home literacy memories: examples of books read, someone who read to them (usually a mother or grandmother), and a few fathers brought homemade artefacts such as Mother's Day cards they had made when they were young. In all, few artefacts were brought. This may have been due to participants' being unsure of what to bring or the lack of availability of the artefact (i.e. a favourite children's book was no longer in the participant's possession). Nevertheless, the fathers talked about their memories even though they may not have had an artefact to show. One father said he was unable to recall any childhood literacy memories, but when prompted by categories such as children's books, someone who read to him, or what kinds of print materials he had at home growing up, he was able to respond.

In addition, Part B survey results (see chart below) showed that the fathers felt confident they knew how to support children's reading and writing development. They were confident their children would be successful learning to read and write and all valued the development of these skills. They also saw literacy learning as a skill to be fostered in child care settings outside the home. Whether through learning games, discussing stories, engaging children in retelling or

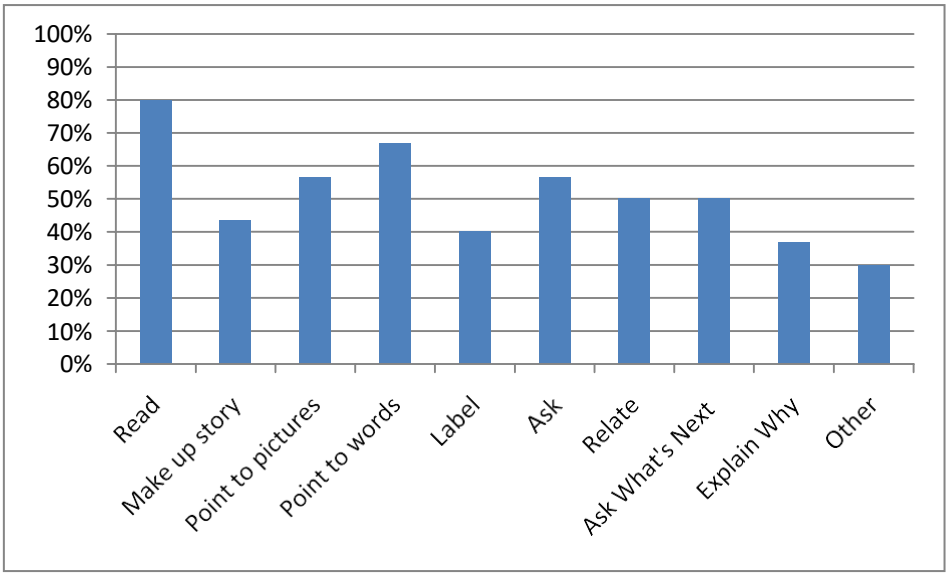
through the use of questioning techniques, or writing/drawing activities, the fathers and father figures indicated they knew how to help their children with reading and writing activities. However, fathers' responses also revealed weak participation in activities such as daily reading, singing songs and reciting nursery rhymes.



Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions

(Note: In the chart above, the numbers 1-16 refer to the questions in Part A of the SFLRP.)

Responses to Part B of the survey indicated the fathers were aware and able to identify their own repertoire of reading behaviours during story time.

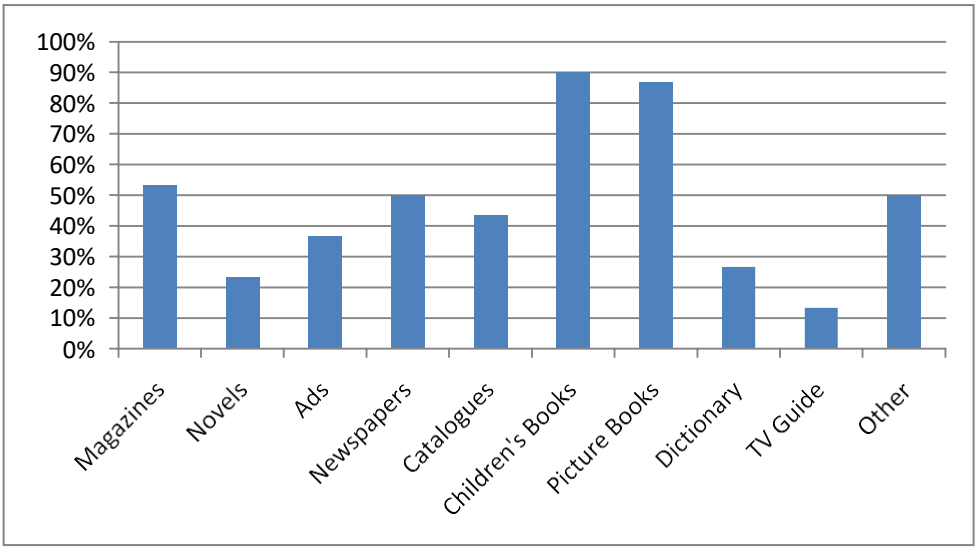


Fathers' Behaviours during Reading

Other behaviours reported included creating bedtime stories from past events, sounding out words, changing words in the story, the use of praise, allowing the child to choose the story, and repeating key parts or information to be sure the child understood. Story time was reported as being highly interactive, even though it was not a daily occurrence.

Observational Knowledge and Skills

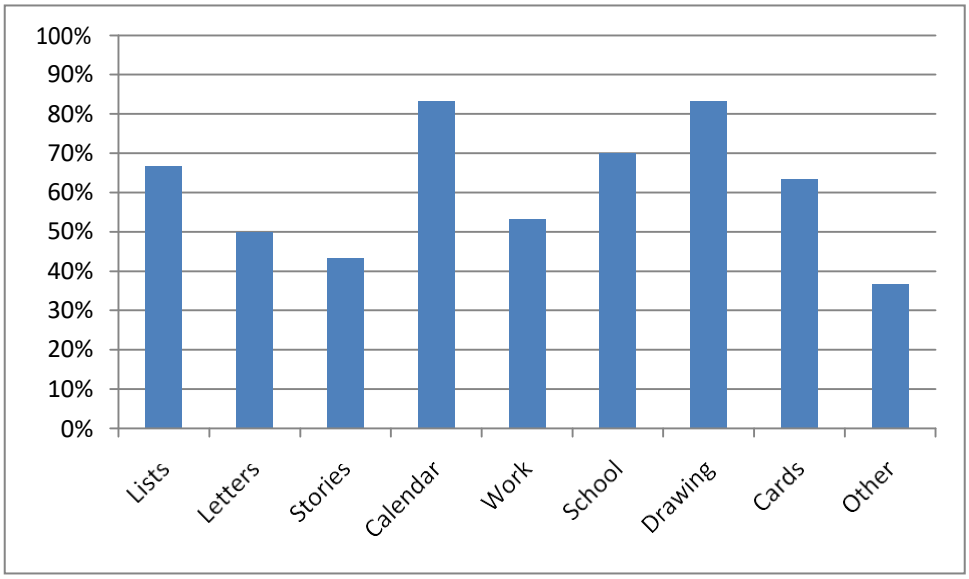
In their homes, the fathers and father figures in this study were knowledgeable observers of the reading and writing activities in which their children engaged. They recognized the variety of children's writing and reading activities that occurred and felt their children were active participants in these. The fathers identified a selection of print materials and writing/drawing materials available in their homes for their children's use from the list provided.



