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Promoting Kindergarten Family Efficacy Through A Virtual Workshop Series: An Action Research Study

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PROMOTING KINDERGARTEN FAMILY EFFICACY THROUGH A VIRTUAL WORKSHOP SERIES: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the families who want to support their children's learning and to all of the educators working to show them how.

Acknowledgments

I am proud to have completed this doctoral program and I am grateful for the support of my tribe along the way. First, I truly could not have it done without the support of my husband, Scott. Thank you for your endless patience and understanding, and for keeping yourself busy these last 5 years! Additionally, I would not be where I am today without the constant encouragement of my family, especially my mother (Dawn) and grandparents (Ruthe, Jan, and Larry). I am also thankful for the support and inspiration from my many mentors along the way, including Evelyn Perhac, Melanie Jenkins, Katina Keener, and Lynda Anderson-Towns; and Lesley, for her endless advice and support.

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I must also offer my gratitude to Delta Kappa Gamma for financially supporting my doctoral study through grants and scholarships. And finally, I am thankful for the friendship and collegiality of the four amazing women who have been on this journey with me since 2016: Kristin, Cathie, Veronica, and Allison. We made it!

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Abstract

Families play an essential role in their children's academic, social, and emotional development. Many families want to support their children's learning but are unsure of how to do so. It is an important task of schools to find ways to engage students' families and help them support their children's learning at home. This study explored the effects of a virtual workshop series designed for the families of kindergarten students on participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices at home. Three research questions were addressed: *After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe their knowledge of family practices that support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade? After participating in a workshop series, how do participants perceive their levels of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home? After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe changes in family practices that support an effective home learning environment?* Taking a mixed methods approach, the study used interviews, surveys, daily reflection charts, and field notes to answer the questions. Results indicated that participants increased their knowledge and self-efficacy related to supporting their children's learning at home and made changes to their family practices, including reading more often with their children. Recommendations include schools offering a variety of workshop opportunities, providing families with necessary materials for home-based learning support, and incorporating ways for families to share their successes and challenges.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

As students step into kindergarten classrooms, they stand at the beginning of their 13-year journey of formal education. This education will take place in schools and classrooms, with student learning facilitated by professional teachers. However, teachers are not the only people who impact a child's learning experiences, and schools are not the only places where learning occurs. Family members who are active in a child's learning life play an important role in a child's development and learning outside of school (Comer, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). These experiences, created through interactions with their families in and around their homes, comprise a child's home learning environment and impact a child's cognitive, emotional, and academic development (Sammons et al., 2015). Once children enter kindergarten and begin their formal schooling, the educational influence of families does not disappear. In fact, a child's home learning environment continues to have a significant educational impact (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012).

In the last decade, the subject of home learning environments has been of growing interest to educational researchers. In fact, several researchers who have studied relationships between home learning environments and student achievement have found home learning environments to be a predictor of future success in the areas of literacy (Niklas & Schneider, 2013); numeracy (Anders et al., 2012); and behavior (Schmiedeler et al., 2014). Having an

academically supportive home learning environment is imperative to maximizing a child's cognitive, emotional, and academic growth.

When it comes to the children in their care, generally families and educators share a common goal: they want what is best for the children (Haynes & Comer, 1996). They want children to be successful in school and in life, reaching their potential academically, socially, and emotionally (Henderson et al., 2007). The difference is that, although educators complete coursework and undergo trainings that teach them effective pedagogical practices and strategies for facilitating children's social and emotional development, many families are not well versed in how to intentionally support their child's development at home and may not feel confident in their abilities to positively influence their child's educational outcomes (Epstein, 1986; Henderson et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Thus, schools should offer opportunities for families to increase their level of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's academic, social, and emotional development at home.

Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy is credited to Bandura (1977) and his work in social cognitive theory. Bandura (1982) stated that an individual's perceived self-efficacy is their judgment of how well they can perform an action that is required to achieve success in a specific situation. Bandura (1977) outlined four ways to develop an individual's self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. A mastery experience occurs when an individual experiences success with a specific task. It is the most influential method of increasing self-efficacy because it is built upon an individual's actual experiences. Vicarious experiences provide opportunities for an individual to see other people experience success with a particular task. When a person sees someone else successfully

accomplish a task, they start to believe they can experience the same success. Verbal persuasion is another strategy for increasing self-efficacy that involves encouraging individuals to believe they can successfully accomplish a task. Although this method is widely used because it is quick and easy to implement, it is important to note that the effects of verbal persuasion are not as strong or as long-lasting as the effects of mastery experiences because they are not built upon a foundation of authentic experiences. The fourth strategy for increasing self-efficacy is emotional arousal. Bandura (1977) stated that when a person is in a tense physiological state, it impedes their performance. He suggested that increasing self-efficacy requires reducing people's stress reactions in a given situation (Bandura, 1994). Thus, lowering levels of fear and anxiety while simultaneously increasing levels of confidence and excitement surrounding a potentially stressful situation means individuals are more likely to experience success in that specific situation.

Increasing Self-Efficacy in Families

Building on Bandura's work on self-efficacy, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) modified the four strategies and applied them to the concept of parent involvement in a child's education. They used the phrase parental sense of efficacy to describe the level of a parent's belief that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to help their child, as well as the belief that their child can learn what they are trying to teach (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) noted that direct, or mastery, experiences occur when individuals successfully accomplish an involvement task, which they defined as a home-based activity related to their child's learning in school or a school-based activity such as supervising a field trip or volunteering in the child's classroom. Vicarious experiences occur when individuals see others successfully complete an involvement task. Vicarious experiences might also include opportunities for families to see involvement tasks modeled for them by

school staff. Verbal persuasion occurs when others inform family members that involvement activities are valuable and encourage families that they are capable of accomplishing involvement tasks. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) noted that in the context of parent involvement, emotional arousal occurs when something important is at stake, such as a child's well-being or educational success, causing families to be emotionally invested in the outcome.

Generally, families want to help their children reach their maximum potential. To accomplish this, families want suggestions and ideas from teachers about how to help their child at home. Additionally, teachers want their students' families to be actively involved in their children's education (Epstein, 2011). As such, it is essential that schools and families work together to form collaborative partnerships in order to improve students' educational outcomes (Epstein, 1995). Epstein (1995) noted that when schools and families collaborate as partners, many positive results occur, including providing families with necessary services and support, increasing families' skills and confidence, and connecting families with other families. Ultimately, students reap the benefits when families play an ongoing role in their children's learning.

Statement of the Action Research Problem

Currently, a knowledge gap exists between what families know and what they feel they need to know to support their child's education at home (Arce, 2019; Epstein, 2011; Henderson et al., 2007; Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Epstein (2011) stated that "the main differences among parents are their knowledge of how to help their children at home…and the degree of information and guidance from their children's teachers in how to help their children at home" (p. 39). To help their children at home, families must first be aware of what is occurring in

school (Henderson et al., 2007). Families of students from preschool through high school want more information about what their children are learning in school, and how they can support this learning at home (Foster, 2012). In a small qualitative study, Arce (2019) determined through interviews, focus groups and questionnaires that parents believed they had an important role to play in their child's education, but they wished for more opportunities to learn how to help their children academically. Similarly, Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) found that parents wanted to engage more with their children's education, but they reported they did not understand what to do or how to do it. Additionally, Henderson et al. (2007) reviewed years of survey data and found that families desired access to books, technology, and other learning materials, and they wanted their child's school to offer more after-school programs and workshops focused on how to help their children at home. Addressing this information gap provides schools an opportunity to offer guidance and support to the families they serve. In this case, schools could support their students by providing support to their students' families. Henderson et al. (2007) noted that schools bear the burden of responsibility to forge partnerships with families, stating that "reaching out to parents is easier for educators than 'reaching in' to teachers and other staff is for parents" (p. 40). Epstein (2011) emphasized this point, noting that the flow of information shared with families is typically one-way, from school to home, and is controlled by teachers and school staff. Families want to be involved in their children's education, but this involvement should be initiated by the school (Foster, 2012). Thus, by increasing the number of opportunities for effective two-way communication and engaging families in their children's education, schools can build stronger relationships with families (Epstein, 1995).

One key aspect that determines whether families become involved in their children's education is the level of self-efficacy they feel about their abilities to assist their children

(Henderson et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). Families are more likely to become involved if they think they have the knowledge and skills to help their children, and if they believe that the activities they do at home will have a positive impact on their children's education (Henderson et al., 2007). Henderson et al. (2007) suggested that schools can help build families' efficacy in their abilities to support their children's learning by offering workshops that provide family members with information and give them materials that will help them develop their skills. Knowledge is power and equipping families with the information and skills necessary to develop an effective home learning environment is essential to supporting children's educational outcomes and forging effective and productive partnerships between schools and families (Foster, 2012; Henderson et al., 2007).

Schools can put into place various structures to help families as they develop their home learning environments. Henderson et al. (2007) suggested that implementing events such as reading workshops, family math nights, or Saturday academies can help families engage with their children's learning and have a positive impact on student achievement. Building from this idea, I planned to implement a virtual workshop series for the families of kindergarten students. The purpose of the study was to explore the short-term impacts of the workshop series on participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices at home. Each session in the series had a different focus, with specific goals and outcomes intended to improve the effectiveness of a family's home learning environment.

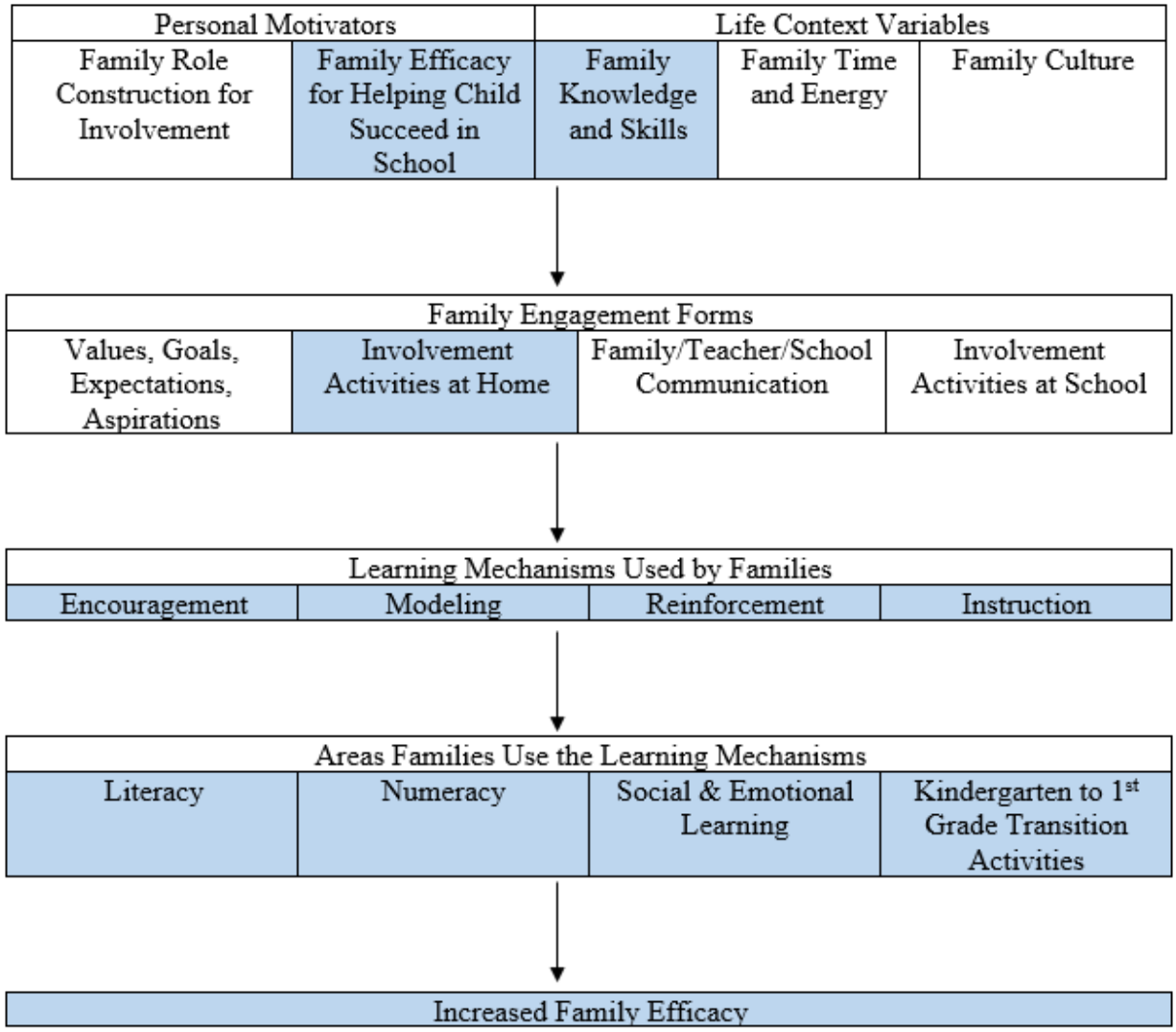
Conceptual Framework

I created a conceptual framework to use as a guide for this study (see Figure 1). The foundation of this framework was Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005; see also Walker et al., 2010) theoretical model of parent involvement. The areas highlighted in blue

signify areas that were addressed during this study. The goal of the workshop series was to provide families with the knowledge, skills, and materials they needed to increase their self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home. This was achieved through four virtual workshop sessions, which showed families how to incorporate activities at home to encourage, model, reinforce, and instruct their children in the areas of literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework: Increasing Family Efficacy



Note. Adapted from "Why is parent involvement important? Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model of the Parental Involvement Process," by Parent Institute (http://www.par-inst.com/pdf-samples/h-d-and-s-model.pdf). Copyright 2012 by Parent Institute.

Context of the Action Research Problem

This study took place in a single elementary school in a school district in southeastern Virginia. The school district, classified by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE, 2009)

as “rural, fringe” (p. 1), is comprised of five elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. During the 2019–2020 school year, the elementary school where the study was implemented served approximately 400 students in Grades PreK–5, including 59 kindergarten students (VDOE, n.d.). According to 2019 fall membership data, 82.9% of the students identified as White, 7.2% as Hispanic, 6.5% as multiple races, and 3.5% as Black. In addition, 15.9% of students were identified as students with disabilities, 39.5% of students were categorized as economically disadvantaged, and 3.5% of students were classified as English Learners (VDOE, n.d.).

At the time of the study, the school engaged in several types of traditional family engagement activities throughout the school year. Activities directly related to student learning included an annual literacy event, math and science nights, and math night at the local grocery store. There were also activities that were not directly linked to student learning such as the Parent Teacher Association’s (PTA) family movie night and spring carnival. At all the academic events during the 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 school years, attendance and participation for students in kindergarten was the lowest of all the grade levels (K. Keener, personal communication, October 30, 2020). As some of the youngest and newest students in the school, these students and their families may not have been aware of these events, may have been unsure of how to participate in these events, or may not have felt as though they belonged at these events. Implementing a virtual workshop series designed specifically for families of kindergarten students was one way to connect with the families of some of the school’s youngest learners who were not taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the school.

Brief Overview of the Action Research Intervention

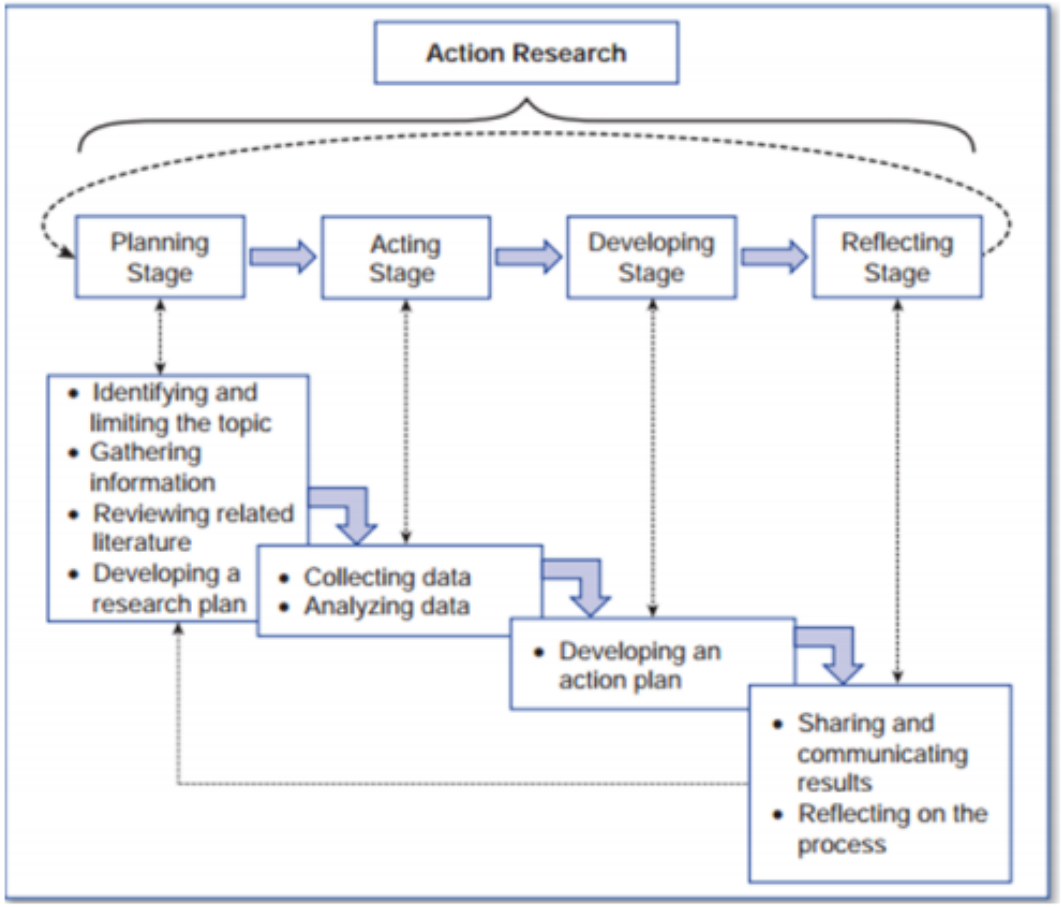
The intervention that was implemented in this research study was a virtual workshop series designed for the families of kindergarten students. The workshop series was comprised of four sessions, each with a different focus: literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade. The series took place during the spring of the students' kindergarten year. Each session was scheduled for 45 minutes, which included a planned 30-minute presentation and 15 minutes for questions or discussion. Each session had specific goals related to the content of the session, and participants received materials that helped them implement the new knowledge and skills that they learned during each session. Two of Bandura's (1977) strategies for increasing self-efficacy were evident in the sessions, including vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion. Ultimately, the purpose of the study was to explore the short-term impacts of the workshop series on participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices at home.

Action Research Model

Action research is defined as research that is carried out by practitioners whose ultimate goal is to improve educational outcomes (Mertler, 2017). The action research model used to guide this study was Mertler's (2017) four-stage model. The four stages included planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. The planning stage included choosing a topic, reviewing past and current literature on the subject, and designing a research plan. The acting stage involved implementing the study, collecting data, and analyzing data. The developing stage focused on the development of an action plan to use the results of the study. Finally, the reflecting stage encouraged the sharing and communicating of the study's results with appropriate stakeholders. The cyclical process of the four steps is demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Mertler's Steps to Action Research



Note. Reprinted from *Action Research: Improving Schools and Empowering Educators* (5th ed.), by C. A. Mertler, 2017, SAGE. Copyright 2017 by SAGE Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).

Action research was a fitting approach for this study because the process is designed for practitioners to address a specific problem of practice in their current setting (Mertler, 2017). The problem that was addressed in this study was the knowledge gap that exists between what families know and what they feel they need to know to support their kindergarten child at home. Optimally the workshop series would help build knowledge in families, which in return would build their self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning. In addition, action research is

both collaborative and participative, with educators working together to improve educational practice. The virtual workshop series that was implemented in this study incorporated the combined efforts of school and district staff to provide support for families of kindergarten students. Finally, the action research process allowed family members who participated in the workshop series to provide feedback about the effectiveness of the series. This feedback will be used as the foundation for another cycle of action research, thus highlighting the cyclical nature of the action research process.

Action Research Questions

The purpose of the virtual workshop series for families of kindergarten students was to empower families with the knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy to create a more effective home learning environment. The following questions acted as a basis for this study:

1. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe their knowledge of family practices that support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade?
2. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants perceive their levels of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home?
3. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe changes in family practices that support an effective home learning environment?

Definitions of Terms

Action research: research that is carried out by practitioners to address a specific problem in their current setting (Mertler, 2017).