Printed Materials

Taken together, children's books, picture books and novels were the most common form of printed material indicated. Other materials included activity books, order forms, puzzles, games, labels on groceries (i.e. cereal boxes), flash cards and the bible.

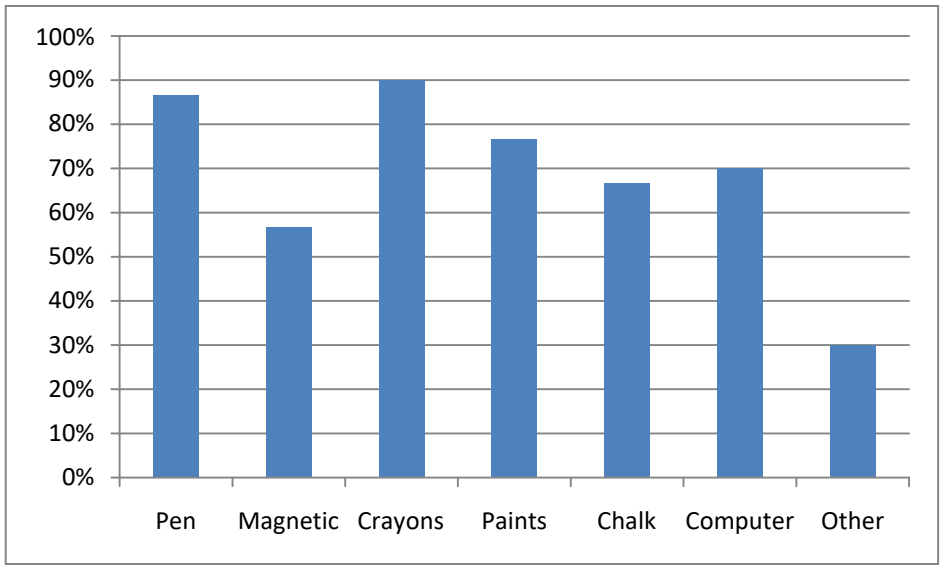
The fathers also identified the variety of writing/drawing activities that occurred within the home from the list provided.



Home Writing/Drawing Activities

Although some activities were more prevalent than others, all fathers reported some writing/drawing activity in their homes. Responses in the "Other" category included crafts, tattoos, drawing pictures for games, making floor plans, designing posters, and writing reports.

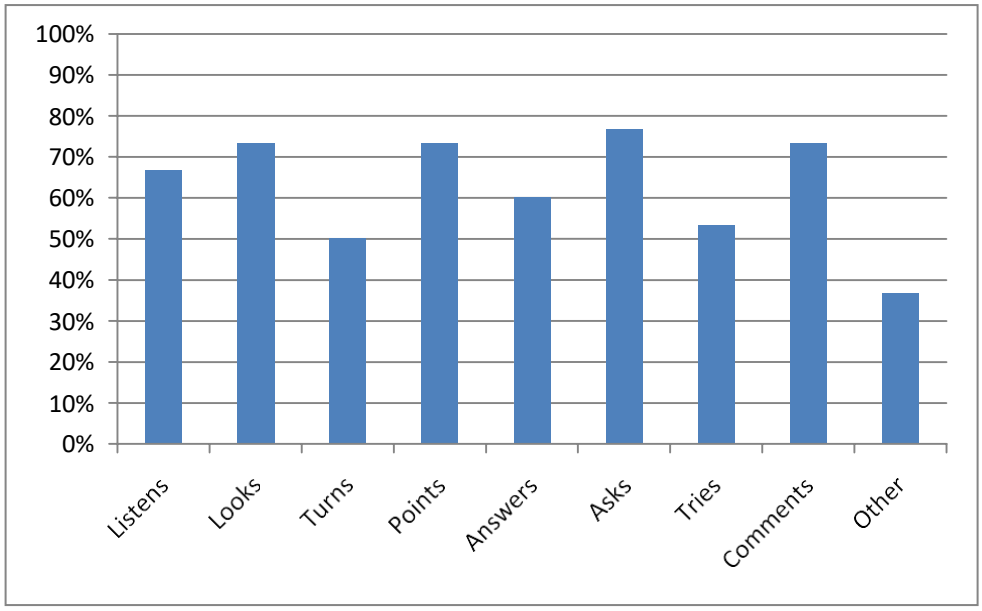
The fathers also indicated their awareness of the writing/drawing materials available in their homes. It was interesting to note fathers' agreement that the computer was a writing/drawing tool, as the research team had anticipated it would be considered as entertainment.



Home Writing/Drawing Materials

From the survey data it is not possible to determine the level of involvement of the respondents in obtaining/purchasing these materials.

The fathers and father figures in this study also reported on their children's behaviours during father-child reading times.



Children's Behaviours during Reading

A range of behaviours were identified from the list provided, from more obvious forms such as listening and looking, to less obvious, such as commenting and asking questions. Other behaviours included demands by the child (i.e read faster, wanting an answer to a question rather than wait to see).

Fathers also reported developmental anomalies they observed, particularly if they had more than one child in the family. They also compared their child's reading and writing preferences with their own.

Expert Knowledge and Skills

Of the fathers and father figured surveyed, 50% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they knew what the literature had to say about their role or about what to have in their home to support their children's literacy learning. Of the thirty respondents, 39% were not confident with their knowledge about what had been written about either of these topics. Part I of the interview confirmed that the fathers and father figures in this study did not rely on print information about children's literacy development to inform their literacy engagement with their children. They also did not rely on other media for information. All dads reported listening to information

reported by their spouse or partner that came from a print or media source. All also reported a desire to prepare their child for school. One father reported using story time to have his child practice sitting still and being quiet, skills he felt the school wanted his child to have upon entry. This father was unable to identify how he came to think this.

In contrast to the role perceptions as indicated in the community surveys that did not recognize fathers as having the necessary knowledge, skill, and desire to become involved in young children's literacy learning (see pp. 13-14), the fathers in this study perceived themselves as having the knowledge and skills necessary to support their children's literacy learning. They valued literacy learning and were able to identify the tasks usually associated with that learning in the home. Although interactive behaviours were reported by the fathers when reading with/to their children, their knowledge of the importance of such tasks or their ability to undertake them was not attributed to obtaining information through print or media. Their partner/wife was named as a source of family literacy information. Fathers did not report other fathers as a source of information.

The fathers expressed a desire to be involved with their young children's literacy development, but were less confident singing and reciting rhymes, traditional activities associated with early childhood parenting practices. These activities were seen by the fathers as something their wives/partners did better.

Daily reading to their children was reported by 44%. This low percentage was likely due to employment factors that took fathers out of the home during optimal times for reading to children (i.e. bedtime, after school, evenings). Information concerning employment was collected during the interviews, however, in the interest of protecting participants' privacy, it can be shared only in limited ways (see p. 34).

Despite demonstrating a high level of confidence and knowledge with respect to their children's literacy, the fathers were not confident demonstrating that knowledge with family and friends. A disconnect was revealed by the participants between their perceptions of their role in their

children's literacy learning as reported on the survey portion of the interviews, and their enactment of that role as reported during the interviews prior to the workshops.

PID Workshops

The interview and survey results informed the initial content of the PID workshops. Six workshops were developed. The six workshops focused on expanding the repertoire of literacy practices fathers had by building on what fathers already knew.

Each workshop provided fathers with ideas and activities for supporting early literacy development, a support network of other fathers, and offered guided practice with their children. In addition, take-home bags were given to the participants at each workshop. The bags contained:

- the picture book that provided a touchstone for each workshop theme
- a blank book for recording home literacy stories and developments that the participants would share with the group
- a booklet of activities that grew out of the touchstone book and a bibliography of related books available at the local public library
- the book participants wrote with their children
- a package of materials to use at home

Workshops ran for two hours each. They took place on Saturday mornings in a local elementary school approximately twice a month from September to December (Fall cohort) and January – April (Winter cohort) and were facilitated by three teams. Each team had two males and one female on the team. The primary facilitator for each team was a male elementary teacher. Recommendations of male teachers who were considered to be knowledgeable about children's literature and young children's literacy development were sought from local schools, family resource centres and regional librarians. Teacher facilitators were selected from the list generated.

The same community groups were also asked to provide the names of males in the community known for having a love of children's literature, as evidenced by their enthusiasm for story reading or storytelling, as well as their interaction with their children. Three names were on all recommended lists and were recruited to participate. Each was a grandparent. It was originally intended to have all male teams, however, the community facilitators who were grandparents, asked to have their wives included on the team. Each thought their spouse would make a positive contribution to the program as they too, read often with the grandchildren. They also said they felt more comfortable having a familiar partner come with them.

Facilitators who had early childhood training, were recruited from the local school and community college to carry out the children's session. Three individuals who had early childhood certification were recruited. All happened to be female. A student from the early childhood program at the community college also volunteered. As a result of this selection process, all three teams had a husband-wife grandparent pair, along with a male elementary teacher, and a female early childhood specialist on them. All facilitators lived within the school catchment area.

The six workshops were designed by the research team, in consultation with the Picture It Dads Advisory Committee (PIDAC) and the facilitator teams. Each focused on a specific literacy theme that was developmentally appropriate for the children, as well as built on literacy knowledge and skill revealed by the fathers during the interviews. The themes were meant to be starting points for facilitators and as connecting points for home activities suggested in the take-home materials (see chart below).

Touchstone Book	Literacy Theme
The Gruffalo	Reading aloud
Where's Spot	Interactive Books
If You Give A Mouse A Cookie	Imagination
Alphabet Under Construction	Reading Pictures

The Mitten	Retelling Stories
On the Move	Nonfiction Picture Books

Prior to each session, the facilitator team assigned to that session met to go over the facilitator and home activities and to discuss the connections they were able to make to the content. They also shared literacy stories (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984) from their own experiences that they felt would illustrate or expand on the themes. They decided who would take the lead for each portion of the workshop. They went over the feedback sheets and added or adjusted the discussion and activities accordingly. If additional information was required, they consulted local experts known to them for information and suggestions. The team also debriefed following each session and discussed with the research team what they felt worked well and why they thought it did. This information was shared with the other facilitator teams.

Each workshop session followed the following structure:

- Read Together Time with fathers and children (15 minutes). During this segment facilitators read aloud the touchstone book, inviting fathers and children to participate in the reading and engaging them in noticing features of the print and the illustrations.

- Talk Time with fathers (45 minutes). During this segment fathers and facilitators discussed books, literacy activities, issues, concerns and questions while the children made a craft with help from an early childhood facilitator.

- Book-Making Time with fathers and children (45 minutes). During this segment fathers and children used word processing and digital photography to make a book from a template, prepared by the research team, patterned after the touchstone book. The book starred each father-child pair.

- Feedback Time with fathers and children (15 minutes). During this segment fathers evaluated the session and made suggestions and recommendations regarding the content

and organization for subsequent sessions and future cohorts. The children were asked to draw pictures showing their participation during each of the segments.

(Note: The times listed above were guidelines for the facilitators. Times varied somewhat depending on the needs of the group.)

Fathers and facilitators share books and strategies during Talk Time.

FINDINGS

Johnson (2007) describes communities of practice (CoP) as action learning spaces in which mutual engagement, shared enterprise and a shared repertoire of practices are dynamic processes. In other words, they are relational, continually changing and influenced by social interactions. Returning to Lavre and Wenger (1991), the benchmark of a successful CoP is the application of new learning (see p. 15). Analyzing PID sessions through a CoP lens, with this benchmark in mind, allowed the research team to examine the effectiveness of this model for fathers and father figures in terms of five key dimensions that distinguish a community of practice (Buysse et al, 2003):

1. Common purposes and goals,

2. Diverse membership,
3. Participatory framework,
4. Communicating with the larger community,
5. Reproduction of the cycle through membership and activities.