Emotional arousal: a strategy for increasing self-efficacy that occurs when something important is at stake, causing an individual to become emotionally invested in the outcome (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995)

Family: any person who assumes most of the responsibility for the daily care of a child; could include, but is not limited to, biological parents, stepparents, grandparents, or non-biological caregivers such as foster parents or friends of the family

Family engagement: activities that honor the many ways families can be supportive of their children's education at home and at school, and is based on relationships of trust between families and schools; inclusive term that respects the contributions of biological and non-biological caregivers to a child's education (Baker et al., 2016; Pushor, 2012)

Family practices: activities that family members engage in at home that support a child's development in literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills

Home learning environment: activities and interactions that take place in a child's home and surrounding environment that support a child's educational development (Lehrl et al., 2020)

Home literacy experiences: formal (such as direct instruction about letters and letter sounds) or informal (such as reading stories before bedtime) activities that take place in the home and support a child's literacy development

Home numeracy experiences: formal (such as direct instruction about numbers and counting) or informal (such as cooking, crafts, or carpentry) activities that take place in the home and support a child's numeracy development

Involvement task: a home-based or school-based activity directly or indirectly related to a child's learning in school, such as reviewing homework or supervising a field trip (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997)

Mastery experience: a strategy to increase self-efficacy in which the individual successfully accomplishes a specific task (Bandura, 1977)

Parental self-efficacy: parents' beliefs and knowledge that they can teach their child (content, processes, attitudes, and values), and that their child can learn what they teach (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992)

Self-efficacy: an individual's belief that they have the capabilities to successfully accomplish a given task (Bandura, 1977)

Social and emotional learning: the development of social and emotional competencies in five core areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2017)

Verbal persuasion: a strategy to increase self-efficacy in which an individual is led to believe that they have the capabilities to successfully accomplish a specific task (Bandura, 1977)

Vicarious experiences: a strategy to increase self-efficacy in which an individual observes another individual successfully complete a specific task, and believes they, too, can successfully accomplish the same task (Bandura, 1977)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review examines past and current research related to family engagement and parental self-efficacy. First, I address a brief background of academic socialization and family engagement, types of family engagement practices, benefits of and barriers to family engagement, and the role of family engagement in school reform. Next, I review four models of family engagement—several of which incorporate self-efficacy as an explicit component—and investigate what previous researchers have concluded about parental academic self-efficacy. Finally, I examine the effectiveness of family engagement programs, and review research about the relationships between home learning environments and each of the four areas the virtual workshop series addressed: literacy, numeracy, social-emotional learning (SEL), and the transition from kindergarten to first grade.

Academic Socialization

Parents are their children's first teachers. As such, they are the main actors responsible for a child's academic socialization. Academic socialization is the diverse set of parental beliefs and behaviors that affect a child's school-related development (Taylor et al., 2004). The concept acknowledges that parents help shape their children's attitudes toward school and academics. When families are committed and well informed about their children's learning, children are more likely to flourish (Constantino, 2020). Taylor and colleagues (2004) stated that who parents are and what parents do greatly affects a child's school-related development in their early years.

The researchers posited that "who parents are" includes socioeconomic and cultural influences, parental cognitions about school, and a parent's individual experiences; "what parents do" includes the home learning they create, transition practices they incorporate, and their involvement in their child's education. This involvement in their child's education is more broadly defined as family engagement.

Family Engagement

Throughout this dissertation, I use the term *family engagement*, except when discussing other's research, in which case I use the term the researchers used. Family engagement is an inclusive term that recognizes and honors the contributions of biological and non-biological caregivers to a child's education (Baker et al., 2016; Pushor, 2012). Family engagement is multi-faceted and complex, respecting the many ways families can be supportive of their children's education at home and at school. It necessitates moving beyond the idea that learning only happens in schools and recognizing that families can positively impact their children's education in many ways (Rosenberg et al., 2009). For example, families are engaged at school when they participate in parent-teacher conferences or attend school events (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), but they can also be engaged in their child's education at home, such as when they help with homework, ask their child about their day at school, or maintain high academic expectations (Baker et al., 2016; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Schools that prioritize family engagement recognize that families can be actively involved in their children's education without being physically present in the school building, and these schools work to capitalize upon the myriad ways parents can support their children's education.

In addition, the concept of family engagement is undergirded by the notion that effective engagement is a shared responsibility between families and schools (Weiss et al., 2010). For

family engagement efforts to be successful, there must be trusting relationships between families and schools. This requires families and schools to work together and form productive partnerships (Weiss et al., 2010). In a true partnership, schools and families work collaboratively to solve problems, share information, and guide students (Epstein, 2011). Epstein (1995) noted that the main reason to form family-school partnerships is to help students succeed in school and beyond. However, there are other benefits of productive partnerships. Epstein (1995) stated that "partnerships can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work" (p. 701). Henderson et al. (2007) reiterated the importance of partnerships, stating that "partnerships among schools, families, and community groups are not a luxury—they are a necessity" (p. 1). Family engagement efforts are those that promote the development of strong partnerships between families and schools.

Family engagement has long been seen as an essential component in successful school communities (Haynes & Comer, 1996). As the benefits of family engagement have become more well-known, mandatory family engagement components have been included in federal education legislation (Watson et al., 2012). For example, in 1964, the federally funded Project Head Start included mandatory parent involvement. The following year, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 also included a required parent involvement component. Decades later, the 1994 writing of the Goals 2000 Act included parent involvement as one of its eight national goals (Hiatt-Michael, 2001), and the reauthorization of ESEA in 2001 as the No Child Left Behind legislation maintained its parent involvement component (Watson et al., 2012). As with previous legislation, the more recent Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) also

included a mandatory parent engagement component, requiring that 1% of Title I funds be used to support family engagement activities (ESSA, 2015).

Types of Family Engagement Practices

In the section that follows, I discuss the three categories of family engagement practices put forth by Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues (2009): school-based involvement, home-based activities, and communication. In addition, I discuss virtual family engagement practices, which have gained popularity since the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

School-Based Involvement

School-based involvement occurs at the physical school building and typifies the traditional idea of parent involvement. Chaperoning a field trip, participating in the school's literacy or numeracy night, or attending a parent teacher association (PTA) meeting are school-based involvement activities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). When participating in these activities, families are visible in the school environment. Although these activities are important, merely attending such activities is not as impactful as being actively engaged in supporting a child's academic development (Baker et al., 2016). Additionally, although some parents can participate in school-based activities, many events are not accessible to those who have conflicting work schedules, unmet childcare needs, or other competing obligations (Epstein, 1986).

Home-Based Activities

In contrast, home-based engagement activities occur when families participate in activities at home with the purpose of supporting their child's academic, social, and emotional development. Home-based activities can include reviewing graded work, supervising homework completion, or facilitating a discussion about the school day (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler,

1997). Some home-based activities do not appear to directly support academic growth but have an indirect effect on a child's academic progress, including participation in extracurricular activities, maintaining high expectations for children's behavior, and establishing a daily family routine with a designated time and place for study (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Jeynes, 2011). Baker et al. (2016) noted that anytime families spend time with their child participating in activities that will help them in school, they are implementing a home-based engagement activity.

Communication

The third family engagement category is communication. Examples of communication activities are emails or phone calls between teachers and families about a student's classroom performance, or attendance at a parent-teacher conference (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2009). However, it is important to distinguish between providing information and engaging in effective communication. Epstein (1986) noted that when schools send home information about students' academic progress or upcoming events, they are merely providing information, not engaging in true communication. She added that for communication to be considered an involvement practice, it must be free-flowing and allow for two-way communication. Comer (2005) reiterated this idea, stating that effective two-way communication between families and teachers is necessary to provide a comprehensive system of support for students' development at home and at school.

Virtual Engagement Activities

In March 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, schools across America closed their doors and shifted to fully remote or virtual teaching and learning (Camera, 2020). Family engagement efforts were affected, and schools and communities had to think of

innovative ways to engage families. Alvarez Gutierrez et al. (2020) suggested that schools invest in families as co-educators. They recognized that many families were unprepared to take on the teaching responsibilities necessitated by the global pandemic, and that providing materials, workshops, and individualized support to families was a way to help families build confidence.

Benefits of Family Engagement

In recent decades, educational researchers have found innumerable benefits of family engagement, including benefits to students, schools, and families (Epstein, 2011; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Haynes & Comer, 1996). At the elementary level, students with engaged families earn better grades, complete homework more often, have better rates of attendance, demonstrate more positive attitudes toward school, have fewer disciplinary infractions, score higher on standardized assessments, and experience overall increased student achievement (Baker et al., 2016; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Henderson et al., 2007; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jeynes, 2005).

Schools also benefit from increased levels of family engagement. Many of the resulting benefits for students are also considered benefits for schools, such as improved attendance, higher student grades and test scores, and lower rates of disciplinary infractions (Baker et al., 2016; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jeynes, 2005). In addition, productive partnerships between schools and families lead to improved parent-staff relationships, higher opinions of the school's teachers, and increased confidence in the school's effectiveness (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Increased family engagement also results in an improved school climate, improved teacher morale, and increased teacher job satisfaction (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Family engagement is also beneficial for families. As family members become more involved in their children's education, they become more confident and efficacious about their ability to help their children succeed academically (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This increased self-efficacy leads to increased satisfaction and an improved self-image (Epstein & Becker, 1982), often resulting in family members making positive changes in their own lives, such as taking on leadership roles, continuing their education, or pursuing additional job training (Epstein & Becker, 1982; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson et al., 2007). Active involvement in their children's education also presents opportunities for families to connect with community resources, services and supports, and provides opportunities to forge relationships with other families (Epstein, 1995).

Barriers to Family Engagement

Although meaningful family engagement produces many benefits for students, schools, and families, there are also significant barriers to family engagement that must be considered and addressed before schools can truly engage families in their children's education. These barriers can be divided into two categories: challenges for families and challenges for schools.

Challenges for Families

Many families face significant challenges that limit their ability or willingness to engage in their children's education. Families might experience challenges to engagement in the following areas: (a) family schedules, (b) unmet childcare needs, (c) cultural barriers, (d) construct of the parental role, or (e) previous school experiences (Foster, 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Watson et al., 2012). For example, with many family members working outside of the home and often working multiple jobs, work schedules limit their abilities to

engage during the day. Another example is the cultural barrier that exists when families do not speak English or have different cultural norms about family engagement (Foster, 2012).

Additionally, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) stated that a parent's construct of the parental role and their perceived self-efficacy about their ability to have a positive impact on their children's education contributes to their willingness to participate in family engagement activities. Thus, if families do not feel that they should be involved or if they do not feel as though they have adequate knowledge or skills to support their child, they could be unwilling to get involved (Baker et al., 2016). Finally, individuals' previous educational experiences might also impact their decision to be involved. Family members who had negative school experiences themselves might be less willing to be involved (Comer, 2005).

Challenges for Schools

The responsibility for initiating family engagement efforts lies with the school (Baker et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2007). Yet there are many challenges to engaging families. It is difficult to reach and engage all parents, and it can be a challenge to engage families without overburdening available resources. This can lead to resentment among some school staff, who assume their students' families are uninterested in being actively involved in their child's education (Watson et al., 2012). School staff might also make assumptions about what families know and what they need to know. For example, Foster (2012) stated that teachers should not assume that parents know how to help their child with homework. Instead, teachers should offer parents suggestions about how to support their child's homework completion productively.

Additionally, even when schools try to engage families, their efforts sometimes prove unsuccessful. Baker et al. (2016) found that parents often reported being unaware of school events and activities or learning about activities with too little time to plan adequately for

attendance. Strategies for engagement that include ineffective one-way communication or rigid options for participation could actually hinder family engagement (Watson et al., 2012).

Role of Family Engagement in School Reform Efforts

Efforts to reform schools are demarcated by a continuous, cyclical process (Lezotte, 1991). In other words, schools should continue to strive for improvements until all students are able to demonstrate success with grade level standards and expectations. Over 3 decades ago, Edmonds (1982) proposed five characteristics of effective schools: (a) principal's leadership, (b) strong instructional focus, (c) orderly and safe climate, (d) high teacher expectations for students, and (e) program evaluations that incorporate measures of student achievement. None of these mentioned family engagement. Almost a decade later, Lezotte (1991), recognizing the importance of family engagement in school reform efforts, modified Edmonds's five characteristics and added two more: (a) opportunity to learn and student time on task, and (b) home-school relations. Haynes and Comer (1996) also acknowledged the importance of including families in school reform efforts, noting that "education is a holistic process in which significant adults—parents, school staff, and responsible members of the community—work together to help children develop well along multiple pathways" (p. 501). Similarly, Bryk (2010) recognized the important role of families in school reform efforts, listing strong parent-community-school ties as one of the five essential supports for school improvement. If schools hope to see results from their improvement efforts, families must be included in the process as essential stakeholders, and cultivating authentic partnerships between home and school must be a top priority.

Jeynes (2012) found that at the elementary level, family engagement programs that focused on families and children reading together, families checking homework, and family

communication with teachers resulted in the highest effect sizes. Similarly, See and Gorard (2013) acknowledged that the most promising phase for effective family engagement interventions is during early school years, and that such programs are likely to be most effective when they incorporate collaboration between school staff and families, parental training, and ongoing support.

Models and Frameworks of Family Engagement

There are many different models and frameworks of family engagement. It is beyond the scope of this literature review to review all of them. Instead, this section provides an overview of four such models: (a) Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence and Six Types of Parent Involvement, (b) Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parent Involvement, (c) Mapp and Kuttner's Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, and (d) Jeynes's Dual Navigation Approach. Epstein's and Hoover Dempsey and Sandler's models were chosen because they are broadly recognized and accepted frameworks in the field of family engagement research. Although more recent than the other two, Mapp and Kuttner's and Jeynes's frameworks were chosen because they emphasize the self-efficacy of families as a component of the models, an area of particular focus for this study.

Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence and Six Types of Parent Involvement

One of the most widely used theoretical frameworks in family engagement research, Epstein's (1995) theory of overlapping spheres of influence places the student in the center of the overlap of the three contexts that influence a child's social, emotional, and academic development: family, school, and the community. Epstein (1995) recognized that although "students are the main actors in their education, development and success in school…partnerships can be designed to engage, guide, energize, and motivate students to

produce their own successes" (p. 702). The theory recognizes that the level of overlap between families, schools, and communities can be increased or decreased based on the experiences, efforts, and practices of families, schools, and the community (Yamauchi et al., 2017).

Epstein (1995) posited a conceptual framework consisting of six types of parent involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. In this model, the six types of involvement can "guide the development of a balanced, comprehensive program of partnerships, including opportunities for family involvement at school and at home" (p. 707).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Theoretical Model of Parent Involvement

Recognizing that parent involvement is a "powerful enabling and enhancing variable in children's educational success" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 319), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005; see also Walker et al., 2010) created a theoretical model of parent involvement that considers the involvement process from the perspective of parents and acknowledges that parent involvement is a dynamic process that can change over time. Their model is unique in that it focuses on why parents choose to become involved. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005; see also Walker et al., 2010) model has undergone multiple revisions and currently includes six levels:

- Level 1: Parents' Motivations to Become Involved
- Level 1.5: Parent Involvement Forms
- Level 2: Learning Mechanisms Engaged by Parents During Involvement Activities
- Level 3: Student Perceptions of Learning Mechanisms Engaged by Parents
- Level 4: Student Proximal Learning Attributes Conducive to Achievement
- Level 5: Student Achievement

Level 1: Parents' Motivations to Become Involved. In Level 1 of the model, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005; see also Walker et al., 2010) posited that there are three areas that parents consider when choosing to become involved: (a) personal motivators, (b) perceptions of invitations to be involved, and (c) life context variables.

Of these three areas, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) noted the importance of personal motivators: the parental role construction for involvement and parental efficacy for helping their child succeed in school. They recognized that both of these reasons are necessary for involvement, while perceptions of opportunities appear to be less influential on a parent's decision to be involved. A parent's construction of the parenting role is the most important, because if a parent does not feel that their role requires them to be involved in their child's education, then they will likely not make an effort to do so. However, having a parental role construction that includes involvement is not sufficient; in order to be involved, parents must also take action. This is where parents' personal sense of efficacy influences their decision to be involved. When parents see involvement activities as reasonable and valuable, and feel that they have the adequate knowledge and skills to implement the activities with success, they are more likely to become involved. Additionally, life context variables play a role in determining whether parents become involved in their child's education. For example, a parent's specific areas of knowledge and skills will influence whether they become involved. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) noted that parents will choose involvement forms they are confident they can execute successfully. Second, other demands on a parent's time and energy influence a parent's type of involvement. Work schedules, unmet childcare needs, and other competing obligations could restrict the types of involvement activities in which a parent can participate.

Level 1.5: Parent Involvement Forms. In later revisions of the model, an additional level was added between Levels 1 and 2 that outlined four forms of parent involvement (Walker et al., 2010). There are many ways for parents to be involved in their child's education and there are several factors that affect a parent's choice of involvement. There are four ways parents can be involved: (a) setting goals, expectations, and aspirations for their child; (b) involvement activities at home; (c) parent/teacher/school communication; and (d) involvement activities at school.

Level 2: Learning Mechanisms Engaged by Parents During Involvement Activities. In their model, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005; see also Walker et al., 2010) described four types of mechanisms of influence: encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction. First, when parents encourage and model appropriate school-related behaviors and attitudes, they demonstrate to the child that school-related activities are important and worthy of time and attention. Second, parents' reinforcement of specific aspects of school-related learning can lead to improved student outcomes. When parents acknowledge, praise, and reward positive school-related behaviors, such as doing homework or studying for a test, the child is more likely to repeat the rewarded behavior (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Third, parents can influence their child's learning through direct instruction, such as when parents help children learn factual information (e.g., reading sight words) or through open-ended discussions that encourage students to explain, analyze, and compare. In 2010, a fourth mechanism was added: encouragement. This addition stems from the idea that the "emotional quality of parent-child interactions influences the effectiveness of specific parenting practices" (Walker et al., 2010, p. 29).

Level 3: Student Perceptions of Learning Mechanisms Engaged by Parents. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005; see also Walker et al., 2010) acknowledged that the impacts of the learning mechanisms used by parents are mediated by student perceptions of the learning mechanisms that are used. More specifically, there are two mediating variables that influence a child's educational outcomes: the use of developmentally appropriate involvement strategies and the fit between parents' involvement actions and school expectations. First, parents must choose involvement activities that are developmentally appropriate for their child, and the choice of involvement activities must be perceived by the child as positive and appropriate. Second, the fit between parents' involvement activities and school expectations is an important mediating variable. If the parent's choices are aligned with school expectations, their involvement has a greater probability of having a positive impact.

Level 4: Student Proximal Attributes Conducive to Achievement. The fourth level of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005; see also Walker et al., 2010) model includes four important outcomes for the child that lead to student achievement: (a) academic self-efficacy, (b) intrinsic motivation to learn, (c) self-regulatory strategy knowledge and use, and (d) social self-efficacy for relating to teachers. When parents engage in modeling, reinforcing, instructing, and encouraging their child at home, the child is likely to learn knowledge and skills that will support their success in school and build their motivation to continue learning. Additionally, when parents are involved in their child's education, they reinforce the development of a child's personal sense of self-efficacy for doing well in school.

Level 5: Student Achievement. The final level of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997, 2005; see also Walker et al., 2010) model shows how the previous levels culminate in increased student achievement. When students are motivated to learn and feel efficacious

about their abilities to learn as a result of their parents' encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction, then they are more likely to achieve at higher levels.

Mapp and Kuttner's Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships

Many family engagement policies are undergirded by the assumption that educators and families already have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to develop and maintain productive partnerships between home and school (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). In actuality, although school staff recognize the importance of establishing such partnerships, they typically receive minimal training regarding how to engage families. Meanwhile, families face barriers that prevent their engagement, including a limited understanding of how the school system works, a limited understanding of how to advocate for their child, and competing obligations that require their time and energy, such as work schedules or unmet childcare needs. It is with this understanding that Mapp and Kuttner (2013) created their framework for family-school partnerships. The premise of the framework is that, in order to form productive partnerships, it is first necessary to build the capacity of families and schools. To address this, their model includes four components: capacity challenges, opportunity conditions, policy and program goals, and staff and family partnership outcomes.

The first component, capacity challenges, has already been mentioned. Educators are uncertain how to effectively engage with families, and families are uncertain how to effectively engage with the school and advocate for their child. For example, if their child is struggling with math, literacy, or social and emotional skills, a parent might be unsure of how to inquire about getting extra help for their child. The second component, opportunity conditions, is further divided into two types: process conditions and organizational conditions. Process conditions are the designs, actions, and procedures of a family engagement initiative; they are necessary for a

parent to leave a learning experience feeling excited and prepared to implement their new knowledge. Conversely, organizational conditions are viewed from a systems level. They are the conditions that are required to sustain and expand family engagement initiatives to other schools and entire districts.