Talk Time sessions provided insight into how these five dimensions were realized through PID. [Note: For the purpose of this analysis, data from both cohorts were combined]:

Common Purposes and Goals

The fathers initially came to PID sessions for different purposes. Some were signed up by their spouse, some were curious to see what PID was all about, some said they came for the free materials, some came because a friend of their child was attending, some came because a friend, teacher, or one of the facilitators recommended it, some came because it was something to do with their child on a Saturday and some came because they read about the project in the local newspaper.

Fathers' goals varied less. While some said they wanted to learn about how to help their child with school readiness, and some saw PID sessions as providing a social setting for their child, most said they did not have a specific goal in mind.

However, over the course of the four months during which the PID workshops were held, there was a noticeable change. By the third session, all the fathers said they attended because they wanted to and because they saw the value in coming for themselves and their children. Their purpose for coming was linked to their heightened awareness and satisfaction that PID was a project explicitly for fathers.

The fathers also articulated more clearly goals for themselves (i.e. "I think I need to learn what to do with these books when I read them [Joe].") and for their children (i.e. "If we don't accomplish anything else, I hope Sarah (daughter) will speak up during the book sharing. She's so shy here but such a chatterbox at home [Allan].") Their goals shifted from goals that were unfocussed or

unvoiced to more specific goals that related directly to learning outcomes for themselves and their children.

A sense of trust was demonstrated through the sharing of personal anecdotes and information. The fathers used phrases such as “I felt...”, “I’ve never...” “I’m afraid of...” when sharing the emotional impact of specific literacy events in the past or the present. Discussions extended beyond the original focus of the session to other issues of interest such as the influence of advertising on children, how boys and girls are depicted in catalogues and flyers, and whether boys and girls learn to read differently. A climate developed in which participants were comfortable to discuss a range of topics and issues.

The fathers also demonstrated their responsibility and commitment to the group. Phrases such as “I knew you would want to know this...” , “I didn’t dare come today without...”, “I brought this for...” became more common. The fathers also considered the learning of others in the group as well as their own.

Diverse Membership

The fathers were considered by the research team to be a diverse group and fairly representative of the population of the geographic area of the study according to the following indicators:

Age	Ranged from 23-68
Status in family	Father, grandfather
Socio-economic status	Less than $20,000/yr $20,000/yr or more
Education	Grade 9 – University
Employment	Labourer Professional Self-employed Unemployed

	Skilled tradesman
Family size	From 1-4 children
Marital status	Married Divorced Separated

Participatory Framework

The fathers took control over the direction of the discussions, initiating topics, bringing children's books and other literacy artefacts from home, and sharing observations. The issues the fathers raised and the changes reported in at-home behaviour (i.e. reading more often, creating literacy games from found objects and going to the public library) were examples of the impact PID was having on participants' literacy involvement , as well as the sense of shared ownership of the content that developed.

The fathers reported initiating literacy activities between workshop sessions. They shared these activities with the other participants and facilitators. Some brought examples of books they read to their children or books they liked when they were a child. Some brought homemade books, child or parent-written cards, notes or books. Often these were related to the activities suggested in the Home Activities booklet they received at the previous session, but sometimes they were new activities they had created, as this example from Gary[v] represents:

> *I brought the Sears Wish Book. Cody and I have just started playing a game with it. I just started doing it one day and now he wants to do it every day! One of us opens the book to a page – any page – and then, with our eyes shut, Cody or me will point to a place on the page. Then we make up a story about whatever we pointed to. Sometimes it gets a bit tricky – especially on the underwear page – it gets pretty silly!*
>
> *You know, I didn't think I could just....think up stuff to do with my kid. Before coming here I probably wouldn't have thought that this kind of game could be...you know...a...a...learning thing. I now see that I can teach him words – the names of*

> *things – and colours and how to make up stuff...like use his imagination and we can even do alphabet stuff. And it is my kind of fun! (To one of the facilitators) You know, Jack, you're right – this isn't rocket science!*

The fathers demonstrated increased confidence in their ability to create new activities and to carry out the activities designed for and with them. They also reported spending more time with their children around books and reading and shared the positive responses they noticed from their children.

The fathers saw themselves as initiators of literacy activities. They planned and practiced literacy strategies during the PID sessions and at home. They shared their literacy experiences and dilemmas in order to refine and extend their early literacy knowledge and skills. The fathers expressed the enjoyment this interaction brought them and showed an increased confidence in sharing examples of the literacy they were developing in their children through activities they initiated and "invented". They also realized there were many more opportunities available for them, on a daily basis, that would allow them to interact with their children in literacy-related ways. The fathers also demonstrated they were capable of creating new knowledge that they were willing to share with others (i.e. new literacy games, strategies for keeping a child's attention). The fathers also reported finding ways to put their own stamp on literacy activities in their home.

The fathers used journaling to reflect and record their literacy activities, questions, and reflections. Each father was given a *Notes from Home* journal. These blank notebooks were given to each father at the first PID workshop. Fathers were asked to bring these each week and to use them during discussions to help recall anecdotes or activities they wanted to share.

At first there were no entries and the idea of a journal was thought by the research team to have not been a good idea. Some of the first entries were written by the children (in the form of scribbles and drawings) and some were written by spouses or other family members. However, by the third session, entries started appearing that were written by the fathers. The following are representative of the entries the fathers wrote:

Dan: Allie wants me to read our book every night before bed no matter what.

Micah: Today Chris started reading along with me. I stopped reading at the end of the first page and he finished it. I was surprised. He is only 3 years old.

Mark: I read the cartoons from the newspaper out loud.

Simon: We read "Where The Wild Things Are", "Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus" and "Caps For Sale". "The Pigeon" is our new favourite book.

During Talk Time the fathers also discussed how they felt about keeping a journal and what made them decide to start writing:

Mark: I guess I didn't know what to write. I mean I thought "I'm not a teacher. What will I write about?" But then Chris just started to read a book. It was from his memory and all, but it was exciting and I thought "I should write this down and tell the team."

Aaron: It is pretty exciting when they do something on their own or like when Angie wants to read the book we made – with our picture in it and all. It...well, it makes me feel...like she thinks it's special. I thought it might give some of you other guys an idea of what you might look for. I know having an example would have helped me out. I just sort of stumbled on this myself. Now I know what to write in here.

The above examples are representative of the fathers' recording of home literacy events. Recorded comments also indicated the importance of the group as a support. Although it took a little time for them to become comfortable with journaling, writing down something to share became part of their expanded practice. The journals helped fathers recall the literacy activities they tried at home. Sometimes these were modifications of something they had already been

doing, like reading the cartoons from the newspaper out loud, or sometimes they had tried a literacy activity that was new to them. The number and quality of observations also increased. The fathers used the journals to expand their literacy practices.

The fathers all said they considered their experience making their own books with their children to have been an important literacy activity for them. Their comments about how they felt when they first saw the finished book demonstrate how they moved from feeling uncertain to feeling a sense of pride and accomplishment:

> *Micah: I don't think I realized what we were really doing until that first book came out of the printer. And, there I was, in a book. I'm not sure who was more excited, Serena or me!*
>
> *Jack: I felt proud. I made a book! I never would have guessed I could do it.*
>
> *Mark: The book-making was my favourite part. The day the printer broke and we had to go home without our book, I was so disappointed. But then, when you delivered the book to our house, it made my day. I read it to Angie right then.*

Simon's comments are indicative of the comments the fathers shared about the impact of the book-making activity on them and their children:

> *Simon: I love those books! You know, I think it was so important to have me in a book with Ben. I think our reading times are different because of that. We have the book to remind us of our special time together. I like it when my wife reads the book to Ben, too. I don't know how to say it...it makes me feel proud to see her sharing my book.*

The books gave fathers and children a tangible reminder of their literacy experiences together and became visible symbols of their involvement. The library of personalized books were

celebrated by the group at each session. They helped each other with word selection, spelling, word processing and printing. They read each others' books and responded positively. The fathers had moved from the periphery (Johnson, 2007) to the centre, becoming facilitators themselves.

The fathers also brought their struggles to the Talk Time table as indicated in these examples:

> *Roger: I had to find my own way to share books with my child. My wife, she reads with all these voices and...stuff and I just, just can't do it like that. I just can't compete with that. Y'all get what I mean? I'm just not that good a reader but now I don't think about that. I just do it my way and we have fun. She has her style, I have mine.*

Initially, the fathers struggled to find their place in home literacy activities. Many felt their wives were more experienced and read with more expression. However, as they shared their feelings and experiences, they helped each other find their own entry point into home literacy practices. For example, many expressed becoming comfortable taking liberties with the original text. They made up their own versions, often silly, of the story. They tried to change the reading to see if their child would notice and loudly objected when their child challenged the reading. This often resulted in their child "helping" to read the story. They put their own stamp on literacy activities, something they likely did to some extent previously, but now were willing to acknowledge and share within the group. They made suggestions to each other, punctuated by impromptu demonstrations and examples.

The fathers also demonstrated an ability to talk about child development and schooling issues in general as represented in these examples:

> *Len: Cassie knows all her letters and can count to 100. She even can spell her name and she's only three. I've noticed that kids today are doing at three what kids used to be doing at five.*

Dan: *I'm not sure if putting four year olds in the public school is really a good idea. I mean, some will be ready all right – there are always kids who are ready for school – but many kids are not ready but their parents will just want to have cheap babysitting so they will start them. They should think carefully about it I think.*

Carl: *I've been looking online for information about teaching left-handed children to write. Tom is left-handed and I found a great website. Not being left-handed myself, I wasn't helping him correctly until I went to this website.*

The fathers often brought up local issues and voiced their opinions about child-rearing and child development, something they had not done during the first few sessions. As the number of workshops progressed, so did their willingness to put issues on the table for comment and debate.

Communicating With the Larger Community

The fathers reported more interactions outside of the sessions with family resource centre and nursery school/daycare staff. The first cohort invited a member of the regional library staff, who was also a father, to participate in one of the sessions. He returned for the second cohort. The fathers and the facilitators reached out to fathers in neighbouring communities. They shared information both formally and informally at local events. Photographs taken during the PID sessions were selected by participants for use in displays, workshops, and printed materials. The fathers reported a heightened awareness in the local area that *Picture It, Dads!* meant sessions especially for fathers and father figures.

The fathers also said they felt that the workshops raised the profile of fathers as literacy partners. They reported having more conversations with their partner/spouse about what literacy activities they were doing. The fathers reported that spouses/partners and extended family members and friends asked questions about the workshops and were interested in what happened during them.

The fathers also gave examples of neighbours and family favourably responding to the books the fathers made with their children. These actions were signs of how the fathers were reaching beyond their immediate group to communicate with those in the larger community.

In addition, the fathers demonstrated an awareness of their relationship to the larger community (i.e. those with interests and responsibility for early childhood literacy development including: family resource centre, nursery school/daycare and regional library staff, spouses, and other parents). This reaching out is also a key dimension of CoP but something that is often missing from projects described in the literature (Buysse at al, 2003).

The fathers also started bringing self-help books, newspaper and magazine articles on literacy topics, including book reviews of children's books, to the workshops. These were often accompanied by short summaries or sharing of selected passages. The materials were often borrowed by another member of the group at the end of the session.

Reproduction of the Cycle through Membership and Activities

After the end of the second cohort, additional workshops were requested by the fathers and held by the facilitators. Recruitment and funding strategies were developed by the fathers and facilitators and implemented. Although attendance at the additional workshops was limited to fifteen, registration at each session exceeded thirty as other fathers and father figures became aware of the group and signed up for the sessions should a space occur. Although the sessions were hosted by facilitators, each was planned by groups of fathers and facilitators.

A community celebration of fathers and reading was held in the school gym. Approximately two hundred people attended. The PID fathers and facilitators helped to organize the celebration and they shared literacy stories at the microphone throughout the evening. They also read to small groups of children and adults at stations throughout the gym.

The PID group continues to plan and hold activities for fathers. The size of the group fluctuates, however, a core group of facilitators and fathers have maintained the group and continue to recruit members and initiate learning activities.

GUIDEPOSTS FOR FUTURE APPLICATION

Picture It, Dads! offered a model of support for fathers and father figures within a community of practice framework. Learning within the social environment afforded by PID, provided fathers and father figures with the multiple and varying supports they needed and empowered them to take action within and outside the PID learning community. As a result, both fathers and facilitators reshaped their identities as fathers, facilitators, learners, literacy supporters, local role models, readers of children's literature, writers, observers, interpreters and active participants in children's literacy learning. They became a community of inquiry, negotiating shared meaning through dialogue, peer coaching, collaborative problem solving and the co-construction of knowledge.