The third component is policy and program goals. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) emphasized that policies created to improve family engagement must focus on building the capacity of both families and school staff. The researchers further broke this component down into four sub-components: capabilities, connections, confidence, and cognition. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) noted the importance of self-efficacy, stating that "staff and families need a sense of comfort and self-efficacy related to engaging in partnership activities" (p. 11).

The fourth component is staff and family partnership outcomes. The ultimate outcome from developing productive partnerships between families and schools is to support students' learning and development in order to improve student and school outcomes.

In 2019, Mapp and Bergman updated the framework based on feedback from over 1,000 practitioners. First, the framework switched from a vertical alignment to a horizontal alignment, to demonstrate the flow from ineffective partnerships to effective partnerships. Next, opportunity conditions were renamed *essential conditions*, and relational trust was moved to the top to highlight its importance. Additionally, *culturally responsive and respectful* was added as a necessary process condition. Finally, an additional graphic was added to the end of the framework to emphasize the ultimate goal of effective partnerships, to support student achievement and school improvement.

Jeynes's Dual Navigation Approach

In 2018, Jeynes published a practical model of parent engagement to be used by school leaders to develop parent engagement in the home and at school. Called the Dual Navigation Approach, the model details five school-based and five home-based components of parent involvement. The five school-based components include: (a) partnership with the teacher, (b) communication between parents and teachers/school, (c) checking homework, (d) parent participation and attendance, and (e) drawing from community resources. The five family-based components include: (a) maintaining high expectations, (b) supportive and informative communication, (c) parenting style, (d) reading with children, and (e) household rules.

An important strength to Jeynes's (2018) Dual Navigation Approach model is that the model is research-based, created from the results of six meta-analyses of family engagement he conducted over the course of 15 years. Jeynes noted an important benefit of a meta-analysis is its comprehensive nature. It incorporates results from many studies to provide a robust grounding of research. As such, using the results of meta-analyses prevents school leaders from the mistake of using the results of a single study as the basis for initiating change.

However, Jeynes's (2018) Dual Navigation Approach also has some limitations. Although meta-analyses have several benefits, there are also disadvantages. A meta-analysis is only as strong as the studies it includes. If the studies are of poor quality the results of the meta-analysis could be inaccurate (Chambers, 2004). Another limitation is the newness of the model. There has not yet been enough time for the model to be thoroughly implemented, reviewed, or critiqued. Another limitation of the model is that 7 out of 10 components rely on family members initiating action. Even two of the school-based components (checking homework and attendance at school events) rely on families taking the first step. Only three components (partnerships with

the teacher, communication between home and school, and drawing on community resources) are initiated by schools. However, many researchers feel that the burden of initiating parent engagement efforts should fall to schools rather than families (Baker et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2007).

Promoting Parenting Efficacy

Three of the four family engagement models previously discussed have one important commonality: they reference self-efficacy in some form. Self-efficacy is an individual's perceived judgment of how well they can perform an action that is necessary to achieve success in a specific situation (Bandura, 1982). First, although Epstein's (1995) model did not directly address self-efficacy, she indirectly referenced the concept when she noted that most families are not well versed in how to intentionally support their child's academic, social, and emotional development at home, and might not feel confident in their abilities to positively influence their child's educational outcomes (Epstein, 1986). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) model directly addressed the importance of self-efficacy when they listed a parent's personal sense of efficacy as one of the three reasons that a parent chooses to become involved in their child's education. Further, they identified a parent's sense of self-efficacy as one of two necessary conditions for parent involvement. In their Dual Capacity-Building Framework, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) listed confidence and self-efficacy as one of the policy and program goals; and Jeynes's (2018) Dual Navigation Approach noted that his model is designed to combine "aspects of volunteer parental participation with school-based efforts to maximize the efficacy of parents and schools" (p. 149).

Parenting Self-Efficacy

As discussed in Chapter 1, Bandura (1977) identified four ways an individual can develop self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Other researchers have built on Bandura's work and addressed the area of *parenting self-efficacy* (PSE): the individual's perceived belief of their ability to raise successful children and have a positive influence on their children's behavior and development (Coleman & Karraker, 1998; Wittkowski et al., 2017). Coleman and Karraker (1998) recognized that parenting self-efficacy "does not represent a global, fixed personality trait but is instead conceptualized as an integral component of a dynamic, emergent system subject to modification in response to the changing demands of the task" (p. 51). Wittkowski et al. (2017) reiterated this notion, recognizing that PSE is malleable, and is situation-dependent and situation-specific. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992) emphasized a distinction between parent self-efficacy and parent education, stating that although parent education results in higher levels of skill and knowledge, it is a parent's self-efficacy that increases the chances a parent will move beyond knowledge to action.

PSE in the Context of Education

Building on Bandura's (1977) work, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) adapted the four methods of increasing self-efficacy and applied them to the concept of parent involvement in a child's education. In the context of education, PSE describes a parent's belief that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to help their child, as well as the belief that their child can learn what they are trying to teach (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) noted that direct, or mastery, experiences occur when parents successfully accomplish an involvement task. Vicarious experiences occur when parents see others

successfully complete an involvement task. Vicarious experiences might also include opportunities for parents to see involvement tasks modeled for them by school staff. Verbal persuasion occurs when others inform parents that involvement activities are important and encourage parents that they are capable of accomplishing involvement tasks. Finally, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) noted that in the context of parent involvement, emotional arousal occurs when something valuable is at stake, such as a child's well-being or educational success, and causes a parent to become emotionally committed to the outcome.

Bandura et al. (1996) found that a parent's beliefs in their own efficacy about their ability to support their child's education, and the educational aspirations they hold for their child are two important factors in a child's academic development. They noted that parents who are academically efficacious are more likely to create supportive learning environments at home. They are more likely to facilitate educational activities at home, and to encourage the development of important skills that indirectly support learning, such as interpersonal and self-management skills. Similarly, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) stated that higher levels of PSE are correlated with a responsive, motivating, and supportive home environment, which in turn, promotes the healthy development of a child's social, academic, and psychological well-being. In addition, parents with high degrees of academic PSE are more likely to serve as powerful partners with schools, and to act as strong advocates for their child in educational settings (Bandura et al., 1996).

A parent's sense of academic PSE and its connections to the creation of an effective home learning environment, a parent's involvement at home and school, and the academic development of a child is acknowledged in the literature. The importance of PSE combined with its adaptability makes it an important goal of family engagement interventions. Because of the

power of this concept and its malleability, schools should consider creating interventions that are specifically designed to develop parental self-efficacy, and to increase parents' beliefs that they can have a positive influence on their child's academic success (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992; Wittkowski et al., 2017).

Impact of Families on Children's Education

Families play an important role in children's education. This has been especially true in the last 18 months as schools have shifted to virtual teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Vegas and Winthrop (2020) stated that schools should engage families as allies in students' education by equipping them to support their children's learning at home. In fact, Epstein (2011) found that families wanted to learn about the school's instructional programs and learn ways to help their children at home in specific areas. This section of the literature review summarizes the findings of how families can support their children at home in four areas: literacy, numeracy, social and emotional development, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade. These areas were each addressed in a workshop session, with the research acting as a guide for the goals of each session.

Literacy

Literacy is the key to a bright future. One World Literacy Foundation (n.d.) states that "the ability to read is a vital skill in being able to function in today's society" (para. 1). Reese et al. (2009) agreed, arguing that literacy is "perhaps the most important sociocultural tool that a child can have in Western society" (p. 35). An essential task of families and educators is teaching students to read and supporting their literacy development. Although it is assumed that schools will provide students with quality literacy instruction, many families do not know how to effectively support their child's reading development at home.

One of the most frequent suggestions from teachers is for family members to read to their children routinely (Becker & Epstein, 1982). However, Sénéchal and Young (2008) found that training parents merely to read to their child did not affect the child's reading skills. Morrow and Brittain (2009) echoed these findings, stating that "reading stories by itself does not exert a magical influence on literacy development" (p. 138). Thus, Reese and colleagues (2009) argued that it might not be the act of reading to a child that is beneficial, but rather the way in which children are read to that supports their literacy development.

Specifically, shared reading strategies such as picture walks and dialogic reading are more beneficial to children's literacy development (Sénéchal & Young, 2008). Engaging in a picture walk by having children look at the story's illustrations before reading provides opportunities for children to activate their prior knowledge, make predictions, and familiarize themselves with the story prior to reading (Brown et al., 2019). Brown et al. (2019) found that picture walks made the first reading of a story less daunting and provided a positive, motivating experience for children. Another shared reading technique, dialogic reading, incorporates "high levels of interaction between adult and child, with an emphasis on getting the child to answer open-ended questions and take more responsibility for storytelling over the course of repeated readings" (Reese et al., 2009, p. 39). Dialogic reading can be characterized as reading *with* a child rather than reading *to* a child. This type of shared reading encourages the child to take an active role in reading, rather than being a passive listener (Brown et al., 2019). Morrow and Brittain (2009) stated that the quality of interactions between the adult and child is the component that results in positive effects on the child's literacy development. Doyle and Bramwell (2006) echoed this notion, emphasizing that a "critical factor in shared book reading is the discourse, or verbal interaction, between adults and children" (p. 555). In their meta-analysis

of 16 studies, Mol et al. (2008) reported similar findings for young children, stating that "enhancing the dialogue between parent and child during reading sessions strengthens the effects of book reading" (p. 20).

However, Mol and colleagues (2008) recognized that parents do not automatically implement interactive reading techniques, because many parents do not know how to apply these techniques or are unaware of such strategies. To address this gap in knowledge, schools should show parents tangible and practical ways to read effectively with their children at home (Brown et al., 2019). Sénéchal and Young (2008) found that subject-specific family engagement activities were the most likely to improve children's academic performance in the targeted area. Providing parents with training about how to use shared reading strategies with their children can influence children's reading skills. Interactive reading strategies are important for children's literacy development, and thus, these skills were the focus of the workshop session on literacy.

Numeracy

Similar to literacy skills, strong numeracy skills are essential for academic and life success (Niklas & Schneider, 2014). Compared to the amount of research conducted on the impact of the home literacy environment on students' literacy development, there has been much less research conducted about the impact of the home numeracy environment on students' numeracy development. However, current research supports the notion that numeracy experiences at home are related to children's math performance in school and are beneficial to children's math development (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Kleemans et al., 2012; Niklas & Schneider, 2014; Skwarchuk et al., 2014).

Jay et al. (2018) recognized that cultivating home-school partnerships in math tends to be a challenge. For many parents, math looks different than what they learned in school; this

unfamiliarity with what their children are learning has led to parents reporting that they feel confused, embarrassed, and frustrated when trying to help their child with math at home (Jay et al., 2018). In fact, Maloney et al. (2015) found that when parents frequently helped their child with math homework at home, parents' math anxiety was negatively correlated to their child's math learning during the school year. However, other research has demonstrated a positive relationship between home numeracy environments and children's mathematics abilities (see LeFevre et al., 2009; Niklas & Schneider, 2014; Skwarchuk et al., 2014).

Parents can support their children's mathematics development at home through direct numeracy activities and indirect numeracy activities. Direct numeracy activities provide formal instruction about numbers or calculations (e.g., practicing simple addition and subtraction problems, writing numbers, or counting objects). Indirect numeracy activities are authentic, real-world experiences that incorporate numeracy concepts (e.g., playing board games or card games, cooking, and using money; LeFevre et al., 2009; Niklas & Schneider, 2014). Both direct and indirect numeracy activities have a positive impact on children's mathematical development. In a study of numeracy skills among Canadian and Greek students, LeFevre et al. (2010) found that greater quantities of direct home numeracy experiences predicted the symbolic number knowledge of the students. Children's indirect experiences with numeracy, especially in an engaging context such as a board game that utilizes math, have been shown to positively impact children's computation fluency (LeFevre et al., 2009). Similarly, Skwarchuk et al. (2014) reported that board game interventions led to increased scores on various mathematical tasks for children, and in a small study in Hong Kong, Wang and Hung (2010) found that kindergarten children who played a math board game once a week performed significantly better on almost all assessed math tasks.

Although research in the area of home numeracy activities is still emerging, current findings demonstrate that home numeracy experiences are correlated to children's mathematical outcomes (Skwarchuk et al., 2014). Helping a child to develop a strong mathematical foundation requires the use of both direct and indirect numeracy experiences. Demonstrating to parents how to incorporate such activities at home is essential and was the focus of the workshop session on numeracy.

Social and Emotional Learning

Albright et al. (2011) defined social and emotional learning (SEL) as "the process of developing basic social and emotional competencies that serve children (and adults) in all areas of life" (p. 1). The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2017) identified five core competencies of SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making. Although all five SEL competencies are important, a focus of SEL in kindergarten is self-awareness.

Defined as the "ability to recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior" (CASEL, 2017, p. 4), self-awareness is a precursor to emotional regulation and self-management. Graziano et al. (2007) found that children who struggle to regulate their emotions often have difficulty learning in the classroom. Further, they found that parents' reports of their children's emotional regulation skills were related to their children's academic success, as measured by standardized assessments. In another study, elementary school nurses implemented a program called Emotion Locomotion with first- and second-grade students, and found that after participating in the program, students were able to identify more emotions from photographs, including more complex emotions such as confused, nervous, shy, and discouraged (McLachlan et al., 2009). Thus, students need explicit instruction about emotion vocabulary to help them

recognize and identify emotions in themselves and others so they can then learn strategies to help manage their emotions in healthy ways (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; McLachlan et al., 2009). In fact, Doyle and Bramwell (2006) identified emotion vocabulary as an important intersection of SEL and emerging literacy. They suggested that choosing books with developmentally appropriate SEL themes coupled with the use of dialogic reading techniques can support primary students' development of SEL competencies.

There are many benefits to SEL, including improved academic performance, an increase in positive behaviors and a decrease in negative behaviors, and decreased levels of emotional stress (CASEL, 2017). SEL skills are important for elementary students and cannot be taught or applied in isolation. Children need practice implementing their SEL skills across a variety of contexts, including home, school, and in the community (Albright & Weissberg, 2010). Thus, it is essential that schools and families work together to reinforce and support SEL at home and at school. This collaboration must include two-way communication that not only allows schools to share information about SEL programs and competencies, but also provides opportunities for families to engage by sharing information about their child or asking questions about program content and implementation (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; CASEL, 2017). Helping their children develop SEL skills such as self-regulation is an important task for families and was the focus of the workshop session on SEL.

Transition From Kindergarten to First Grade

Although collective skills related to literacy, numeracy, and social emotional wellbeing all contribute to children being ready to transition from kindergarten to first grade successfully, they are not the only factors to consider. While there is extensive research about children's transition into kindergarten, there is a dearth of research about the transition from kindergarten to

first grade (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; La Paro et al., 2000; Sink et al., 2007). Yet, this transition demarcates an important time in a child's life. Typically, kindergarten classrooms share more similarities with preschool classrooms than with first-grade classrooms (La Paro et al., 2000). The kindergarten curriculum addresses all areas of students' development and is implemented using play-based and student-centered teaching. In many kindergarten classrooms, students listen to stories, play organized games, sing and dance, and explore new concepts in individual or group centers. Students can use the bathroom whenever necessary, and there are many opportunities for students to move throughout the day (La Paro et al., 2000; Loizou, 2011).

However, the transition to first grade indicates a shift to an environment that is more structured and less flexible. There is an increased focus on academics, especially literacy and numeracy (Powell et al., 2012). Students spend less time in learning centers and more time working at their table or desk. Behaviorally, they are expected to be responsible and autonomous, to work independently, and to self-regulate their behavior for longer periods of time (La Paro et al., 2000; Loizou, 2011; Sink et al., 2007). These new expectations can be daunting for many students. Entwisle and Alexander (1998) claimed that the transition from kindergarten to first grade marks a "critical period" in a child's life and is a time when a child's "external and internal worlds are undergoing profound change *at the same time*" (p. 352). Internally, their cognitive processes experience rapid development between the ages of 5–8. Externally, they are adjusting to new, academically-focused classrooms and teaching approaches (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998).

Helping children adjust to the increased demands of first grade is an essential task for schools and families, and some parents might feel unprepared to support their child during this transition. However, in their study of kindergarten teachers' reported use of transition practices,

La Paro et al. (2000) found that most teachers reported the use of transition activities that were focused on the child or the teacher; they typically did not use transition activities that were focused on families. In fact, over 60% of teachers in the study reported they did not send parents any information about first-grade curriculum or expectations. Nearly a decade later, Sink et al. (2007) reported similar findings when they interviewed eight practitioners about their first-grade transition practices. None of the practitioners used transition practices that incorporated families. Sink et al. (2007) suggested that sharing information about academic and behavioral expectations with families is one method of including families in the first-grade transition process, and thus, sharing information about first grade was the focus of the fourth workshop session.

Summary

Family engagement results in many benefits for students, families, and schools. However, many families are unsure of how to best support their child's education at home or do not have the self-efficacy to engage in such practices. For family engagement efforts to be effective, schools must engage families as partners in their children's learning. Many families want to be involved in their children's education and are willing to devote additional time at home to activities that support their children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. In fact, in a survey of more than 1,200 parents, Epstein (1986) found that 80% said they could spend additional time engaging in educational activities with their child at home if specific learning activities were demonstrated for them. With appropriate training and support, families can implement activities that support their children's literacy and numeracy development, social emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade.

This chapter provided a brief review of the literature related to family engagement, parental self-efficacy, and the impact of families on their child's education, specifically in the

areas of literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade. The conclusions drawn from the research presented in this literature review established a need for this study and informed my approach to action research. The rationale for this study was to add to the current body of research about ways schools can engage families and help them to support their child's learning at home. Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive description of the research design and methodology used in this study

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Rationale for Action Research Approach

Action research is carried out by practitioners whose ultimate goal is to improve educational outcomes (Mertler, 2017). The action research model used to guide this study was Mertler's (2017) 4-stage model. The stages are *planning*, *acting*, *developing*, and *reflecting*. During the planning stage, the researcher completes activities prior to implementation of the study, such as identifying the topic, gathering information, reviewing the literature, and developing a research plan. In the acting stage, the researcher implements the study, and collects and analyzes data. During the developing stage, the researcher develops an action plan that incorporates any revisions or changes to the study's implementation for future cycles. Finally, in the reflecting stage, the researcher shares the results of the study and reflects on the action research process. Mertler (2017) noted that the following characteristics are embedded within a cycle of action research:

- integration of change
- teacher-initiated
- collaborative and participative
- practical and relevant
- planned and systematic
- cyclical

Because of these characteristics, action research was a fitting choice for this study. It is a process that is designed for practitioners to address a specific problem within their current setting. The problem addressed in this study was the information gap that exists between what families know and what they feel they need to know to support their child at home (Arce, 2019; Epstein, 2011; Henderson et al., 2007; Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). In addition, action research is both collaborative and participative, with educators working together to improve educational practice. The virtual workshop series that was implemented in this study incorporated the combined efforts of school and district staff to provide support for families of kindergarten students. Finally, the action research process allowed those who participated in the workshop series to provide feedback about the usefulness of the sessions. This feedback will be used as the foundation for another cycle of action research, highlighting the cyclical nature of the action research process.

Rationale for Mixed Methods Approach

The beliefs that underpinned this study stemmed from a pragmatic worldview. This worldview emphasizes the research problem that is being addressed and uses a variety of approaches to understand the problem and find solutions for the problem (Creswell, 2014). The focus is on the results of the research and how researchers plan to use the results. Such an approach allows researchers the flexibility to choose methods and procedures that best fit their needs, often resulting in the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. A mixed methods approach enables researchers to capitalize on the strengths and minimize the limitations of both quantitative and qualitative research methods and provides a more complete and robust understanding of the research problem than either qualitative or quantitative data alone (Creswell, 2014). Thus, mixed methods researchers increase the validity of studies by

triangulating their data sources, defined by Mertler (2017) as the process of "using multiple methods, data collection strategies, [and] data sources" (p. 141). Triangulation is "a means for seeking convergence across qualitative and quantitative methods" (Creswell, 2014, p. 15). The focus of this study was to understand how a virtual workshop series impacted the perceived knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices of kindergarten families, and then to use the results to provide improved support to families. I used quantitative data sources (pre- and post-surveys, pre- and post-daily reflection charts) as well as qualitative data sources (interviews, field notes journal) to examine changes in participants' perceptions of their knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices. Thus, a mixed methods approach was fitting.

Action Research Questions

The purpose of the virtual workshop series for families of kindergarten students was to empower families with the knowledge and skills to create a more effective home learning environment. The following questions acted as a basis for this study:

1. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe their knowledge of family practices that support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade?
2. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants perceive their levels of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home?
3. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe changes in family practices that support an effective home learning environment?

Description of the Action Research Intervention

The action research intervention examined in this study was a virtual workshop series designed for the families of kindergarten students. The purpose of the workshop series was to

support families as they enhanced their home learning environment. This support took the form of disseminating information about curriculum standards, offering ideas or suggestions of activities to do at home, and providing the materials to implement the activities. The materials provided to families were funded by a grant from an international educational sorority, of which I am a member. The workshop series was comprised of four sessions and took place once a week over the course of 4 weeks. Each session was scheduled for 45 minutes, which included a 30-minute presentation, with the remaining 15 minutes open for questions and discussion.

The workshop sessions were held during May on Thursday evenings via Zoom. The use of videoconferencing platforms like Zoom for family engagement activities has seen a tremendous rise during the last year, as the COVID-19 global pandemic has drastically changed the way schools operate (National PTA, 2020). In May 2021, the school district where the study was implemented strongly encouraged all meetings and activities to take place virtually. The use of this platform had several advantages. One advantage of using Zoom was the flexibility it offered families. Participants did not have to be physically present in the building for each session; they could participate from their homes, the baseball field, or even their cars. There was also less disruption to their nightly schedule, as families did not need to worry about commuting to the school or finding childcare.

Sessions were held weekly from 6:30-7:15 p.m. This time allowed families time to get home from school or work and allowed time after the session for bedtime routines. Each session was recorded, and the recording was made available to participants who were unable to attend synchronously.

When families registered to participate in the virtual workshop series, they signed up for the series as a whole, rather than signing up for each individual session. Although some family

members were not able to attend all four sessions live, they were asked to attend as many as they could and were strongly encouraged to watch the recording of any sessions they were unable to attend. Having the same group of participants at each session allowed a feeling of community to develop and enabled me to collect pre- and post- data from the same group of participants.

Rationale for Workshop Session Topics

Each of the four workshop sessions had a different focus: literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning (SEL), and the transition from kindergarten to first grade. I chose the first three of these topics as they are focus areas of the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP). The VKRP is a multifaceted assessment that measures students in four critical areas (literacy, mathematics, social skills, and self-regulation) during the fall and spring of their kindergarten year. The results from these assessments provide a robust look at students' kindergarten readiness when they enter kindergarten, and again at the end of their kindergarten year (VKRP, n.d.).

The decision to address these topics in the workshop series was reinforced after engaging in discussions with parents of kindergarten students and current education practitioners, including kindergarten teachers, school administrators, and instructional specialists. They unanimously agreed that literacy and numeracy were the two most important academic components of the kindergarten curriculum, and they recognized that there are many things families can do to support reading and math at home. In addition, conversations with the school counselor and school psychologist, who both emphasized the school's responsibility to teach the whole child and to ensure students develop not only academically, but also socially and emotionally, reinforced the importance of supporting students' SEL development through a workshop session.

Finally, due to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic at the time of the study, students attended school either fully remotely or on a hybrid schedule. Those who attended on a hybrid schedule were only in the physical school building 2 days a week; the other 3 days were spent learning virtually from home. This led to concerns among teachers and families about students being ill-equipped for the demands of the next grade level. This sentiment held true for kindergarten students. Nearly everyone I spoke to was concerned about kindergarten students being unprepared for the structure and rigor of first grade. Thus, I decided to focus the last session on the transition from kindergarten to first grade, and how families can prepare for and support this transition at home.

Literacy

The first workshop session had a literacy focus, and the presenter was the school district's K-5 Instructional Literacy Specialist. This session demonstrated to families how to implement two shared reading strategies, picture walks and dialogic reading, which have been shown to be effective in supporting children's literacy development (Brown et al., 2019; Reese et al., 2009; Sénéchal & Young, 2008). There were two goals for this session:

1. Families will learn how to implement two interactive reading strategies: picture walks and dialogic reading.
2. Families will use these strategies more frequently with their kindergartener.

To support these goals, session participants each received two books that could be used to implement picture walks and dialogic reading.

Numeracy

The second workshop session had a numeracy focus and was presented by the school district's K-5 Instructional Mathematics Specialist. The purpose of this session was to introduce

games and activities that families could use at home to develop their child's numeracy skills, defined by Raghubar and Barnes (2017) as a set of skills that includes "verbal counting, knowing the number symbols, recognizing quantities, discerning number patterns, comparing numeral magnitudes, and manipulating quantities" (p. 331). There were two goals for this session:

1. Families will intentionally facilitate opportunities to develop their child's numeracy skills through direct numeracy activities more frequently.
2. Families will intentionally facilitate opportunities to develop their child's numeracy skills through indirect numeracy activities more frequently.

To support these goals, session participants received a set of dice (two different colors of 6-sided dice); a deck of cards; a set of index cards (to make number games); and two games (Roll, Climb, & Slide and Connect 4).

SEL

The third workshop session focused on social and emotional learning and included a presentation by the school counselor and school psychologist. There were two goals for this session:

1. Families will intentionally and frequently communicate with their child about their child's emotions.
2. Families will support their child's use of productive self-regulation strategies.

To support these goals, session participants received a small poster about emotions and a picture book about emotions (*The Color Monster* by Anna Llenas). Participants were encouraged to incorporate what they learned during the literacy session about dialogic reading to start a conversation with their child about their child's emotions.

Transition From Kindergarten to First Grade

The final workshop session focused on supporting students' transition from kindergarten to first grade and included a presentation by a kindergarten and first grade teacher. There were two goals for this session:

1. Families will learn about the academic and behavioral expectations of first grade.
2. Families will learn practical suggestions to prepare their child for first grade.

To support these goals, session participants received information about first-grade curriculum and behavioral expectations, a fiction book about going to first grade, pencil case filled with essential school supplies for the child's learning space at home, and some dry erase reading and math practice sheets. Table 1 provides an overview of the four workshop session topics, goals, and materials.

Table 1

Overview of Workshop Session Topics, Goals, and Materials

Topic	Goals	Materials
Literacy	1. Learn how to implement two interactive reading strategies: picture walks and dialogic reading 2. Use these strategies more frequently with child	• 1 fiction book • 1 nonfiction book
Numeracy	1. Facilitate direct numeracy activities with child more frequently 2. Facilitate indirect numeracy activities with child	• Dice • Deck of cards • Index cards • Game (Connect 4) • Game (Roll, Climb, & Slide)
Social and Emotional Learning	1. Communicate with child about child's emotions intentionally and frequently 2. Support child's use of productive self-regulation strategies	• Emotions poster • Picture book about emotions
Transition from Kindergarten to 1st Grade	1. Learn about 1st-grade curriculum and behavioral expectations 2. Learn practical tips to help child transition smoothly to 1st grade	• Packet of information about 1st-grade curriculum and expectations • Pencil case filled with school supplies • Reading and math learning activities • Book about going to 1st grade

Role of the Researcher

The process of action research is designed such that the researcher is actively involved throughout the four stages of the research process (Mertler, 2017). This is consistent with Creswell's (2014) statement that in qualitative research, the researcher should be involved in a "sustained and intensive experience with participants" (p. 187). Throughout the study, I assumed the role of participant as observer (Mertler, 2017). This was an active role in which I interacted with the presenters and participants in the study, but also had the opportunity to observe and reflect on my observations (Mertler, 2017).

Before each workshop session, I met with each presenter individually to develop a plan for their session. During these meetings, we discussed the goals of the session, the strategies and activities to be shared in the session, and the materials participants would receive. In addition, I had multiple opportunities to interact with participants throughout the study. These opportunities included conversations with individual participants, such as when we discussed what participation in the study would entail or when I met with participants for individual interviews, as well as interactions in a group setting during the workshop sessions.

I attended each workshop session, acting as the session facilitator. In this role of facilitator, I opened the Zoom meeting and welcomed participants to the session, introduced the presenters, managed the chat box, facilitated the question-and-answer period, and provided closure to each session. For the purposes of the study, I also assumed the role of researcher as key instrument (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) noted that when a researcher is acting as a key instrument, they "collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants" (p. 185). In this role, I gathered data through interviews, daily reflection charts, pre- and post-surveys, and my own field notes journal.

Maintaining the role of participant as observer had both benefits and challenges. One benefit was that I was immersed in the activities of the study, including preparing for the virtual workshop series; facilitating each of the sessions; and interacting with participants before, during, and after the workshop series. For example, I engaged in a conversation with each participant prior to the start of the workshop series. In this conversation, we discussed what participation in the study would entail, talked through the informed consent document, and I addressed any questions they had. I also asked whether their kindergarten child was their oldest child. Then throughout the workshop series, I interacted with participants during each session.

Finally, when the workshop series was complete, I interacted with eight participants who agreed to participate in individual interviews with me. My ongoing participation allowed participants to get to know me and feel comfortable with my presence, providing an opportunity for me to build trusting relationships with participants and to gain a deeper understanding of the activities of the study.

However, there were also challenges to maintaining the role of participant as observer throughout the duration of the study. Mertler (2017) noted that it is easy for researchers to lose their objectivity in this role due to their deep immersion in the activities that are being studied. Researchers' biases are likely to affect their judgment, thus, it is important for researchers to identify the "biases, values, and personal background" that they bring to the study (Creswell, 2014, p. 187). I wanted the virtual workshop series to go well, and I had a vested interest in seeing positive outcomes as a result of the workshop series. However, I took measures to remain as objective as possible, and to identify and address any biases that arose during the course of the workshop series.

Two strategies I employed to maintain objectivity and mitigate my biases included peer debriefing and reflective journaling. When I engaged in peer debriefing, I asked two trusted colleagues, the school's principal and reading specialist, to analyze the data from the study and my interpretations. They helped me draw attention to any biases, missed conclusions, or overemphasized points. I also engaged in reflective journaling using a field notes journal. Continuously reflecting on the activities and events of the study helped me identify my own biases that arose. However, although these steps helped maximize my objectivity and minimize the effects of my biases, in my role as participant as observer, it is important to note that it was impossible to remain completely objective and to fully eliminate my biases.

Participants

This study took place in a single elementary school in a school district in southeastern Virginia. This particular school was selected because it is where I was employed as the assistant principal at the time of the study. Information regarding the virtual workshop series was provided to the families of approximately 60 kindergarten students who were enrolled at the school during this time period. This included approximately 50 in-person students (i.e., students who were receiving in-person instruction 4 days per week) and approximately 10 fully virtual students. The information shared with families included the following details about the study:

- the purpose of the study
- what participation in the study would entail
- the focus of each workshop session
- what participants could expect to learn at each workshop session
- logistical information about the workshop series, including the dates and times

Soliciting Participation

In order to implement the study, I needed a minimum of 10 participants, although I was hoping for more participants. Having at least 10 participants allowed me to analyze the results from the pre- and post-surveys. I solicited participants for the study using several methods. First, I sent home flyers advertising the workshop and inviting families to participate via the weekly folders of in-person students. Next, I asked teachers to post the same flyer as an announcement in their virtual classrooms. I also asked teachers to send a class email to students' families. In each method, families were provided with information about the workshop series and told that participation in the study was completely voluntary.

Original respondents fell into many categories. Most were mothers; two were grandmothers. For some, their kindergarten child was their oldest (or only) child. For others, their kindergarten child was in the middle or was the youngest. There were 12 respondents who returned the interest flyer and responded when I reached out individually. These respondents became study participants. Then there were three respondents who returned the interest flyer but did not respond despite multiple attempts to contact them. They were not included as study participants. As I still hoped for more participants, I issued specific invitations to selected families. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) noted that specific invitations from the school are influential in a parent's decision to become involved and in their involvement choices. Thus, I asked kindergarten teachers for names of families they felt could benefit from participating in the workshop series and would likely be willing to do so. Using their lists, I contacted three more families. All three agreed to participate, although one reached out prior to signing the informed consent document and informed me she was unable to participate because her children were involved in too many other activities at that time. Ultimately, the study moved forward with 14 confirmed participants (see Table 2).

Table 2

Study Respondents and Participants

Respondent	Interest	Confirmed Participant	Relationship to Child	Child's Birth Order
A	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Middle
B	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Oldest
C	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Grandmother	Grandchild
D	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Only
E	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Middle
F	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Middle
G	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Oldest
H	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Only
I	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Youngest
J	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Oldest
K	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Grandmother	Grandchild
L	Returned interest flyer	Yes	Mother	Oldest
M	Returned interest flyer	No	Mother	Unknown
N	Returned interest flyer	No	Father	Unknown
O	Returned interest flyer	No	Mother	Unknown
P	Personal invitation	Yes	Mother	Youngest
Q	Personal invitation	Yes	Mother	Only
R	Personal invitation	No	Mother	Unknown

Note. The table includes 18 respondents, including 4 who did not become participants in the study (highlighted in gray).

Data Sources

To address the study's research questions, multiple sources of data were used. These sources included both qualitative measures (i.e., individual interviews, field notes journal) and quantitative measures (i.e., pre- and post-survey, participants' daily reflection charts)—a mixed

methods approach. More specifically, I used what Creswell (2014) defined as a convergent parallel mixed methods design. With this design, I collected both qualitative and quantitative data separately, but during the same timeframe. Next, I analyzed each data source separately, and then compared the results to determine whether findings were consistent or contradictory between data sources (Creswell, 2014). Not only were the results from quantitative and qualitative data collection able to be compared, but they were also able to be merged. Creswell (2014) explained that a mixed methods approach allows quantitative results to be elaborated upon with qualitative data collection and provides "a better understanding [of] the need for and impact of an intervention program through collecting both quantitative and qualitative data" (p. 218). This ultimately leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem, and increased credibility of the findings.

Triangulation, or having multiple data sources that incorporate the use of multiple instruments, is an important strategy used to increase the validity of findings in an action research study (Creswell, 2014). Further, analyzing data from multiple sources allowed me to confirm the accuracy of the data, clarify meanings from participants, and identify inconsistencies in the data (Mertler, 2017).

Pre- and Post-Surveys

I used pre- and post-surveys to gather quantitative information about participants' perceptions of their knowledge, skills, and behaviors (Mertler, 2017). The survey items included rating scales and frequency counts. Rating scales are beneficial when seeking information about participants' attitudes, perceptions, or behaviors (Creswell, 2014). They are also an appropriate way for participants to indicate their strength of response to an item (Mertler, 2017). Using a pre-survey prior to the implementation of the workshop series, and a post-survey afterward provided

me with a snapshot of participants' perceived changes in their knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices before and after participating in the virtual workshop series. However, it is important to note that, although surveys are a helpful way to quickly gather quantitative data from participants all at once, responses are self-reported, and the accuracy of the results relies on the honesty of the participants' answers.

For this action research study, I created a survey instrument that was administered twice, as a pre- and post-survey (Appendix B). When creating the survey, I considered the following recommendations from Mertler (2017):

- Each item should address a single idea.
- Keep the length brief and do not use too many questions.
- Ensure the reading level is relatively easy.
- Maintain the same response scale through the survey.
- Review questions to ensure they are not leading.

In the survey, participants were asked to respond to several items related to their perceptions of their knowledge and self-efficacy. Each item contained a statement and was measured using a 5-point Likert scale on a continuum of responses from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. These items provided valuable ordinal scale data, because they imply a greater than/less than relationship (Boone & Boone, 2012).

In addition, participants were asked to respond to several items related to their family practices. These items were formatted as frequency questions, asking how many times the participant engaged in specific activities over the previous 7 days (e.g., "In the last 7 days, how many days have you read with your child?). Participants were able to choose a numbered response from 0–7 on each of these items.

Validity and Reliability. Creswell (2014) stated that field-testing a survey instrument is essential to establish the validity of an instrument and to improve the quality of the instrument. To establish the validity of the pre-and post-survey instrument, I first gave a draft of the survey to a panel of three experts who were familiar with survey creation and implementation. I asked for specific feedback related to the match between the items on the survey and the study's research questions, as well as feedback about the scales used for each set of items. I also solicited general feedback related to the format and readability of the items. Next, I revised the instrument to incorporate the feedback from the experts, and then I field-tested the survey with a group of non-experts. These three individuals were chosen because they each have a child who is close to kindergarten age, and thus, they were representative of the study's participants. When soliciting their opinions, I asked for specific feedback related to their understanding and interpretation of the survey questions. I also asked for general feedback about the organization, readability, and clarity of the questions. I used their feedback to make minor revisions to the instrument to improve the survey instrument and make it more user-friendly.

Daily Reflection Chart

I asked participants to maintain a daily reflection chart for a week prior to the first workshop session, and again for a week after the final workshop session (see Appendix C). These daily reflection charts provided me with a snapshot about participants' behaviors at home before and after the workshop series. More precisely, they allowed me to see which specific activities participants were engaging in at home, and the frequency of these activities. The activities included in the reflection charts were aligned with the goals of each workshop session. Each reflection chart included a 7-day calendar with a key underneath. The key matched letters with specific behaviors and activities. If the family member engaged in a specific action on a

specific day, they put the letter in the corresponding box for that day. For example, if a participant read with their child using an interactive reading strategy on a given day, they would put an *A* in the box for that day. One unintended consequence of this data source is that the chart could have acted as a visual cue to participants, reminding them to incorporate what they learned in the workshop sessions into their daily lives at home when they would not otherwise have done so.

Validity and Reliability. I established validity for the daily reflection charts by soliciting feedback from a panel of educational experts regarding the instrument's content and ease of use. I also asked for general feedback related to the format and readability of the items. Next, I incorporated the revisions from the expert panel, and I field-tested the chart with a group of non-experts. These three individuals were chosen because they each have a child who is close to kindergarten age, and thus, they were representative of the study's participants. I asked for specific feedback related to their understanding of how to use the daily reflection chart, and I also requested general feedback regarding the format and functionality of the instrument. I used their feedback to make minor revisions to the daily reflection chart to improve its functionality.

The daily reflection charts functioned similarly to a checklist, with the advantage of being able to track multiple behaviors simultaneously. Mertler (2017) stated that a checklist enables the user to "indicate simply *if* the behavior or characteristic is observed or present or if it is *not* observed or present" (p. 151). He added that, although checklists are quick and easy to use, they do not result in rich or detailed data. Similarly, Mathew (2018) noted that checklists are simple to implement, but they only determine the presence or absence of a behavior and do not provide any information on the quality of performance. However, this limitation was minimized with

follow-up interviews with participants, which provided more detailed explanations about participants' behaviors.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews provide opportunities for researchers to speak directly to a study's participants (Mertler, 2017). At the conclusion of the four workshop sessions, I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight of the study's participants to garner information about their perceived changes in their knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices after participating in the workshop series. These individuals were chosen based on their responses to a question on the post-survey that asked for volunteers to participate in an interview with me. The qualitative data from the interviews was compared with the quantitative data from the pre- and post-surveys and daily reflection charts for alignment in responses between the different data sources. The semi-structured format enabled me to structure each interview around a series of preliminary questions, which provided consistency, but also permitted some flexibility to ask participants to elaborate upon or clarify their responses. Having the flexibility to ask follow-up questions allowed me to probe deeper and elicit richer, more robust responses from participants (Creswell, 2014; Mertler, 2017).

Trustworthiness and Credibility. I created an interview protocol to use during each interview (see Appendix D). To increase trustworthiness and credibility of the interview protocol, I solicited feedback from a panel of three educational experts who reviewed the instrument for alignment with the study's research questions and general readability. I also asked the experts to review the questions for redundancy or gaps in questions. I used their feedback to make revisions to the interview protocol. Then I field-tested the protocol with a group of three non-experts. These individuals were selected because they have a child who is close to

kindergarten age, and thus, they are representative of the study's participants. In addition to gathering general feedback, I also requested feedback about the order of the questions, and their interpretations of the questions. I made changes based on their recommendations to improve the flow and the clarity of the questions.

Field Notes Journal

Because of my position as a participant observer, it was important for me to remain intentionally objective. Thus, I maintained a field notes journal throughout the study. Creswell (2014) noted that in qualitative research, the researcher should take notes on the behavior and activities of the participants and document them in an unstructured way. He added that the researcher can gather field notes as a participant or as an observer in the activities. In the field notes journal, I recorded actual observations and my interpretations of what I observed and participated in during the study (Mertler, 2017). For example, I wrote descriptive notes from planning meetings with the session facilitators. In addition, I kept track of attendance at each workshop session, making note of which participants attended each session live. This allowed me to document which session topics were more popular with participants and provide some descriptive information about the virtual workshop series as it existed.