Key Factors

In considering the success of PID as a community of practice, several key factors provide guideposts for future implementation:

1. the establishment of a safe and supportive environment. A supportive safety-net was built into the predictable structure of the workshop sessions and into the materials used. This allowed participants to set the direction, validate what they already knew and connect that knowledge to new knowledge and skills in non-threatening, but sometimes challenging, ways.

2. the creation of a balance. An important factor was the creation of a balance between giving the fathers enough support and direction to ensure the workshops had value while, at the same time, not imposing a structure that was too rigid and restrictive. The workshop materials for the facilitators and the participants were

important resources as they provided a starting point for discussion and activity and invited collaboration and problem-solving.

3. the allowance of ample time between workshops. Time was needed between workshops for fathers to process what they had learned and to try out new-to-them literacy practices. Offering workshops every two-three weeks helped fathers work around their employment schedules or other family matters that might have interfered with fathers trying out literacy activities at home (i.e illness of parent or child, visitation schedules, family vacations, etc.).

4. a variety of ways for fathers to participate. The fathers were able to participate in a number of ways and to varying degrees (i.e. share experiences, offer new activities, provide demonstrations, participate in the workshop activities, and record their observations in their journal). Although invitations were made, there were no formal „assignments'. The degree to which an individual participated was up to them. By offering a wide variety of ways in which to participate, fathers were able to share leadership and take ownership for their learning.

5. a carefully selected team. Careful attention was paid to selecting the team of facilitators, including ensuring there were male mentors from the local area. The facilitators had effective people skills and were able to demonstrate literacy activities and interactions with children. They were able to convey the pleasure and importance of shared literacy activities have to offer fathers and children. At the same time, facilitators were able to release control to the fathers, seeking opportunities to share leadership. They became an integral part of the learning community, learning with the participants.

6. an identifiable presence developed. The PID logo became highly visible in the local area and on recruitment flyers and materials. With fathers' permission, photographs taken at the workshops were used on posters advertising sessions. PID activities

became readily identifiable and distinguishable from other programs offered to parents.

7. an understanding of the context. By understanding the many factors that impact on fathers' participation in children's literacy learning (e.g. the cultural context, socio-economic factors, gender role perceptions, etc.), the facilitators and fathers were able to consider how these factors may impact on their perception of their role or on the ways in which they carried out their role and connected this understanding to the wider learning community.

Providing opportunities for fathers and father figures to operate within a community of practice frame, helps to move family literacy research and practice from a model of „learning from' to a model of „learning with' in which the strengths , social capacities and capabilities of the fathers and father figures become the cornerstone of an "action learning space[s]" (Johnson, 2007).

In the PID community of practice, „learning with' became an active process of mutual engagement. It was a process that allowed space for expanding the boundaries of what was known through collaborative dialogue, trust building, and knowledge sharing.

These guideposts provide a starting point for applying a community of practice framework to family literacy research and initiatives. In particular, they will be helpful for those who design programs for fathers and father figures. Whether they are literacy or more generally oriented, keeping these CoP features in mind can enhance the experience for fathers and create a meaningful learning partnership between facilitators and participants.

More research is needed on the application of a community of practice model. It is important to apply the model in a variety of contexts and with fathers and father figures from other populations (i.e. immigrants, urban, etc.). Future research can also help identify the nature and patterns of interactions among fathers in a CoP and how these change over time. Researchers can also examine ways in which the impact of a CoP can extend beyond the local area. In addition, research that identifies the strategies used to address challenges in implementing and sustaining

communities of practice over time is needed. Additional research would be beneficial that helps identify innovative methods for studying the effectiveness of a community of practice framework for family literacy initiatives focusing on fathers.

The use of a community of practice framework holds promise for the field of family literacy in general and, in particular, for the future design and implementation of family literacy programs in rural areas, particularly those that want to attract the participation of fathers and father figures.

ENDNOTES

[i] **Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (SFLRP)** is adapted from the EARLY LITERACY PROJECT, Parent Needs Survey, Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships-Canada, 2004

[ii] Community Counts (http://www.gov.ns.ca/finance/communitycounts/) data encompasses Brickton, Central Clarence, Clarence East, East Inglisville, Inglisville, Lawrencetown, North Williamston, Paradise, Roxbury, South Williamston, West Inglisville, West Lawrencetown . In addition, Mt. Hanley, Outram, and New Albany are also part of the Lawrencetown School catchment area but were not in the statistics for the Community Counts "Lawrencetown" demographic.

[iii] **Community Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (SFLRP)** is adapted from the EARLY LITERACY PROJECT, Parent Needs Survey, Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships-Canada, 2004

[iv] **Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (SFLRP)** is adapted from the EARLY LITERACY PROJECT, Parent Needs Survey, Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships-Canada, 2004

[v] Pseudonyms have been used throughout this report to protect the privacy of participants.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY OF FATHER LITERACY ROLE PERCEPTIONS (SFLRP)

Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (SFLRP)

Parent's Name: _____ Date: _____

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Instructions for administering the survey: Give the following information: *This survey is an opportunity for you to consider your involvement in the literacy experiences of your child at home. We will use this information to develop materials and education support. For each statement I read, indicate the number that shows your level of agreement according to the Rating Scale I will show you and tell us if you want more information about the topic. There will also be an opportunity for you to comment on your experiences and/or needs.*

Rating Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Somewhat Agree

4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree N/A = Not Applicable

I want more information

Part A

1. I know what has been written about fathers' role in the literacy development of young children.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

2. I know what is written about what to have in my home to help my child learn to read and write.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

3. I believe that my child will learn to read and write.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

4. I believe that knowing how to read and write will help my child to communicate.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

5. I believe that early reading and writing activities should be part of Daycare, Nursery School and other child care programs.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

6. I know how to help my child participate in early reading and writing activities at home (e.g., discussing stories,
learning about the alphabet, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

7. I have my child turn the pages of a book as I read to him/her.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

8. I sing nursery rhymes and songs with my child.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

9. I sing songs and say rhymes with my child.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

10. At home, my child plays with games or puzzles that have letters and pictures (e.g., lotto, abc puzzles, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

11. I know how to help my child play with games or puzzles involving letters and pictures (e.g., lotto, abc puzzles, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

12. I read to my child every day.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

13. I talk to my child about stories while I am reading the story (e.g., ask questions, explain new words, talk about my child's experiences, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

14. I know how to help my child talk about stories and experiences (e.g., guess what will happen next, ask

questions, answer questions, re-tell parts of the story).