Maintaining a field notes journal also helped me engage in reflexivity. Creswell (2014) defined reflexivity as an activity in which the researcher "reflects about how their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations" (p. 186). Similarly, Mertler (2017) defined reflexivity as "the process of integrating your own preliminary thoughts and interpretations with your actual observation notes" (p. 143). He emphasized the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research, noting that researchers should keep detailed notes and document their "initial interpretations, assumptions,

and biases" (p. 143). Mertler (2017) also addressed the importance of reflection, stating that "the act of critically exploring what you are doing, why you decided to do it, and what its effects have been" (p. 13) is an integral part of the action research process, enabling the researcher to focus on things that are unique or significant, and allowing patterns to emerge from the data. Both reflection and reflexivity are important aspects of action research. Maintaining a field notes journal throughout the study helped me engage in reflexivity about the beliefs I brought to the study and engage in reflection about the activities of the study.

Data Collection

Informed Consent

Prior to collecting any data, I reached out to all individuals who expressed interest in the workshop series. After verbal conversations on the phone, I obtained written informed consent from all participants (see Appendix E). Both Creswell (2014) and Mertler (2017) put forth lists of elements that should be included in an informed consent document. Their lists included the following elements:

- identification of the researcher and sponsoring institution, including who to contact if questions arise
- purpose and description of the research study
- explanation of what participation will entail, including any benefits or potential risks
- indication that participation is voluntary and can be terminated any time without penalty
- guarantee of confidentiality
- offer to provide a summary of the study's findings
- place for the participant to sign and date

Mertler (2017) noted that when participants provide their consent, they are agreeing to participate in the study and saying that they understand the nature of the study, what participation will entail, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent documents were a way for me, as the researcher, to protect my participants, and to ensure that I did not collect any data from any individuals without receiving their written permission to do so.

After I received informed consent from all participants, I triangulated my data sources by collecting data through multiple methods and using multiple instruments, as outlined in the preceding sections. I used quantitative data sources, including pre- and post-surveys and daily reflection charts, and qualitative data sources, including interviews and my own field notes journal.

Pre- and Post-Surveys

Survey data was collected via an online survey using Google Forms. The surveys did not require participants to include an email address or their name, so their responses remained completely anonymous if they wished. The link to the pre-survey was emailed to registered participants 1 week before the first workshop session. The link to the post-survey was emailed to registered participants 1 day after the final workshop session. A link to the survey was also available in the Google Drive folder set up for the virtual workshop series. Participants were able to access the link to the survey from any smart device. Each survey was available for 1 week; the pre-survey was available for the week prior to the first workshop session, and the post-survey was available for 1 week after the last workshop session. The data from the surveys were collected, tabulated, and stored electronically.

Daily Reflection Charts

Prior to the first workshop session, each participant received a paper copy of the daily reflection chart, along with a return envelope. They were asked to keep track of their activities using the chart for a total of 2 weeks—1 week prior to the start of the workshop sessions, and 1 week after the conclusion of the workshop sessions. Participants were asked to submit their reflection charts by sending the chart into school with their child.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I solicited participants for the interviews via an additional question on the post-survey. If a participant indicated that they were willing to take part in an interview, I followed up with them to schedule an interview via Zoom. With participant permission, each interview was recorded and the Zoom platform's live transcript application was used. This allowed for ease in transcribing the interview later. Each interview was scheduled for 30 minutes at a time that was convenient for the participant. Eight participants agreed to be interviewed. During each interview, I followed the interview protocol that was created for this study. I asked each participant all of the preliminary questions, inviting them to elaborate or clarify their responses as necessary. These interviews gave me a more comprehensive picture of how participants viewed the workshop series and its effects on their knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices.

Field Notes Journal

Throughout the study, I maintained a field notes journal so that I could jot down observations, thoughts, or notes as they arose. The field notes journal also included email correspondences, summaries of phone calls, to-do lists, reminders, and any other documents that were relevant to the study, along with my reflections and interpretations. I maintained my field

notes journal in a spiral notebook, with different sections for various categories. This helped me better organize my notes and supported later data analysis of the field notes.

Data Analysis

Pre- and Post-Surveys

The pre- and post-surveys offered insight into how participants perceived any changes in their knowledge and self-efficacy after participating in the virtual workshop series. The surveys contained Likert-type items and thus, quantitative data analysis techniques were used. Likert-type items are considered ordinal data, as their responses demonstrate measures of magnitude. I used descriptive statistics to analyze the results from the surveys, including the median and mode(s) as the measures of central tendency. I did not report the mean because Likert-type items represent ordinal data, and although responses are ordered and ranked, the magnitude between each response is not quantified. Thus, using the statistical mean for Likert-type items can be misleading and is not appropriate (Boone & Boone, 2012). I also reported measures of variation using frequency counts, noting what percentage of participants chose each response.

When analyzing the survey items that addressed how many times in the past 7 days a participant had engaged in a particular activity at home, I was able to use the mean as a measure of central tendency. Then I used a *t*-test to determine if the means from the pre- and post-surveys were statistically different. In addition, I reported frequencies of each response as a measure of variability. I also compared aggregate results from the pre-survey completed before the start of the workshop series with aggregate results from the post-survey completed after the conclusion of the workshop series and analyzed data from both surveys to see if there were any changes in the means, medians, modes, or frequencies of responses.

Daily Reflection Charts

I asked participants to maintain a daily reflection chart for one week before the workshop series began, and again for one week after the series concluded. Then I asked participants to submit their daily reflection charts. These documents provided quantitative data about participants' self-reported family practices in the form of behavior frequency counts. I looked at behaviors that directly correlated to the goals of each workshop session, such as how many times a participant reported using interactive reading strategies with their child or talking with their child about their feelings. First, I looked for any patterns or trends that emerged, for example, whether the frequencies of each activity tracked on the daily reflection chart increased, decreased, or stayed the same throughout the duration of the workshop series. I also used descriptive statistics to analyze these data, including measures of central tendency (such as the mean) and measures of variation (such as frequency counts), and I used a *t*-test to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the means of the two sets of daily reflection charts.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Participants' interview responses enabled me to provide thicker, richer descriptions of how participants described changes in their knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices after participating in the virtual workshop series. To analyze the data from the interviews, I used an inductive, "bottoms-up" approach (Mertler, 2017). In this approach, the researcher is concerned with "identifying and organizing the data into important patterns and themes" (Mertler, 2017, pp. 172–173), while simultaneously ensuring that they do not "minimize, distort, oversimplify, or misinterpret any of [the] data" (p. 173). Mertler (2017) added that analysis of qualitative data requires the researcher to "spend a good deal of time reviewing the data," and that the process of

coding requires “reading, rereading, and rereading again” (p. 173). Similarly, Creswell (2014) noted that in qualitative analysis, not all of the information can be used; it is the researcher’s responsibility to determine what is important and necessary, and to organize the data into a small number of themes. Thus, I examined the qualitative data from the interviews and organized them into themes that directly addressed each of the study’s research questions, while excluding data that did not directly address the study’s research questions.

To determine the themes of the data, I engaged in a qualitative coding process. I used two types of coding: initial coding and in vivo coding. Initial coding, also referred to as open coding, is a process in which the researcher “breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 115). Saldaña (2016) noted that initial coding is an open-ended approach to coding, where all codes used during this cycle are exploratory and temporary, with revisions to codes being made as analysis progresses. During the coding process, I separated codes into the three categories recommended by Creswell (2014). These categories were: (a) codes I expected to find, (b) codes that were surprising and unanticipated, and (c) codes that were unusual.

The second type of coding I used was in vivo coding, also called literal or verbatim coding (Saldaña, 2016). Saldaña (2016) stated that in vivo coding is fitting for studies that “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (p. 106); thus, in vivo coding is applicable for action research and studies conducted by practitioners and is appropriate to be used with initial coding. Because the total number of interviews was small, I coded all interview data by hand, following Creswell’s (2014) 6-step coding process:

- Step 1: Organize and prepare the data for analysis.
- Step 2: Read all of the data.

- Step 3: Start coding the data.
- Step 4: Generate categories or themes for analysis.
- Step 5: Determine how themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative.
- Step 6: Make interpretations of the findings or results.

To be sure that I had captured participants' responses accurately, I engaged in a truncated method of member checking. For 2 of the 8 interviews I conducted, after transcribing the interviews, I sent the transcripts to the two participants, who both responded that they felt their responses were captured accurately and fairly.

Field Notes Journal

Due to my role as a participant and researcher in the study, I maintained a field notes journal to capture my thoughts, observations, and reflections. I also used this document to capture questions and discussions from each workshop session, which provided further insight into participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices. This qualitative data source helped me determine alignment or misalignment between the other data sources used in this study. I used initial coding to determine any categories and themes that arose from my field notes. Additionally, I compared my field notes with findings from the surveys, interviews, and daily reflection charts to see if there were inconsistencies or variations.

Research Questions

All three of the study's research questions were addressed using selected data from the pre- and post-surveys, interviews, daily reflection charts, and field notes journal, as described in the sections that follow. Quantitative data from the surveys and reflection charts were analyzed using descriptive statistics and *t*-tests. Qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed and coded using Creswell's (2014) six-step coding process as a guide. Initial and in vivo coding were

used simultaneously to determine important categories or themes that emerged from the data related to participants' perceived levels of knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices. Analysis of my field notes journal using initial and in vivo coding provided an additional data source to determine alignment between sources. Triangulation of data sources also allowed me to examine consistency between responses and to detect any inconsistencies that emerged.

Action Research Question 1

After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe their knowledge of family practices that support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade?

This research question was addressed using data from pre- and post-surveys, interviews, and my field notes journal. More specifically, Items 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 on the pre- and post-survey addressed participants' perceived changes in knowledge and were analyzed with measures of central tendency including medians and modes, as well as measures of variation including frequency counts. Using the interview protocol, Questions 3, 6, and 7 addressed participants' changes in knowledge. I also used initial coding to analyze the entries in my field notes journal, looking for examples of comments made in phone calls, emails, or during the workshop sessions that identified new knowledge on the part of the participants.

Action Research Question 2

How do participants describe changes in their levels of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home?

Similar to the first research question, this research question was addressed using data from pre- and post-surveys, interviews, and field notes journal. On the survey, Items 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 addressed participants' perceived changes in their self-efficacy and were analyzed to

determine the median, mode, and percentage of participants who chose each response. Questions 4 and 8 on the interview protocol were related to participants' perceived levels of self-efficacy and were analyzed using initial and in vivo coding. Finally, I examined the entries in my field notes journal, looking for examples of participants' comments about their confidence or ability to implement the strategies shared in the sessions.

Action Research Question 3

How do participants describe changes in family practices that support an effective home learning environment?

This question was addressed through pre- and post-survey data, daily reflection charts, and interviews. Section 2 of the survey asked participants about their home activities for the previous 7 days. The results from each item on the pre-survey were compared with the results of the same item on the post-survey. Descriptive statistics and *t*-tests were used to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in items on the pre-survey and post-survey. In addition, the daily reflection charts provided valuable insight into participants' daily activities and behaviors at home. These charts were analyzed similarly to the surveys, comparing data from the reflection charts completed before the workshop series with data from the reflection charts completed after the workshop series. Descriptive statistics such as the mean were reported, and *t*-tests were used to determine if there were any statistically significant differences. Finally, Questions 2 and 5 of the interview protocol addressed changes in participants' family practices at home as a result of participating in the workshop series. Initial and in vivo coding were used to determine important categories or themes that emerged from the data related to changes in participants' family practices.

It is important to note that Question 1 of the interview protocol did not directly address any of the study's research questions. However, it served as an icebreaker question to begin the interview, while also providing valuable background information about the participant's family. Table 3 provides a summary of the study's action research questions, data sources, and data analysis approaches.

Table 3

Action Research Questions, Data Sources, and Data Analysis

Action Research Question	Data Sources	Data Analysis
1. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe their knowledge of family practices that support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade?	Pre- and post-survey Items 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 Interview Questions 3, 6, 7 Field notes journal	Descriptive statistics Initial and in vivo coding Initial coding
2. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants perceive their levels of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home?	Pre- and post-survey Items 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 Interview Questions 4, 8 Field notes journal	Descriptive statistics Initial and in vivo coding Initial coding
3. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe changes in family practices that support an effective home learning environment?	Pre- and post-survey, all items in Section 2 Interview Questions 2, 5 Daily reflection chart	Descriptive statistics and *t*-tests Initial and in vivo coding Descriptive statistics and *t*-test

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

Delimitations

As the researcher, there were many decisions I needed to make to ensure that the scope of the study was feasible. These included choices about the research design, participants, program implementation, and data sources. First, there were delimitations related to the research design of the study. I chose to use action research because it is an appropriate choice for current practitioners who want to address a problem of practice. I also chose to use a mixed methods approach to data collection and data analysis. Using both quantitative and qualitative data sources allowed me to have a deeper understanding of how the workshop series affected participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices. Multiple methods also permitted me to compare the data and determine whether results were consistent between various data types.

Next, there were delimitations about the participants of the study. For the purposes of this study, I chose to focus on families rather than other stakeholders, such as teachers or students. I made this decision after watching families struggle with virtual learning during the COVID-19 global pandemic and after having informal discussions with several parents of kindergarten students. The families I spoke to wanted their children to be successful and they wanted to help their children at home, but they were unsure of how to do so. My goal was that the virtual workshop series would provide families with practical suggestions of ways to support their child at home. Additionally, I chose to focus the study on families of kindergarten students in a single school, which fits with the action research model that was used throughout the study.

Another delimitation of this study was the design of the virtual workshop series. I determined the number of workshop sessions and the topic of each session. To ensure the study remained manageable, I chose to conduct four workshop sessions, and I selected the topics of

each session based on focus areas of kindergarten assessments and informal conversations with current educators and parents, as well as a needs assessment informed by a review of related extant literature.

Limitations

In addition to the delimitations of the study, there were several aspects of the study that were beyond my control. These limitations might have affected the results of the study. First, several data sources and data collection methods relied on participants' perceptions. These responses could have been biased due to other factors in the participant's life that affected how they responded on data collection instruments. However, perception data can also be very valuable because people often act in congruence with what they believe to be true. Another limitation involved the data from the interviews, which were provided by participants who voluntarily agreed to take part in an interview. These volunteers were willing to share their thoughts and feelings about their experiences with the workshop series. However, the perspectives of the participants who did not volunteer to participate in an interview and were not willing to share about their experiences were not captured in the interview data.

Additionally, my role as an administrator in the school could have influenced how participants responded to questions on the survey and in the interviews. They might have provided answers they thought I wanted to hear, thus introducing a level of untruthfulness into their responses, leading to inaccurate findings. Finally, because of the small scale of the study, coupled with the design of action research, the study's findings are not generalizable to other contexts, and individuals should not attempt to apply these findings to other settings.

Assumptions

The assumption that formed the foundation of this study was the notion that families want to create an effective home learning environment to support their children's learning at home. It was also assumed that participants responded truthfully on surveys, completed the daily reflection charts accurately, and spoke openly and honestly during interviews. Another assumption that undergirded this study was that the virtual delivery of the workshop series was an engaging mode of interacting with families, and an effective means of building family efficacy.

Ethical Considerations

Positionality

Due to my role in the study as a participant as observer, it is necessary to address the issue of positionality. Because the study took place in my current work setting, I was personally invested in the results of the study. I wanted the implementation of the virtual workshop series for the families of kindergarten students to ultimately result in positive outcomes. I also had my own preconceived notions about families and their engagement with their children's schooling that could have affected the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. For example, I believe that all families want what is best for their children and are doing their best to support their children's learning. I believe that families *want* to help their child at home, but that many are unsure of how to do so. Thus, I believe it is the responsibility of schools to reach out to families and equip them with the knowledge and skills to help their children at home.

Despite my personal beliefs, as the researcher, it was imperative that I collected, analyzed, and interpreted data in a fair and honest manner. Reflective and reflexive journaling, and peer debriefing were two strategies that helped me identify my biases and ensured that I

remained objective. However, even with those measures in place, it was impossible for me to completely eliminate my biases, as is the case in all action research studies.

Accuracy, Credibility, and Dependability

It is important to address the trustworthiness of qualitative data (Mertler, 2017). The level of trustworthiness is determined by assessing the accuracy, credibility, and dependability of the data. I took several steps to guarantee trustworthiness in this study, including prolonged engagement, triangulation of data, peer debriefing, and reflective and reflexive journaling.

Prolonged Engagement. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation are ways to provide rigor in action research studies (Mertler, 2017). Through my role as participant observer, I was actively involved with participants during the entire 9 weeks of the study. This timeline included 2 weeks of soliciting participants, 1 week of collecting data from the pre-survey and daily reflection chart, 4 weeks of implementing the study, and 2 weeks of collecting data from the post-survey, daily reflection chart, and individual interviews. I was available throughout the study to answer participants' questions and provide additional information as needed. As the facilitator of each workshop session, I also interacted with the session presenters and the families who participated in the sessions. Finally, I supervised data collection and, as I was the one conducting the individual interviews, I had additional opportunities to interact with participants. These ongoing interactions allowed me to get to know the participants and build trusting relationships with them.

Triangulation of Data. Having multiple data sources supported the accuracy and increased the validity of the study's findings. I collected data from both quantitative (pre- and post-surveys and daily reflection charts) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews and field notes journal) sources. Having data from multiple sources allowed me to confirm the accuracy of

the data, clarify meanings from participants, and identify any inconsistencies in the data (Mertler, 2017). Incorporating different methods and instruments to collect data increased the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

Peer Debriefing. I used 2 trusted colleagues who were not directly involved with the study to review the study's processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Having these colleagues provide a critical assessment of each component of the study encouraged me to continually reflect on my research process, ensure that my data collection was systematic and fair, and confirm that I analyzed and interpreted the data appropriately. Having outsiders review each step of the process and offer feedback was another way to increase the credibility of the study's findings.

Reflective Journaling. Because of my role as participant observer, I had a vested interest in the results of the study, which introduced a level of bias. To ensure that I remained as objective as possible, I maintained a field notes journal, which gave me a place to engage in reflective and reflexive journaling. I was able to look back and ensure that any biases were identified and addressed. The field notes journal also allowed me to document any changes that were made during the course of the action research process. Mertler (2017) stated that it is the researcher's responsibility "to account for the ever changing context" (p. 141) of action research by documenting any changes that were made during the course of the study and thinking critically about how those changes might affect the study. Engaging in reflective journaling was a way to increase the dependability of the findings.

Institutional Review Board

I completed the mandatory Institutional Review Board (IRB) training course and earned a certificate of completion for the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). After

receiving committee approval for the study's proposal, I submitted and received approval from William & Mary's Education Institutional Review Committee (EDIRC). I also received written approval from the school district to implement the study (see Appendix F). Once approval was obtained from the EDIRC and the school district, I moved forward with the implementation of the virtual workshop series.

Conclusion

This action research study examined the effects of a virtual workshop series designed for the families of kindergarten students. Perceived changes in participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices were investigated using quantitative data sources (pre- and post-surveys, daily reflection charts), and qualitative data sources (semi-structured interviews, field notes journal). To increase the validity of the instruments used, a panel of experts provided substantive feedback on the survey, interview protocol, and daily reflection chart. A group of non-experts, who were representative of the study's participants because they have a child close to kindergarten age, also reviewed the instruments for readability, clarity, and ease of use.

Looking ahead, Chapter 4 reports changes to the study that occurred during the implementation phase, as well as a comprehensive report of the findings from the study. Finally, Chapter 5 connects these findings to the extant literature and suggests recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this mixed methods action research study was to examine the effects of a virtual workshop series on kindergarten families' perceptions of their knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices related to supporting their child's learning at home. The workshop series included four sessions, each with a different focus: literacy, numeracy, social-emotional learning (SEL), and transitioning from kindergarten to first grade. The sessions provided participants with opportunities to increase their knowledge and to develop their self-efficacy through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. The previous chapter outlined the methodology of the study, in which data collection instruments such as surveys, daily reflection charts, interviews, and my own field notes journal were analyzed and used to answer the study's research questions.

This chapter includes the study's findings, providing a comprehensive look at participants' experiences with the workshop series, and its effects on their knowledge, self-efficacy, and family behaviors related to supporting their child's learning at home. Three research questions guided this study:

1. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe their knowledge of family practices that support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade?
2. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants perceive their levels of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home?

3. After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe changes in family practices that support an effective home learning environment?

Multiple data sources were used to answer the research questions, including qualitative and quantitative measures. Qualitative data collection instruments included semi-structured individual interviews and my field notes journal. These were coded using Creswell's (2014) six-step coding process, and then were analyzed for recurring patterns and organized into themes. Both initial coding and in vivo coding were used to capture participants' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. I offered interviews to all 14 participants, and 8 participants volunteered to be interviewed. Because of the small number of interviews, I chose to conduct the coding process manually. In doing so, I was able to immerse myself in the data.

The first step in the coding process was to manually transcribe all eight interviews. Completing this task by hand allowed me to ensure participants' responses were recorded accurately and gave me an opportunity to reflect on participants' comments and their meanings. Next, I printed two copies of each interview transcript so I could manually code each interview. Using one copy, I read through each interview and used initial coding. The codes were single words or short phrases that addressed the general topics of participants' responses. After completing a first cycle of coding with each interview, I began to organize the data around topics using the second set of interview transcripts. Each code became the heading on a page, and all responses that corresponded to that specific code were cut and glued onto the page. By the end of the coding process, there were 21 different codes that were identified. For example, there were pages titled "Changes in Knowledge," "Workshop Recommendations," and "Motivation for Attending." Gathering coded responses on these pages allowed me to organize responses from multiple interviews about a single topic and view them all at once. This helped me to see

similarities and differences in participants' responses, and to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes.

I also collected quantitative data to address each research question. Quantitative data collection instruments included pre- and post-surveys, and pre- and post-daily reflection charts. These data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts, medians, modes, and means. I used *t*-tests where appropriate to compare the means of pre- and post- data to determine if there were statistically significant differences in participants' responses.

Adjustments to the Study

Overall, the study ran as planned. After all permissions were obtained, the workshop series was advertised, and participants were recruited. Materials were purchased, organized, and disseminated to participants prior to the workshop sessions. The sessions all took place on their designated days, at the designated times, with the designated presenters. Timelines for soliciting participants, collecting data before the sessions, and collecting data after the sessions were all followed exactly as planned. However, two adjustments were made to the study, one of which was beyond my control, and one of which occurred by happenstance.

First, although the study began with 14 confirmed participants, only 12 actively participated. One participant stayed in contact with me and shared that there was a death in the family, and then a family illness that prevented her from participating. Another confirmed participant did not attend any sessions and did not communicate with me throughout the duration of the workshop series. The other 12 participants actively participated, although their levels of live attendance varied. Some attended all four workshop sessions live, while others only attended one or two sessions live. However, several participants later indicated that they watched the

recordings of the sessions they missed. An overview of the participants and their participation in the live workshop sessions can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Participants' Engagement With Live and Recorded Sessions

	Sessions Attended	
Participant	**Live**	**Recorded**
A	4	0
B	2	2
C	4	0
D	1	3
E	4	0
F	4	0
G	3	1
H	3	1
I	3	2
J	2	1
K	3	1
L	1	Unknown
M	0	Unknown
N	0	Unknown

Note. The number of sessions watched later was determined from participants' post-survey responses, in which they openly identified themselves, or from participants' follow-up interviews and other communication with me. A response of "Unknown" indicates that the participant did not complete or did not identify themselves on the post-survey and did not communicate with me after the sessions.

The second adjustment to the study occurred by happenstance. The kindergarten and first-grade teachers, who were scheduled to present during the last workshop session, asked if they could attend the first session to see how it went and to get a feel of what to expect when

they presented. Their presence at the session was valuable; they were able to answer participants' questions directly, and they shared insight as to what strategies they used in their classrooms and how families could support those at home. They brought such unique perspectives to the session that I asked if they would be willing to attend all four sessions, and they both agreed. After the workshop series, 5 of the 8 participants commented on the benefits of hearing from the classroom teachers.

- "I think having his [kindergarten] teacher there and then the first-grade teacher both giving their perspectives was awesome, too."
- "It was helpful, especially hearing from the first-grade teacher."
- "I might be a little biased because my child's [kindergarten] teacher was in there but…it's just a connection, from school to home."
- "To have that hands-on knowledge with actual teachers and professionals was a great thing to have as well."
- "I found [the workshop series] very helpful, especially the feedback from the teachers."

Workshop Attendance

The number of participants who attended each workshop session live varied from week to week. Attendance data for each session are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Synchronous Workshop Attendance by Session

Session	Participants
Literacy	10
Numeracy	10
Social and Emotional Learning	6
Transition from Kindergarten to First Grade	8

Action Research Question 1

After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe their knowledge of family practices that support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade?

Participants reported learning from participating in the workshop series. Responses from individual interviews, survey items, and my field notes journal determined that, after participating in the sessions, participants were more knowledgeable about how to help their child at home in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and transitioning from kindergarten to first grade.

Semi-Structured Interview Responses

Semi-structured interview questions were created to elicit responses from participants about how their knowledge related to supporting their child's academic development at home evolved throughout the workshop series. The interview questions specifically focused on how participants' knowledge changed in the areas of literacy, numeracy, SEL, and transitioning their child from kindergarten to first grade. These responses are representative of the 8 participants

who voluntarily agreed to participate in an interview. The views from the 6 participants who did not volunteer to be interviewed are not represented.

To analyze the data and determine changes in participants' knowledge, I looked for responses in the interviews that indicated participants had learned something new. For example, phrases such as "that was something else I didn't know," or "I didn't realize," or "that was something new for me" were indicative of participants' new knowledge. Then, I further sorted the responses into 4 subcategories based on the topic of new knowledge: changes to literacy knowledge, changes to numeracy knowledge, changes to SEL knowledge, and changes to knowledge related to transitioning to first grade.

Changes to Literacy Knowledge. Two interview questions addressed how participants described their changes in knowledge about literacy after participating in the workshop series. I reviewed the coded material that corresponded to the following codes: Changes in Knowledge, Literacy/Reading, and Word Games. I found that all 8 participants stated that they learned a lot from this session, which was presented by the district's elementary instructional reading specialist. To elicit more information regarding their new learning, I asked for examples of what they learned. The most consistent response, reported by 6 of the 8 participants, was that participants learned the importance of not only reading with their child, but also the importance of talking with their child about what they were reading.

- "That was one thing that I took big from the meeting. I never really understood them understanding what they were reading, more than just making sure they can read it. So, that was really helpful."

- "Like with the reading, we were just reading, and I wasn't, you know, doing anything and that would just be it. But we weren't talking more about it, and I didn't realize how beneficial it was to talk more about it."
- "With the reading, taking the time to talk more about the book so that, you know, you're not just focusing on identifying the words, but [also focusing on] the flow of the story."

Changes to Numeracy Knowledge. Two interview questions addressed how participants described their changes in knowledge about numeracy after participating in the workshop session presented by the district's elementary instructional math specialist. To analyze the responses, I pulled all of the coded material that corresponded to the following codes: Changes in Knowledge, Math/Numeracy, and Math Games. Of the 8 respondents, 7 stated that they learned a lot from this session. A recurring pattern in responses, referenced by 4 of the 8 participants, was that they increased their knowledge about the specific math content that their child was learning in school.

- "Or like those patterns with the dots [subitizing]. I mean, that was genius and something new for me, too."
- "That was something I didn't know, the jump in the numbers they're supposed to know, you know, for sure just writing from 1 to 20 [in kindergarten] and then it's to 120 [in first grade]."
- "Little things that I didn't think should be problematic, like going from 100 to 110. In our heads, it's easy. I'm like, 'Why are we getting stuck here?' So knowing that was, like, part of what's supposed to happen was helpful too because it helped me not to be so frustrated with her."

- "Like, the before and after, I've never really asked [my child] if she knows what before and after is…definitely incorporating that into everyday life."

Changes to SEL Knowledge. Two interview questions addressed how participants described their changes in knowledge regarding SEL after participating in the workshop series. I analyzed the data by reviewing all of the coded material that corresponded to the following codes: Change in Knowledge, SEL, and School Counseling Program. Interestingly, not a single interview participant explicitly mentioned any new knowledge learned during the SEL session. However, 5 out of 8 participants stated that they still found this session valuable. Two stated that the SEL session contained good information and affirmed what they were already doing at home, while two other participants shared that it was helpful to hear more about the school's SEL program during the workshop presentation. Three participants shared that this session was the most helpful for them and offered examples of changes they made in their family practices after attending this session (discussed in further detail with Research Question 3).

- "So we've got [the social and emotional] part down, which was still good to hear and good reassurance that I'm still on the right track doing what I need to do."
- "We talked about the emotions, and what they're learning at school. That was helpful."
- "I didn't even honestly think of some of the social-emotional aspects of it too, so that was nice to bring [the school counselor] into it because I don't normally get to hear her counseling sessions or what she does."
- "So I think we really got a lot out of the social emotional workshop for immediate use."

Changes to Knowledge Related to Transitioning to First Grade. Two interview questions addressed how participants described their changes in knowledge about preparing their child to transition from kindergarten to first grade. To analyze the data, I reviewed all of the coded material that corresponded to the following codes: Changes in Knowledge, Transition from K to 1st, and Concerns about 1st Grade. All 8 participants shared that they appreciated this session and learned a lot. Six of the 8 respondents reported that they learned some of the academic and behavioral expectations of first grade and felt better equipped to prepare their child for first grade over the summer break.

- "Again, just knowing what is kind of expected [in first grade], and, like, those benchmarks was huge."
- "Yeah, I think that helped a lot to kind of know what they were supposed to master in kindergarten and what's going to be expected of them in the next grade level…I think that was really important."
- "Like knowing what's coming so [I] know how to best prepare her over the summer, because I don't want her to lose anything she's gotten [in kindergarten]."
- "I love the benchmarks and just knowing, like hey, this is probably what you should work on over the summer so they have a really good start."
- "I think that [this session] was probably my favorite. Just knowing, like okay, this is what we're working towards."
- "I'm glad that I know, like when they talked about what they're going to be doing in first grade. It's kind of nice to know what we should be doing over the summer."

Responses Regarding the School-Home Connection. A theme emerged during participant interviews that was not directly tied to one of the study's research questions. Six out

of 8 participants shared that they felt the workshop series helped bridge the gap between school and home. Three participants shared that they were using the knowledge gained during the workshop sessions to reinforce what their child was learning at school at home. These participants indicated that having a better understanding of what students learned at school, including the vocabulary and strategies used in the classrooms, was really helpful.

- "Definitely going over…the examples of how you all do it there at school. I'm definitely like, 'Hey, if they're teaching that at school, that's definitely the way I want to try to do it at home.'"
- "And, like I know a lot about [the mental health] field, but to be able to carry over at home what's also being done in school, I think makes it more streamlined and easier for [my child]."

In addition, three other respondents felt that the workshop sessions offered a way for school staff and families to connect on a deeper level.

- "It's a way for us to sort of have that window [into school]. Like, these are the things we're teaching your kids…this is sort of ways that you can help expand on what we've already taught them. I just feel like you grow as a family that way because then your kid sees that you know, and you care about what they're doing at school so they're more willing to come and tell you what's going on."
- "I think you did really good how you guys presented it. I liked all the extra teachers and the principal, everybody involved in it. It made me feel like the school wants to be part of a family instead of it just being school. That everybody's a complete circle connected."

Responses Regarding Participants' Unique Experiences. Another theme that emerged from the interviews was the notion that each participant had their own unique experience with the workshop series based on their individual preferences and the needs of their family. For example, some participants shared that they appreciated the reading and math sessions, while other participants commented on the usefulness of the SEL session and the information provided in the session about transitioning to first grade. Some participants appreciated the virtual format of the sessions, while others shared they would have preferred the sessions to be held in-person.

- "Where I learned the most definitely, I mean the reading, everything was very helpful, but it was the math [session], and seeing how the games are played and what to ask [my child]."
- "I think [the session about transitioning to first grade] was probably my favorite. Just knowing, like, okay, this is what we're working towards."
- "We've incorporated some of the reading but I think what we found most useful immediately was the social emotional aspect because the laminated feelings card helps her identify her feelings and then how to feel better."
- "I love that it was virtual because…some days, I easily found the time and I could just sit and watch… but there was one where I had you in my kitchen because I was cooking dinner while I was watching."
- "I think it probably would have been better in-person because we wouldn't have been distracted by other stuff and then maybe we could have done stuff [with our child]."

Pre- and Post- Survey Items

Participants completed pre- and post-surveys before and after the workshop series to share information about their perceptions of their knowledge, skills, and behaviors (Mertler, 2017). There were five items on the surveys that asked participants about their knowledge related to helping their child learn at home in the areas of literacy, numeracy, SEL, transitioning from kindergarten to first grade, and overall learning. Each item was scored using a Likert scale, from *Strongly Agree* (5) to *Strongly Disagree* (1).

Pre- and Post-Survey Responses. Twelve participants completed the pre-survey, and 11 completed the post-survey, a response rate of 85.7% on the pre-survey and 78.6% on the post-survey. Survey items related to participants' knowledge, and participant responses from the pre- and post-survey are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Participants' Responses on Pre-and Post-Survey Items Related to Knowledge

Statement	Survey	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)
I know what to do to help my child learn at home.	Pre	0 (0%)	8 (66.7%)	4 (33.3%)	0 (0%)
	Post	6 (54.5%)	3 (27.3%)	2 (18.2%)	0 (0%)
I know what to do to help my child with reading at home.	Pre	1 (8.3%)	8 (66.7%)	2 (16.7%)	1 (8.3%)
	Post	4 (36.4%)	6 (54.5%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)
I know what to do to help my child with math at home.	Pre	1 (8.3%)	5 (41.7%)	4 (33.3%)	2 (16.7%)
	Post	5 (45.5%)	4 (36.4%)	2 (18.2%)	0 (0%)
I know what to do to help my child with their feelings.	Pre	3 (25%)	7 (58.3%)	2 (16.7%)	0 (0%)
	Post	3 (27.3%)	7 (63.6%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)
I know what to do to help my child get ready for first grade.	Pre	0 (0%)	6 (50%)	4 (33.3%)	2 (16.7%)
	Post	5 (45.5%)	3 (27.3%)	3 (27.3%)	0 (0%)

Note. For the pre-survey, $n = 12$. For the post-survey, $n = 11$. No participants responded "Strongly Disagree" on any item, so that column has been omitted.

As evidenced by the differences in responses from the pre-survey to the post-survey, participating in the workshop sessions helped participants feel more knowledgeable about helping their child learn at home in all areas but one. Prior to the workshop series, not a single participant strongly agreed with the statement, "I know what to do to help my child learn at home." After the workshop series, over half of responding participants strongly agreed with this statement.

There were also upward trends with participants' reported knowledge levels about helping their child with literacy and numeracy. On the pre-survey, only 8.3% (1 out of 12) of participants strongly agreed with the statement, "I know what to do to help my child with reading at home." This percentage increased to 36.4% (4 out of 11) on the post-survey. Additionally, no participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement after participating in the workshop series. There were similar trends with participants' responses to the statement, "I know how to help my child with math at home." The percentage of participants who strongly agreed with this statement increased from 8.3% (1 out of 12) on the pre-survey to 45.5% (5 out of 11) on the post-survey, with no participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with that statement on the post-survey. These two sessions were well-attended, with 10 participants attending each session synchronously.

Interestingly, the upward trends did not hold true for participants' responses to the statement, "I know how to help my child with their feelings." Looking at participant responses, there were no changes in the number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. This aligned with what participants shared in their individual interviews. While they found the SEL session to be beneficial for other reasons, participants did not indicate any new knowledge after attending this session. This session was also the least attended, with only 6 participants attending the session live. This will be further explored in Chapter 5.

Participants' reported knowledge about how to prepare their child for the transition to first grade also showed an upward trend, like reading and math. On the pre-survey, not a single participant strongly agreed with the statement, "I know how to prepare my child for first grade." After participating in the workshop series, the percentage of participants who strongly agreed

with that statement increased to 45.5% (5 out of 11 participants), with no participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with that statement. This session was attended live by 8 participants.

Pre- and Post-Survey Measures of Central Tendency. There were five items on the pre- and post-survey that pertained to participants' knowledge. I analyzed the measures of central tendency using the median and mode for each survey item. I did not report the mean because Likert-type items represent ordinal data, and although responses are ordered and ranked, the magnitude between each response is not quantified. Thus, using the statistical mean for Likert-type items is not appropriate because it can be misleading (Boone & Boone, 2012). The medians and modes are reported in Table 7.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics Related to Participants' Knowledge

Statement	Survey	Median	Mode
I know what to do to help my child learn at home.	Pre	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	5 (*Strongly Agree*)	5 (*Strongly Agree*)
I know what to do to help my child with reading at home.	Pre	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
I know what to do to help my child with math at home.	Pre	3.5 (*Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	4 (*Agree*)	5 (*Strongly Agree*)
I know what to do to help my child with their feelings.	Pre	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
I know what to do to help my child get ready for first grade.	Pre	3.5 (*Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	4 (*Agree*)	5 (*Strongly Agree*)

As shown in Table 7, medians and modes shifted upward in several areas. Two notable increases are the median and mode of the responses to the statement, "I know what to do to help

my child learn at home." Both the median and mode increased from 4 (*Agree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Similarly, both the medians and modes of responses to the statements about knowing what to do to help their child with math and preparing their child for first grade increased. Conversely, the medians and modes of responses to the statements about the areas of reading and SEL remained the same. While this is an accurate representation of the survey responses to the SEL, it is a bit misleading about the reading. Several respondents indicated that they increased their knowledge of how to help their child with reading, although the number was not enough to alter the median or the mode for that survey item.

Field Notes Journal

Throughout the duration of the study, I maintained a field notes journal to document my thoughts and observations, as well as to keep a record of interactions with participants and presenters. During the data analysis phase, I coded my field notes using initial coding and in vivo coding. For example, I used the code "provided information" to identify examples throughout the presentations that may have offered new learning to participants. Then, I analyzed the codes for any recurring patterns or themes that emerged.

Themes Related to Participants' Knowledge. A theme that emerged from my field notes was the importance of evaluating an action research intervention to determine its impact and effectiveness, and to set the foundation for a subsequent cycle of action research. Although participant responses on the post-survey and during their interviews indicated that all participants increased their level of knowledge related to supporting their child's learning at home, my field notes initially told a different story. Although my field notes identified examples of information shared by the presenters, it was difficult to determine whether participants felt the information was beneficial and whether they learned anything new from the sessions. In fact, live

participation decreased from the first session to the last session, and it was difficult to discern whether this was due to participants' schedules, loss of enthusiasm with the sessions, Zoom fatigue, or that participants did not find the sessions helpful. In addition, I noted that many participants seemed hesitant to engage beyond attending the sessions. Although a few interacted with the presenters verbally or via the chat box feature, most participants did not ask questions during the sessions and did not respond to any reminder or follow-up emails.

However, after analyzing interview and survey responses, it was evident that participants found the sessions beneficial. They were able to offer concrete examples of how they increased their knowledge about three of the four session topics after participating in the workshop series. This gives credence to the importance of evaluation as part of the action research cycle, an idea that is discussed more in Chapter 5.

Summary

After analyzing the data from semi-structured interviews, pre- and post-surveys, and my field notes journal related to participants' knowledge of family practices to support their child's learning at home, it is evident that participants felt they increased their knowledge about supporting their child's learning at home after participating in the workshop series. This was true for the areas of literacy, numeracy, and transitioning to first grade. However, overall, participants did not indicate any increased knowledge about supporting their child's SEL development at home.

One of the most consistent themes that materialized was the notion that each participant had their own unique experience with the workshop series based on their own learning needs. Some found the academic (literacy and numeracy) sessions to be the most helpful and identified those as the sessions where they learned the most. Others cited the SEL session and the strategies

shared to be most meaningful for their families. Still, others appreciated learning the information presented in the session about transitioning to first grade and identified that session as the most informative. In fact, every session was mentioned by at least one participant as being the most impactful for their family, their reasons shaped by their child's experiences in kindergarten, their older children's experiences with kindergarten, and their own experiences with school.

Semi-structured, individual interviews with participants offered rich qualitative data that gave specific examples of how they increased their knowledge related to supporting their child's learning at home, specifically in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and transitioning to first grade. Although participants noted that the workshop session with a focus on SEL was helpful, they did not report any new knowledge after participating in this session.

Analysis of the quantitative data from the pre- and post-surveys aligned with what participants shared in their interviews. There were upward trends in the level of agreement with "I know what to do to help my child with…" statements in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and transitioning to first grade. However, there was not an upward trend in the level of agreement with the statement, "I know what to do to help my child with their feelings." This was consistent with participants' responses in their interviews. Despite this, overall, participants felt that the workshop sessions helped them increase their knowledge, as demonstrated in the upward trend in agreement with the general statement, "I know what to do to help my child learn at home."