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

15. My child draws/writes at home.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

16. I know how to help my child with drawing/writing activities at home.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A More Info.

Comment/Specific Question:

Part B

17. I would like some help with these reading and writing activities at home.

18. What types of reading activities take place in your home (e.g., parents read novels, recipes, work-related materials, newspaper, magazines, etc.).

19. What printed materials can your child use in your home:

___Magazines

___Novels

___Advertisements

___Newspapers

___Catalogues

___Children's books

___Children's picture books

___Children's dictionary

___TV Guide

___Other: _____

20. Do you have a library card?___Yes___No

If yes, how often do you take your child to the library? _____

21. When you read to your child, what does your child do?

___Listens quietly to the story

___Looks at the pictures

___Turns the pages

___Points to the pictures

___Answers your questions

___Asks questions

___Tries to guess what will happen next

___Comments on the story

___Other: _____

22. When you read a book to your child, what do you usually do?

___Read the text in the book

___Make up your own story

___Point to the pictures and label them

___Point to the words in the book

___Ask your child to label the pictures (e.g., what's this?)

___Ask your child to point to the pictures (e.g., Where's the..?)

___Relate the story events to your child's experiences (e.g., The same thing happened when you/we….)

___Ask your child what will happen next

___Ask your child to explain why something happened.

___Other: _____

23. What kinds of writing/drawing activities take place in your home?

___Writing shopping and/or wish lists

___Writing letters to family and/or friends

___Writing stories about experiences

___Writing events on the calendar

___Work-related writing

___School-related writing

___Writing notes to the teacher

___Drawing/colouring pictures

___Making greeting cards (e.g., birthday, holidays, etc.)

___Other: _____

24. What writing/drawing materials does your child use in your home:

___Pen/pencil & paper

___Magnetic/felt letters

___Crayons / markers

___Paints

___Chalk & chalkboard

___Computer

25. Is there anything else you think we should know related to your involvement with your child's literacy development?

(Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (SFLRP) is adapted from the Early Literacy Project, Parent Needs Survey, Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships-Canada, 2004)

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY SURVEY OF FATHER LITERACY ROLE PERCEPTIONS (CSFLRP)

Community Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (CSFLRP)

Survey Respondent #_____ Gender: M F Age:_____Date: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

Instructions for administering the survey: **Telephone interview protocol script:**

Say: *Hello my name is [your name] and I am calling on behalf of the* ***Picture It, Dads!*** *research project at Mount Saint Vincent University. We are interested in your responses to 16 questions about rural Nova Scotia fathers' involvement in children's literacy development. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes and is for research purposes only. All participants will be remain anonymous. Your name will not be attached to this survey. Only a number identifies your individual responses.*

Do you have any questions at this time?

[If questions, address them and record them below]

Say: *This survey is an opportunity for you to consider rural Nova Scotia fathers' involvement in the literacy experiences of young children. We will use this information to develop materials and education support. For each statement I read, indicate the number that shows your level of agreement according to the Rating Scale (Read scale).*

Rating Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree **2 = Disagree** **3 = Somewhat Agree**

4 = Agree **5 = Strongly Agree** **N/A = Not Applicable**

You may decline to answer any questions and may end the interview at any time. Are you willing to continue with the survey? [If, yes, continue and ask question #1.]

1. Fathers are very involved in children's learning at home and school.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

2. Mothers are responsible for the literacy development of young children.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

3. I believe that fathers know how to help children learn to read and write.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

4. Dads would rather play baseball with their child than read them a book.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

5. Dads want to help children with early reading and writing activities at home (e.g., discussing stories, learning about the alphabet, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

6. It is a father's role to help children learn to read.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

7. I believe that fathers should be more involved with children's reading and writing.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

8. Dads know it is important to read to their children every day.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

9. Moms are more likely to take children to the library than dads.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

10. At home, dads often initiate learning games or activities when they play with children.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

11. Dads know how to help their children play with games or puzzles involving letters and pictures (e.g., lotto, abc puzzles, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

12. Dads try to read to their children every day.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

13. Dads need to be more involved with children's learning.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

14. Dads need training in order for them to help children with early reading and writing activities.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

15. Dads don't spend enough time helping their young children learn to read and write.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

16. Dads need to be stronger learning role models for their children.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Comment/Specific Question:

(Community Survey of Father Literacy Role Perceptions (CSFLRP) is adapted from the Early Literacy Project, Parent Needs Survey, Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships-Canada, 2004)

APPENDIX C: SURVEY OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDRENS' PERCEPTIONS ON FAMILY LITERACY (SPCPFL)

Survey of Pre-School Children's Perspectives On Family Literacy (SPCPFL)

Child's Name:_____Date:_____

1. Do you have a favourite nursery rhyme or song? Which one is it? Please say or sing it for me.

2. Do you sing/say them at home? Who sings or says rhymes with you at home?

Draw me a picture of you and_____(Mom, dad, etc.) say/singing rhymes together? Tell me about your picture.

3. Who do you see reading at home? What kinds of things do they read?

4. Do you read at home? Does someone read to you?

What is your favourite book? (Is there one you like a lot?)

Draw me a picture of what you look like when you are reading? Tell me about your picture.

5. Who do you see writing at home? What kinds of things do they write?

Draw me a picture of someone at your house writing. Tell me about your picture.

6. Do you write at home? What do you like to write?

7. Does someone write with you at home? Who?

Draw me a picture of what you look like when you are writing? Tell me about your picture.

8. There is a lot of writing in books, but can you think of anywhere else you see words? Where is that?

Draw me a picture of someplace where you might see those words. Tell me about your picture.

(Adapted from Nutbrown, C. and Hannon, P. (2003). Children's perspectives on family literacy: Methodological issues, findings and implications for practice. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* ,Vol. 3(2), interview questions pp. 120-121.)

APPENDIX D: PID WORKSHOP FEEDBACK INTERVIEW

PID Workshop Feedback Interview

Participant: **Interviewer:**

Date: **Workshop #:**

1. (a) Did you use any of the activities from the workshops or take-home bags? Yes No

   (b) If, yes, which activities did you do? If not, why not?

2. a) Did you have a favourite activity? Yes No

   (b) If yes, which one? What did you like about it?

3. a) Did you read the books from the bags with your child? Yes No

   b) Tell me more about this.

4. a) Did you make any books with your child? Yes No

   b) Tell me about it.

5. (a) Have you noticed any changes in your child's activities or interests during these workshops?

   (b) If yes, what have you noticed?