Another theme related to participants' knowledge developed from participant interviews. Participants shared that they appreciated the workshop sessions because they felt they strengthened the school-home connection. They shared that the information they learned in the sessions helped them reinforce at home what their children were learning in school. Several participants commented in their interviews that increasing the consistency between home and

school was helpful for them and their child. In addition, participants appreciated that the sessions provided an opportunity for the school to forge deeper relationships with families.

Additionally, my field notes journal offered some valuable insights. Throughout the duration of the study, it was difficult to determine how participants felt about the workshop series and whether they were gaining any new knowledge from their participation. The results from the post-surveys and participant interviews demonstrated that participants did increase their knowledge after attending the workshop series, and provided me with a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of the workshop series and its effects on their families. Thus, engaging in some type of evaluation (in this case, through participant interviews and post-surveys) is an important part of the action research process. Evaluation allows the researcher to understand the impacts of the implemented intervention, and to use the data as a foundation for a subsequent cycle of action research. Table 8 summarizes the emerging themes from Research Question 1.

Table 8

Emerging Themes for Research Question 1

Emerging Theme	Data Sources
Participants had their own unique experiences with the workshop series, based on the individual needs of their child and their family.	Semi-Structured Interviews Pre- and Post-Surveys
Workshop sessions strengthened connections between school and home.	Semi-Structured Interviews
Evaluation in an action research cycle helps determine the effects of the intervention and helps plan for the next cycle of action research.	Field Notes Journal

Action Research Question 2

After participating in a workshop series, how do participants perceive their levels of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home?

Findings indicated that participants increased their self-efficacy related to supporting their child at home after participating in the workshop series. Responses from individual interviews, survey items, and my own field notes journal showed that participants felt more confident in their abilities to support their child at home.

Semi-Structured Interview Responses

Semi-structured interview questions were created to elicit responses from participants about how their self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home changed throughout the study. To ensure participants understood the questions, when conducting the interviews, I used the term confidence as a proxy for self-efficacy. Question 1 asked participants why they decided to participate in the virtual workshop series, and several participants noted their lack of knowledge or lack of confidence about how to help their child. Question 4 asked participants how their confidence had changed since participating in the workshop series, and participants gave a variety of responses.

Participants' Confidence Levels. To analyze changes in participants' confidence levels, I read through interview responses and looked for phrases that included the words "confidence," "confident," "self-esteem," and "incompetent." These phrases often indicated changes in participants' confidence levels and I coded them as such. Next, I reviewed all of the material organized under the code "Changes in Confidence." All 8 participants' responses made it clear that, after participating in the workshop series, they not only felt more confident overall, but they also specifically felt more confident about their abilities to implement activities that would support their child's learning at home.

- "Well, I'd like to say it helped my confidence and of course it did. I'm always baffled on how much you don't know sometimes…But I think it just helped to point out more ways or fresher approaches to it."
- "I feel like I'm more confident just doing these activities more."
- "I actually do feel more confident. I'm a little bit more educated on what I can get done. Like, your workshops really broke down the activities."
- "Now we have a lot of stuff for her to choose from that I can feel confident in knowing where I'm going with it."
- "I was just feeling like I had lost it all…I was feeling a little incompetent but [the sessions] really boosted my self-esteem that I can do this."
- "It helped me be more confident, I guess, with the language I was using because what is now referred to in classrooms is very different from what we grew up in."

Bandura's Strategies to Increase Self-Efficacy. Bandura (1977) identified four strategies to increase self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Although the interview questions did not explicitly ask participants about these four areas, they were evident in many participant responses. As participants shared about their experiences with the workshop series, I sorted their anecdotes into four categories of examples: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, or emotional arousal.

Mastery Experiences. Bandura (1977) stated that a mastery experience occurs when an individual experiences success with a specific task. He added that mastery experiences are the most influential method of increasing self-efficacy because they are built upon an individual's actual experiences. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) related Bandura's work to family

engagement at home and noted that mastery experiences occur when individuals successfully perform a home-based activity related to their child's learning in school. Throughout their interviews, participants gave specific examples of strategies they learned in the workshop sessions, implemented at home with their child, and found to be successful.

- "Before we read, I have them look at the pictures and tell me what they think is going to happen. And it's actually gotten a lot better with [my child], understanding more of where the story's going."
- "[After reading the book about emotions] I started asking [my child] every day, 'How are you feeling this morning?' And now he's opening up more and starting to tell me how he feels. So it's a good thing."
- "The strategies provided [in the SEL session] were super helpful. I can be like, '[Child's name], stop. What are you supposed to do? Put your hands on your tummy and breathe.' And you know, that's really helped her."

During her interview, one participant shared an anecdote about how she had essentially given up trying to read with her grandchildren. However, after attending the reading session, she immediately used some of the strategies shared and experienced success with them:

> Yes, I really loved the reading. I can't tell you how much. That just, I don't know, that's just special to me…I kept trying and trying and I just finally gave up with the boys. I was like, "You're never going to want to sit with me and read." I put the books away [and] I just quit. And then when this session came up, I put it in effect the same night you were talking about it. I pulled the books out and I just went in on the spare room bed and opened the book and I said, "Come on, let's go read." And they had so much fun, and it

just went from there…Now they bring books to me and I'm just like, this is good…I have to thank you so much for that input with reading because now they're excited about it.

Vicarious Experiences. A second strategy to build self-efficacy is through vicarious experiences. Vicarious experiences occur when an individual sees or hears about other people experiencing success with a particular task and starts to believe they can experience the same success (Bandura, 1977). Building on Bandura's work, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) stated that vicarious experiences occur when individuals see others successfully complete an involvement task. These experiences might include opportunities for families to see activities modeled for them by school staff or hearing or seeing about other families implementing a strategy or activity. After analyzing interview responses, examples of two types of vicarious experiences were evident: seeing the presenters demonstrate an activity (modeling), and hearing about other participants' experiences, including their challenges.

The first type of vicarious experiences occurred when presenters modeled how to do specific activities. After seeing their demonstrations, four participants reported feeling more confident about knowing what to do and how to do it.

- "I think sometimes just to hear someone say, 'This is how you should play the game. This is what they learn from it.' And show [how to play] the game. That was really good."
- "Just the examples were a great thing."
- "I mean, yes, we could probably read it in books or online, but to have that hands-on knowledge with actual teachers and professionals was a great thing to have, as well."

Two participants also commented that they found the workshop series to be more beneficial than the school's typical methods of family engagement, and they both shared that modeling was one of the reasons.

- "You get that worksheet at the end of the year from the teacher, but the time you spent [in the sessions] to provide that information, and really explain it and show it, that was a lot more helpful than just getting a packet."
- "We've had a few [parent-teacher conferences] in the past. They're helpful but the teachers don't have a lot of time…it was nice to actually have that hour to literally break down exactly what I can do and how I can do it."

A second type of vicarious experiences occurred as participants listened to other participants. In the interviews, four participants remembered and commented on what other participants had shared during the sessions. They made connections to their own life and realized that their concerns about their child were not unique and that other parents had similar fears.

- "As you heard with the one mom who was nervous [about her child going to first grade]…I think it just makes us [as parents] anxious about what's coming in the next grade."
- "Just as someone said in the Zoom session, things we learned long ago in school, they're different. Will I be able to actually help my child do that?"

One participant suggested that it would be helpful to allot some time in each session for participants to talk to each other.

- "And it would just be cool to hear from, like, the other parents any feedback on any activities [they] tried from the prior session or that kind of thing."

Verbal Persuasion. A third strategy for increasing self-efficacy is verbal persuasion, or encouraging individuals to believe that they can successfully accomplish a task (Bandura, 1977). Related to family engagement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) noted that verbal persuasion occurs when others inform family members that involvement activities are worthwhile and provide encouragement to families that they are capable of successfully implementing involvement tasks. While this method is quick and easy to use, Bandura (1977) acknowledged that the effects of verbal persuasion are not as powerful or enduring as mastery experiences. A review of my field notes journal revealed many examples of the presenters using verbal persuasion throughout each of the sessions, however during their interviews, zero participants mentioned examples of verbal persuasion in their responses.

Emotional Arousal. Bandura's (1977) final strategy to improve self-efficacy is emotional arousal. He suggested that increasing self-efficacy requires reducing an individual's stress level in a given situation (Bandura, 1994). He added that lowering levels of anxiety and fear in each situation is more likely to lead to success in that situation. In the context of family engagement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) stated that emotional arousal occurs when an important result is at stake, such as a child's academic success. They recognized that when families are emotionally invested in the outcome of a situation, they experience a heightened state of emotional arousal. Throughout the interviews, emotional arousal was evident in all 8 participants' responses to the first question, which asked them to share about their family, their kindergarten child, and what made them sign up for the workshop series. As participants shared their motivations for participating in the workshop series, their emotional arousal and investment in their child's education and wellbeing were clear.

- "I wanted to learn more about how to help him more with reading and math skills. His math is pretty good but reading skills and alphabet, not so much. So I wanted to learn more about that."
- "I feel like it was really beneficial to just get an idea of what was expected of them…because I really had no idea, which is really what pushed me to go ahead and sign up."
- "Even though I'm a teacher mom, [I was able] to take the time to specifically think about my child in these terms…it's so different when it's your own kid."

Five of the participants also shared anecdotes about negative school experiences with their older children or from their own education that inspired them to register for the workshop series.

- "For [our older child], switching from kindergarten to first grade was a quick pace. We weren't prepared to help her with that transition. She wasn't prepared for that transition. And I didn't want that to happen to [our younger child]."
- "What actually made me sign up for [the workshop series] was my second-grade child. He still struggles with his reading…I needed this when he was in kindergarten."
- "I didn't do so well in school so it was the fear of, 'Will I be able to help my child in this ever-changing world?' So that is one of the reasons I wanted to attend these meetings."
- "I keep referring back to the math because that's just like, I'm horrible at math, so my fear is that my child will be horrible at math too."

- "We just need to do more on our reading and sight words…for some reason, my kids just can't do this reading thing, which I think they get from [me] because, you know, I was never that great at reading."

A final topic that emerged related to participants' emotional arousal was the fear that they were missing something necessary to help their child.

- "That's why I wanted to do your class. Because I thought maybe it was me and I was missing something."
- "My husband and I work full time so I just felt like there could have potentially been things that we missed… So, the workshop seemed like a really good opportunity just to, you know, grab on to whatever else was offered."

Pre- and Post-Survey Items

Pre- and post-surveys were administered to participants before and after the workshop series to gather quantitative information about participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy. There were five items on the surveys that asked participants about their self-efficacy related to helping their child learn at home in the areas of literacy, numeracy, SEL, transitioning from kindergarten to first grade, and overall learning. Each item was worded as a statement and scored using a Likert scale, from *Strongly Agree* (5) to *Strongly Disagree* (1). To ensure that participants understood the items and to increase the readability of each item, the statements were phrased as "I am able to…" This wording helped discern their perceptions of their ability to support their child's learning at home.

Pre- and Post-Survey Responses. Twelve participants completed the pre-survey (response rate of 85.7%), and 11 participants completed the post-survey (response rate of 78.6%). Survey responses are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

Participants' Responses on Pre-and Post-Survey Items Related to Self-Efficacy

Statement	Survey	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)
I am able to help my child learn at home.	Pre	3 (25%)	8 (66.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (8.3%)
	Post	5 (45.5%)	6 (54.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to help my child with reading at home.	Pre	2 (16.7%)	9 (75%)	1 (8.3%)	0 (0%)
	Post	5 (45.5%)	6 (54.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to help my child with math at home.	Pre	2 (16.7%)	8 (66.7%)	1 (8.3%)	1 (8.3%)
	Post	6 (54.5%)	5 (45.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to help my child with their feelings.	Pre	4 (33.3%)	7 (58.3%)	1 (8.3%)	0 (0%)
	Post	4 (36.4%)	6 (54.5%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)
I am able to help my child get ready for first grade.	Pre	2 (16.7%)	7 (58.3%)	2 (16.7%)	1 (8.3%)
	Post	6 (54.5%)	4 (36.4%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)

Note. For the pre-survey, $n = 12$. For the post-survey, $n = 11$. No participants responded "Strongly Disagree" on any item, so that column has been omitted.

Responses on the pre-survey indicated that most participants felt they were able to help their child at home prior to the implementation of the workshop series. For example, 91.7% of participants (11 out of 12) indicated on the pre-survey that they believed that they were able help their child learn at home. On the post-survey, 100% of respondents (11 out of 11) indicated they were able to help their child at home, with a greater percentage of respondents strongly agreeing with the statement, demonstrating a small upward trend. Participants' beliefs about their abilities to help their child with reading were similar, resulting in a small upward trend. Conversely, participants' beliefs about their abilities to help their child with their feelings stayed the same

from the pre-survey to the post-survey, with over 90% indicating they were able to help their child with their feelings on both the pre-survey and post-survey.

The biggest changes in participants' responses were related to their abilities to help their child with math and to prepare their child for first grade. Only 83.4% of respondents (10 out of 12) indicated on the pre-survey that they were able to help their kindergarten child with math. That percentage increased to 100% (11 out of 11) on the post-survey. Similarly, only 75% of respondents (9 out of 12) indicated on the pre-survey that they were able to prepare their child for first grade. This increased to 90.9% (10 out of 11) on the post-survey. On both survey items about math and preparing for first grade, the number of participants who strongly agreed with the statements increased from 2 on the pre-survey to 6 on the post-survey. Thus, after participating in the sessions, more than half of respondents strongly agreed that they were able to help their child with math at home, and to prepare their child for first grade.

Pre- and Post-Survey Measures of Central Tendency. Five items on the pre- and post-survey pertained to participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy. These items were scored using a 5-point Likert scale: *Strongly Agree* (5); *Agree* (4); *Neither Agree nor Disagree* (3), *Disagree* (2), and *Strongly Disagree* (1). I analyzed the measures of central tendency using the median and mode for each survey item. I did not analyze the means because reporting the statistical means can be misleading and offer an inaccurate picture of the data due to the unquantifiable differences between the levels of responses. The medians and modes are reported in Table 10.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics Related to Participants' Self-Efficacy

Statement	Survey	Median	Mode
I am able to help my child learn at home.	Pre	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
I am able to help my child with reading at home.	Pre	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
I am able to help my child with math at home.	Pre	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	5 (*Strongly Agree*)	5 (*Strongly Agree*)
I am able to help my child with their feelings.	Pre	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
I am able to help my child get ready for first grade.	Pre	4 (*Agree*)	4 (*Agree*)
	Post	5 (*Strongly Agree*)	5 (*Strongly Agree*)

As displayed in Table 10, the medians and modes on the items related to participants' self-efficacy did not shift very much. While there were upward trends in all areas except respondents' reported abilities to help their child with their feelings, the only shifts that were large enough to increase the medians and the modes were the items related to participants' abilities to help their child with math and to prepare for first grade. This is because most participants had positive perceptions of their abilities to help their child at home prior to attending any workshop sessions. Thus, although the post-survey indicated that an increased percentage of participants strongly agreed with all statements (excluding their ability to help their child with feelings), the increases were not enough to shift the medians or modes in most cases.

Field Notes Journal

Throughout the study, I maintained a field notes journal to record my observations and reflections, as well as to document interactions with participants and presenters. During the data analysis phase, I coded my field notes using initial coding and in vivo coding. For example, I used the code "verbal persuasion" when the presenter provided encouragement to participants, and I used the code "emotional arousal" to identify examples of questions or comments from participants that highlighted their concern about their child or their commitment to their child's well-being. Then, I analyzed the codes for any themes that emerged.

Themes Related to Participants' Self-Efficacy. The first theme that emerged confirmed the data from the participant interviews. Although participants noted examples of mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and emotional arousal that motivated them and helped them increase their confidence, no one mentioned examples of verbal persuasion. Yet, from my field notes, I observed that of Bandura's (1977) four strategies for increasing efficacy, verbal persuasion was the strategy that was used by the workshop presenters most often. They provided encouragement, affirmation, and support to participants throughout each of the sessions. However, when I engaged in a simultaneous review of my field notes and analysis of interview responses, it was evident that zero participants mentioned the examples of verbal persuasion as a method that increased their confidence or self-efficacy.

I also used my field notes journal to analyze the differences between pre- and post-survey responses about participants' knowledge compared to their self-efficacy. I noticed that the increases in participants' knowledge from pre- to post-surveys were more pronounced than the increases in participants' self-efficacy from pre- to post-surveys. For example, on the pre-survey, 0 participants strongly agreed with the statement, "I know what to do to help my child learn at

home." On the post-survey, 6 participants strongly agreed with this statement. However, on the pre-survey, 3 participants strongly agreed with the statement, "I am able to help my child learn at home." This increased to 5 participants on the post-survey. The smaller increases related to self-efficacy suggest that participants already had moderate to high levels of self-efficacy regarding their abilities to support their child's learning at home. This idea is further explored in Chapter 5.

Summary

Analyzing the data from semi-structured interviews, pre- and post-surveys, and my field notes journal offered insights into participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home. The data sources provided evidence that participants increased their self-efficacy after participating in the virtual workshop series. Participants' reported levels of self-efficacy related to their abilities to help their child in general, and with reading specifically, showed small increases; participants' abilities to help their child with math and to prepare their child for first grade showed greater increases. Participants' reported self-efficacy related to their ability to help their child with their feelings did not change after attending the workshop series.

The first two themes to emerge during data analysis were related to Bandura's (1977) four strategies for building self-efficacy. Participants gave specific examples of three of the strategies to increase self-efficacy (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and emotional arousal). The only strategy that was not explicitly mentioned was verbal persuasion, despite this strategy being used multiple times by each session's presenter(s). First, participants mentioned examples of mastery experiences and vicarious experiences as effective methods of increasing their confidence. They shared stories about implementing the activities at home and experiencing success, which increased their confidence and self-efficacy. Second, participants shared the

benefits of vicarious experiences, such as watching the presenters model how to implement the activities at home and hearing from other participants about the challenges they were experiencing. Third, participants' emotional arousal was evident in their explanations of why they decided to participate in the workshop series. Anxiety from their own school experiences, difficulties from an older child's kindergarten year, and wanting to effectively help their children were all shared as motivations for signing up for the workshop series.

Another theme emerged from my field notes journal. When analyzing results of pre- and post-surveys about participants' knowledge compared to their self-efficacy, it was evident that the increases in participants' self-efficacy were not as pronounced as the increases in knowledge. For example, 0 participants strongly agreed that they knew what to do to help their child learn at home prior to attending any of the workshop sessions. However, 3 participants strongly agreed that they were able to help their child learn at home prior to attending any of the workshop sessions. Although participants shared in their semi-structured interviews that attending the sessions helped boost their confidence, the results from the pre- and post-surveys indicated those increases might have been smaller due to participants already having a moderate to high level of self-efficacy for helping their child before attending any of the workshop sessions.

Table 11 provides an overview of the emerging themes for Research Question 2.

Table 11

Emerging Themes for Research Question 2

Emerging Theme	Data Sources
Mastery and vicarious experiences were effective methods to increase participants' self-efficacy.	Semi-Structured Interviews Pre- and Post-Surveys
Emotional arousal was a strong motivator for participants to sign up for the workshop series.	Semi-Structured Interviews Pre- and Post-Surveys Field Notes Journal
Participants had moderate to high levels of self-efficacy about supporting their child's learning before participating in the workshop series.	Pre- and Post-Surveys Field Notes Journal

Action Research Question 3

After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe changes in family practices that support an effective home learning environment?

Information shared during participants' interviews, and responses on the surveys and daily reflection charts overwhelmingly confirmed that participants made changes to their family practices and behaviors at home after participating in the workshop series.

Semi-Structured Interview Responses

Questions 2 and 3 asked participants what activities they did at home with their child before participating in the workshop series, and what, if anything, they had done differently at home after participating in the workshop series. By asking about each participant's family practices at home, I gained insight regarding changes in their behaviors at home. To analyze the data, I looked for phrases that signaled participants had made a change in their behavior. For example, phrases such as "doing more often," "read[ing] more," and "we have been trying" were indicators that participants had made a change in their family practices. In their responses, all 8 participants referenced making changes after attending specific sessions.

Changes in Family Practices Related to Literacy. All 8 participants shared that since participating in the literacy session, they were reading more frequently with their kindergarten child at home. In addition, participants shared that they were doing more than just reading; they had their child engage in picture walks prior to reading, they were conversing with their child about what they read (dialogic reading), and they were playing word games with their child.

- "Now we do read a lot more. We read more, almost every night now."
- "And then we do reading a bit more, other than just at bedtime."
- "I think we make a point to read more often with her, and to offer to read more."
- "And that's something we're doing a little more too, though. Sometimes you just read the book and truly focus on the words. We are trying to discuss now, like, why did [the characters] do that or, you know, their feelings or something."
- "When we read now, I let them read the book to me first. And then we pick out a word that they really like out of the book. And then I've made flashcards so they can remember that word, and I keep bringing it up through pointing it out that that's your special word and they get excited about it."