6. (a) Do you have any suggestions or recommendations as we revise these workshops?

   (b) For the project in general?

APPENDIX E: INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Picture It, Dads! Project

Information Letter and Consent Form

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I would like to invite you and your pre-school child to participate in a research project designed to determine the effectiveness of the **Picture It, Dads! (PIDS) Project**. The attached pamphlet contains more information about **PID**.

This study will be conducted by Dr. Jane Baskwill. I am a researcher and teacher educator on the Faculty of Education, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS. I will also have two research assistants helping me who are graduate students at Mount Saint Vincent University.

To help in this research, I would like permission to interview you and your child to determine the literacy activities you engage in at home and in the community. The interviews will take place at the start of the project and again, with the same questionnaire, at the end of the project. I will use a child-friendly questionnaire of eight questions (the Survey of Pre-School Children's Perspectives on Family Literacy – SPCPFL) especially designed for this purpose. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be administered by me or one of my assistants at a mutually agreed upon date and location in your community.

In addition, I would like your permission to collect items produced during the project by you and your child **PID** journals and drawings, **PID** home-made books, photos, video and audio recordings of **PID** related literacy activities in action, and any other materials pertaining to **PID**

literacy activities that you would like to share with us during the project. We (my assistants and I) would also like to speak with you and your child about these items so we can better understand with what aspect of literacy learning they connect.

We would also like to have the opportunity to interview fathers individually following each of the six **PID** workshops, at which time we will ask you to comment about the various **PID** activities. Interviews will take approximately thirty minutes and will be conducted at a mutually convenient time and location in your community. We would appreciate your permission to audio-tape our conversation so we can be sure we have an accurate record. We would also like your permission to videotape and photograph **PID** workshops.

Only the researchers will have access to the information collected in this project, which will be kept in locked storage at the university for a period of seven years following the completion of the research, at which time it will be destroyed. In addition, all electronic files will be password protected. Neither your name nor your child's name will appear in any reports of this research. A pseudonym (false name) will be assigned to all participants. You have a right to review a copy of any survey, questionnaire, checklist, etc. being administered to your child.

Participation in this project is voluntary and involves no unusual risks to you or your child. You may rescind your permission for you and your child to participate in this research at any time with no negative consequences. However, participants need to be aware that if they reveal information causing the researchers to feel that anyone is the subject of abuse or neglect or is engaged in illegal activities, the researchers will have the responsibility to report this information to the proper authorities.

If you agree to participate with your child, I ask that you explain the project to your child. Please indicate your decision on the following page and either give it to the researchers at this meeting or return them in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. Please do this by_____. Your participation with your child in this project will help us develop better methods of helping fathers who live in rural communities participate in their child’s literacy learning.

Please note that data resulting from this study may appear in publications and presentations about the **PID** Project and that additional permission will be sought from you should we wish to use any items collected that are related to the project prior to submitting an article for publication.

If you have any questions about this research prior to providing consent, please feel free to contact me. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board c/o MSVU Research and International Office, at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Sincerely,

Jane Baskwill
Coordinator of Graduate Literacy
Faculty of Education
Mount Saint Vincent University
166 Bedford Highway,
Halifax, NS B3M 2J6
(902) 457-6189
janebaskwill@gmail.com

Picture It, Dads!

Please indicate below your decisions regarding the various parts of the Picture It, Dads! research project:

I give my permission for the items checked "Yes" below:

Yes	**No**	
_____	_____	I agree to participate in this research.
_____	_____	I approve my child's participation in this research project and permit my child to be interviewed.
_____	_____	Researchers may collect items produced by me and my child during the project: PID journals and drawings, PID home-made books.
_____	_____	I agree to audio recording of PID workshops and interviews.
_____	_____	I agree to video recording of PID workshops.
_____	_____	I am willing to be interviewed by researchers about the PID workshop activities.
_____	_____	I agree to photographs being taken of me and my child during PID workshops.

_____ _____

(Parent/Guardian printed name) (Child's name and age)

_____ _____

(Parent/Guardian signature) Date

You may either mail your signed form in the envelope provided or give it to the researchers.

APPENDIX F: PHOTOGRAPHIC RELEASE FORM

MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

Excellence • Innovation • Discovery

Faculty of Education

PID Project, Jane Baskwill

Photographic Release Form

As part of this project, we will be taking photographs. Please indicate if you consent to photos taken and initial in the spaces provided what uses of these photographs you consent to. In addition, please sign at the end of this form. Photos will only be used in the ways you consent to. Your name or your child's will not be identified in these photos.

YES NO I agree to allow photographs to be taken of my participation in the PID Project.

If you circled YES, please continue.

I give my specific consent as follows:

1. _____Photographs can be reviewed by the research team.

2. _____Photographs can be used for project illustration.

3. _____Photographs can be used for promotional materials such as brochures or flyers.

4. _____Photographs can be used for classroom presentations.

5. _____Photographs can be used for academic conference presentations

.

6. _____Photographs can be used for fundraising presentations/proposals.

7. _____Photographs can be used for book, magazine, journal or newspaper publication.

8. _____Photographs can be posted on the PID website.

_____ _____

(Printed name: Parent) (Child's name)

_____

(Signature)

_____

Date

You may either mail your signed form in the envelope provided or give it to the researchers.

APPENDIX G: VIDEO RELEASE FORM

Faculty of Education

PID Project, Jane Baskwill

Video Release Form

As part of this project, I will be making videotape recordings of you and your child during your participation in the **PID** workshops. Please indicate what uses of these videotapes you are willing to permit, by putting your initials next to the uses you agree to, and signing the form at the end. This choice is completely up to you. I will only use the videotapes in ways that you agree to. In any use of the tapes, you and your child will not be identified by name.

YES NO I agree to allow videotape recordings to be taken of my participation in the PID Project.

If you circled YES, please continue.

1. _____ The videotapes can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.
2. _____ The videotapes can be used for academic publications.
3. _____ The videotapes can be shown at conferences or meetings.
4. _____ The videotapes can be shown in classrooms to students.
5. _____ The videotapes can be shown in public presentations.
6. _____ The videotapes can be used on television or the audio portion can be used on radio.
7. _____ The videotapes can be posted to a web site.

I have read the above descriptions and give my consent for the use of the videotapes as indicated by my initials above.

Parent's Name:_____Child's Name: _____

_____ _____

(Signature) (Date)

You may either mail your signed form in the envelope provided or give it to the researchers.