Changes in Family Practices Related to Numeracy. In their responses, five participants shared that they enjoyed learning how to incorporate math practice using games. They also appreciated how the presenter modeled the games, so they knew exactly how to play the games and how to support their child's mathematical development through each game.

- "[The math session] gave me more ideas of different things that would make it more fun. I leave the games out and anything that's turned into a game, he's all about."
- "A lot of those activities we do utilize. Especially the math ones, like input the numbers where they're missing."

- "Some of the games, like the dice game and stuff like that, are more fun for him to do than just counting. He likes those [games]."
- "Yeah, and then [the teacher and presenter] actually giving examples of the different games. Now when we play, I know what to ask her."

Changes in Family Practices Related to SEL. In their interviews, 4 participants shared changes in family practices they implemented at home after attending the SEL session.

- "What we found most useful immediately was the social emotional aspect, because the laminated feelings card with, you know, identifying your feelings and what you can do to feel better or to do with that feeling."
- "Just this morning, she had a meltdown over chocolate chip muffins. And I was like, 'Okay, belly breath, like, let's wait a minute and figure out where else we can go.' So yeah, definitely use that one the most probably."
- "She uses the feelings chart all the time…sometimes when she's in a good mood and sometimes [when] she's in a bad mood, she'll use that to talk about her feelings. So that has been really helpful."
- "They're starting to tell me how they feel. If they're doing something and they're fighting, [they will say], 'I'm feeling really angry.' I'm like, 'Okay that's good [that they are identifying how they are feeling].'"

Changes in Family Practices Related to Transitioning to First Grade. Seven participants stated that they learned a lot in the session related to the transition to first grade, and they used this new knowledge to take action to prepare their child for the increased behavioral and academic expectations of first grade. Three participants shared that they had already

implemented some increased behavioral expectations for their child, such as having their child demonstrate responsibility and develop their problem-solving skills.

- "So [my child and I] definitely touched base on that, just ending kindergarten and what that means with the new responsibilities, like not having [a classroom paraprofessional] there all the time and needing to work quietly at her seat."
- "I have been trying to have her follow instructions, giving her, you know, two or three tasks and making sure she not only completes them, but in that order."
- "When they have a problem, my husband and I have been giving the girls opportunities to discuss it and work the thing out…having them give one or two choices and let them figure it out on their own."
- "[My child] is a tad bit nervous about first grade. But now I know what to tell him to help. I'm like, 'It's just a little more work. You don't have [an] extra teacher, you only have the one teacher.' So I'm using the steps you taught us to help him transition."

At the time of the study, the school year was coming to an end. However, 5 participants discussed how they planned to use the upcoming summer break to work on the academic expectations for first grade.

- "[This session] made me really sit down and define what I needed to do this summer, to help [my child] every day."
- "With the sight words, I knew it was a big jump…in kindergarten they only need to know 50, but by the time we get to [the end of] first grade, it's 150. Wow! So we've already started practicing."

- "It's nice to know what we should be doing over the summer, because now I know what they're looking for her to do in Raz-Kids and IXL."
- "My in-laws are coming to town this summer. I can show them the videos [of the sessions], and they can have some structured time, do some of the activities with her every day."

Participant Responses Related to Provided Materials. Throughout the interviews, an emergent theme related to the materials that were provided to participants became evident. All 8 participants referenced the materials that were provided to them. Some of the comments were made in passing and highlighted how much the students enjoyed (or in one case, did not enjoy) the materials. Participants referenced materials from all 4 sessions.

- "He's obsessed with the spider book."
- "They love the bug book because they like to look at the antennas and the mouthpieces."
- "We're trying to work now with the [math] cards because they seem to like the cards a little bit better."
- "He loves the Connect 4 game."
- "We've played Connect 4, I can't tell you how many times."
- "But the Connect 4, they don't have the patience to sit yet, and they end up fighting together."
- "She really likes [the laminated feelings chart]. And so when we showed it to her, she was really excited, and the first night or two after we introduced it, she actually wanted to sleep with it in her bed."

- "I loved the monster book [about emotions]. Love it. I had them complete the activity you sent home about drawing feelings on each monster's face."

Additionally, 5 of the 8 respondents made explicit references to the materials and how having them made implementing the games and activities much easier.

- "I loved all the resources that were sent home. [I've] definitely thought about making those things myself, but it was nice I didn't have to."
- "Good tips, good games, good training aids that we can actually use throughout the summer."
- "Yeah, so I liked that they gave us tangible things to use. It wasn't just like, here's something that you can do if you go out and get these supplies, you know what I mean? We already have them, so we just have to implement it. So, it is nice we have, like, a wide variety of things to choose from over the summer."

Pre- and Post- Survey Items

Pre- and post-surveys were administered to participants before and after the workshop series to gather quantitative information about participants' family practices and behaviors at home. Section 2 of the survey asked participants to share how many times in the previous 7 days they had completed a particular activity with their kindergarten child. The activities included reading with their child, engaging in a math activity, talking to their child about their feelings, and talking with their child about going to first grade. Each item was presented as a multiple-choice item, with respondents choosing a whole number from 0 to 7. Participants' responses are displayed in Table 12. From the pre- to the post-survey, participants' responses to all four items trended upward. After participating in the workshop series, participants reported reading with their child, doing a math activity with their child, talking with their child about their feelings, and

talking with their child about going to first grade more often in the 7 days preceding the post-survey compared to the 7 days preceding the pre-survey.

Table 12

Participants' Responses on Pre-and Post-Survey Items Related to Family Practices

Statement	Survey	Days							
In the last 7 days, how many days have you…		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
…read with your kindergarten child?	Pre	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (16.7%)	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	3 (25%)
	Post	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	4 (36%)
…done a math activity at home with your kindergarten child?	Pre	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
	Post	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	3 (27%)
…talked with your kindergarten child about their feelings?	Pre	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	2 (17%)	4 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)
	Post	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	5 (46%)
…talked with your kindergarten child about going to first grade?	Pre	6 (50%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Post	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	3 (27%)	3 (27%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)

Note. For the pre-survey, $n = 12$. For the post-survey, $n = 11$. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Further analysis was conducted to determine the mean and standard deviation of each item. These are reported in Table 13. The means for all 4 items increased, and in the case of 3 of the 4 items except for talking with your child about their feelings), the means increased more than 1.0. In short, after participating in the workshop series, participants reported reading with their child, doing a math activity with their child, and talking to their child about first grade an extra day during the week.

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations of Pre- and Post-Survey Items

Statement	Survey	*M*	*SD*
In the last 7 days, how many days have you…			
…read with your kindergarten child?	Pre	4.25	1.86
	Post	5.45	1.57
…done a math activity at home with your kindergarten child?	Pre	3.25	2.01
	Post	4.64	2.06
…talked with your kindergarten child about their feelings?	Pre	4.08	2.19
	Post	5.00	2.19
…talked with your kindergarten child about going to first grade?	Pre	0.75	0.97
	Post	2.82	1.83

Note. For the pre-survey, $n = 12$. For the post-survey, $n = 11$.

The mean increased for all items from the pre-survey to the post-survey. However, it was unclear whether these changes represented statistically significant differences. To determine this, I conducted *t*-tests to compare the means of pre- and post-survey responses for each item. The results are displayed in Table 14.

Table 14

Results of t-test Analysis for Pre- and Post-Surveys

Statement In the last 7 days, how many days have you…	**Pre-Survey** ***M***	**Post-Survey** ***M***	**Mean Difference**	***p***
…read with your kindergarten child?	4.25	5.45	+1.20	.638
…done a math activity at home with your kindergarten child?	3.25	4.64	+1.39	.922
…talked with your kindergarten child about their feelings?	4.08	5.00	+0.92	.784
…talked with your kindergarten child about going to first grade?	0.75	2.8	+2.05	.187

Note. For the pre-survey, $n = 12$. For the post-survey, $n = 11$.

The *t*-tests demonstrated that, although the means for each item increased from the pre-survey to the post-survey, these results must be interpreted with caution. Because each item has a high *p*-value, there were not statistically significant differences between items on the pre- and post-surveys. This is likely attributed to two factors. First, the number in the sample was low (12 for the pre-survey and 11 for the post-survey), and thus, the power of the statistical *t*-test is limited. Second, the variability in the samples is high. Therefore, the low statistical power hampers the ability to detect important statistically significant differences. As such, talking about any differences as meaningful could be misleading since the statistical outcome says that the results are likely due to chance. However, the increases in means on the post-survey are encouraging, and with a larger, more robust sample, the same differences in the means from the pre-survey to post-survey might produce a statistically significant result.

Daily Reflection Charts

Participants were asked to maintain a daily reflection chart for 1 week prior to the start of the workshop series and for 1 week after the completion of the workshop series. Eleven participants returned the pre-daily reflection chart (a return rate of 78.6%), and 10 participants returned the post-daily reflection chart (a return rate of 71.4%). The purpose of the daily reflection charts was to track the activities participants did each day with their kindergarten child. The activities included using an interactive reading strategy, engaging in a math activity, talking with their child about their feelings, and supporting their child's use of a self-regulation strategy. There was also an option for participants to write in any additional activities they engaged in with their child. Participants' responses from the pre- and post-daily reflection charts are displayed in Table 15. There were upward trends for the items about using interactive reading strategies, doing a math activity, talking with the child about going to first grade, and supporting the child's use of a self-regulation strategy. However, the same upward trend did not hold true for participants' responses to the number of times they talked with their child about their feelings.

Table 15

Participants' Responses on Daily Reflection Charts Related to Family Practices

Statement In the last 7 days, how many days have you…	**DRC**	**Days**							
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
…used an interactive reading strategy?	Pre	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (36.4%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (18.2%)	3 (27.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)
	Post	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	3 (30%)
…done a math activity at home?	Pre	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	3 (27.3%)	5 (45.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)
	Post	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
… talked with your child about their feelings?	Pre	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)	3 (27.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	4 (36.4%)
	Post	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)
…supported your child's use of self-regulation strategies	Pre	4 (36.4%)	2 (18.2%)	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)
	Post	1 (10%)	5 (50%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)

Note. DRC = Daily Reflection Chart. For the pre-daily reflection chart, $n = 11$. For the post-daily reflection chart, $n = 10$.

In addition to the activities tracked on the daily reflection charts, participants also shared that they engaged in other learning activities with their child. For example, on the pre-daily reflection chart, one participant noted that they completed a writing activity with their child; another participant went camping with their child, where they discussed nature and survival skills. On the post-daily reflection chart, three participants indicated that they engaged in other learning activities, although only two specified what these activities included. One participant shared that they included their child in gardening activities and discussed bug identification, while another participant introduced the game of hopscotch to their child.

Because the daily reflection charts reported interval data, I was able to conduct further analysis on each item, including calculating the mean and standard deviation (Table 16).

Table 16

Means and Standard Deviations From Pre- and Post-Daily Reflection Charts

Statement	DRC	*M*	*SD*
Used an interactive reading strategy	Pre	3.73	1.68
	Post	4.80	1.81
Did a math activity at home	Pre	3.09	1.64
	Post	3.7	1.49
Talked with kindergarten child about their feelings	Pre	4.09	2.77
	Post	3.70	2.71
Supported kindergarten child's use of self-regulation strategies	Pre	2.09	2.70
	Post	2.40	2.55

Note. DRC = Daily Reflection Chart. For the pre-daily reflection chart, $n = 11$. For the post-daily reflection chart, $n = 10$.

The mean increased for all items from the pre-daily reflection chart to the post-daily reflection chart, except for participants talking to their kindergarten child about their feelings. In this case, the mean decreased slightly. However, it was not clear whether these changes represented statistically significant differences. To determine this, I conducted further analysis using *t*-tests to compare the means of pre-survey and post-survey of each item (Table 17).

Table 17

Results of t-test Analysis for Pre- and Post-Daily Reflection Charts

Statement	Pre-DRC *M*	Post-DRC *M*	Mean Difference	*p*
Used an interactive reading strategy	3.73	4.80	+1.07	.630
Done a math activity at home	3.09	3.70	+0.61	.720
Talked with kindergarten child about their feelings	4.09	3.70	-0.39	.741
Supported kindergarten child's use of self-regulation strategies	2.09	2.40	+0.31	.575

Note. DRC = Daily Reflection Chart. For the pre-daily reflection chart, $n = 11$. For the post-daily reflection chart, $n = 10$.

It is important to note that, although the means for each item increased from the pre-daily reflection chart to the post-daily reflection on three of the four items (except for participants talking to their kindergarten child about their feelings), these results must be interpreted with caution. Each item has a high *p*-value, so there is a high probability that the groups cannot be statistically distinguished, and that the given results were due to chance. Two factors that played an important role in these results were the low sample size (11 for the pre-daily reflection chart and 10 for the post-daily reflection chart) and a high level of variability in the samples. These two factors limit the power of the statistical *t*-tests and thus, statistically significant differences cannot be determined. As such, talking about any differences as statistically meaningful is misleading. With a larger, more robust sample, the same differences in the means from the pre-daily reflection charts to post-daily reflection charts might produce a statistically significant result.

Summary

Analyzing the data from semi-structured interviews, pre- and post-surveys, and pre- and post-daily reflection charts confirmed that participants made changes to their family practices at home after participating in the virtual workshop series. Two themes were evident based on the findings. The first theme that emerged was that, with their increased knowledge and self-efficacy, participants reported engaging in more academic activities at home after participating in the workshop series. Through the semi-structured interviews, participants gave examples of the changes in their behavior after attending each of the four workshop sessions, including reading more, playing more math games, using SEL strategies more often, and beginning to prepare their child for first grade by encouraging skills such as responsibility and problem-solving. The second theme to emerge was participants' appreciation for the materials provided. They commented on the usefulness of the materials, and how having the materials already prepared helped them quickly and easily implement the activities shared in the workshop sessions.

Results from the surveys showed an increase in the means from the pre-survey items to the post-survey items for all four statements related to participants' behavior in the previous 7 days. Similarly, the daily reflection charts also showed increases from the pre-daily reflection charts to the post-daily reflection charts, except for the number of times participants talked to their kindergarten children about their feelings, which showed a decrease from the pre- to the post-daily reflection chart. As a final caveat, although these results are encouraging, they must be interpreted carefully because the quantitative findings did not yield statistically significant results. The emerging themes for Research Question 3 are summarized in Table 18.

Table 18

Emerging Themes for Research Question 3

Emerging Theme	Data Sources
With increased knowledge and self-efficacy, participants engaged in more academic activities at home.	Semi-Structured Interviews Pre- and Post-Surveys Daily Reflection Charts
Providing materials to participants made it easier for them to implement the activities immediately.	Semi-Structured Interviews

Overall Summary of Findings

After participating in a virtual workshop series, participants gained knowledge, increased self-efficacy, and engaged in more academic activities at home with their child. This held true across all data sources in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and preparing their child for first grade. The results for participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices related to SEL were less consistent across data sources, and in some cases, were contradictory.

Three themes resulted from the findings related to Action Research Question 1, which investigated how participants described their knowledge of family practices that support their child's learning. First, it was clear that each participant had a unique experience with the workshop series, based on the individual needs of their family. Some participants shared that the academic sessions were more impactful for their families, while others noted that they appreciated the SEL session. Other participants reported that the session about transitioning to first grade was the most informative and beneficial for their families. Additionally, some participants noted the convenience of the virtual format, while others shared they would have preferred to have attended the sessions in-person.

Second, most participants (6 out of 8) found that the workshop series strengthened the connection between school and home. For example, participants commented that they used the

knowledge they learned in the sessions to reinforce school at home. They commented that the sessions provided a deeper look into what goes on in the classroom, complete with insights from the kindergarten and first-grade teachers. Participants also recognized that using the same vocabulary and activities at home increased consistency between home and school.

Finally, engaging in some type of evaluation is an important component of the action research process. It helps schools determine the impact of their programs and informs the next cycle of action research. Conducting semi-structured interviews and gathering data from pre- and post-surveys helped me to understand the effects of the workshop series on participants and their families and will help me better plan for a second cycle of action research.

Data analysis for Action Research Question 2 also yielded several themes. The importance of Bandura's (1977) strategies for increasing self-efficacy was evident in participants' responses. Examples of both mastery experiences and vicarious experiences were offered as methods of increasing participants' confidence. Further, participants described two types of vicarious experiences that were helpful: observing school staff as they modeled activities and making connections to what other participants shared. In addition, a recurring theme was that emotional arousal was a strong motivator for participants to sign up for the workshop series. Concerns stemming from their own educational history and a desire to effectively support their child's learning at home encouraged participants to register for the series.

The final theme from the findings of this research question emerged from my field notes after analyzing responses on the pre- and post-surveys related to participants' knowledge and self-efficacy. The gains in participants' knowledge were much greater than their gains in self-efficacy, leading to the conclusion that prior to participating in the workshop series, participants

already had a moderate to strong sense self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home.

Analyzing the data for Action Research Question 3 resulted in the emergence of two themes. First, with their increased knowledge and self-efficacy, participants engaged in more academic activities at home after participating in the workshop series. This included activities such as reading and discussing text more often with their child; playing math games and engaging in other math activities; and preparing their child for first grade, both academically and behaviorally. Second, providing materials to participants was beneficial. Having the resources already prepared and ready to use made it easier for participants to immediately implement the activities shared at the workshop sessions at home with their child.

The three research questions that informed this study resulted in the emergence of several themes. These themes will guide a discussion of findings and implications for practice in Chapter 5. These implications suggest several practical recommendations that can help schools implement effective workshops for families, leading to better connections between school and home and increased levels of family engagement.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

Family members who are active in a child's life assume an important role and affect the child's academic, behavioral, and social development (Comer, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Even after a child enters school, their home learning environment continues to have a strong influence on their educational development (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). Generally, families want to support their child's learning, but many families are unsure of how to do so and might not feel confident in their abilities to improve their child's academic development (Epstein, 1986; Henderson et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Thus, it is an essential task of schools to engage families in their children's learning by offering opportunities for families to increase their knowledge and self-efficacy related to supporting their child's academic, social, and emotional development at home.

The purpose of this action research study was to implement a virtual workshop series for the families of kindergarten students and then examine the effects of the workshop series on participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family behaviors. The workshop series included four sessions, each with a different focus: literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning (SEL), and transitioning from kindergarten to first grade. Data collection included semi-structured interviews, pre- and post-surveys, pre- and post-daily reflection charts, and my own field notes.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the study's findings, organized by research question. In addition, I discuss these findings and my overall reactions in the context of implications for practice and offer practical recommendations for schools. Finally, I offer suggestions for future research and conclude with a justification of why family engagement is essential and should be a top priority for schools.

Summary of Findings

Action Research Question 1

After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe their knowledge of family practices that support literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade?

Data sources confirmed that participants learned a lot and became more knowledgeable about effective strategies to use with their child at home. During the literacy session, participants learned the importance of not only reading to their child, but also discussing the text with their child. Known as dialogic reading, this type of shared reading recognizes that the quality of interactions between the parent and child result in increased literacy development (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Mol et al., 2008; Morrow & Brittain, 2009). In fact, these conversations help children build their vocabulary and background knowledge, which supports the development of stronger language comprehension skills, an essential component of reading (Moats, 2020). During the math session, participants shared that they increased their content knowledge, which they found beneficial. They also noted that learning about specific math content and the academic and behavioral expectations of first grade was helpful.

Conversely, there was no evidence that participants learned anything new from the SEL workshop session, which was consistent across both qualitative and quantitative data sources.

Although only 6 participants attended the live session, several stated that this was their favorite session and that they were immediately able to implement some of the strategies shared in the session with their child at home. They noted that when they implemented the strategies, they experienced positive outcomes, such as their child being more willing to talk about their feelings.

An important theme that emerged was the use of the workshop series to bridge the gap between school and home. Participants found that the knowledge they learned in the sessions allowed them to better reinforce at home what students were learning at school. They acknowledged that the sessions helped deepen connections between home and school. In addition, school staff such as the principal, myself (the assistant principal), and two classroom teachers attended the sessions. This demonstrated to families that this workshop series was a priority for school staff, and that we found it to be worthwhile and valuable.

Another theme that emerged is that participants each had their own unique experiences with the workshop series. While some families appreciated the academic sessions, others preferred the SEL session and found the strategies shared to be the most helpful for their families. Other participants shared that the session about transitioning to first grade was the most beneficial session as they learned about the academic and behavioral expectations of first grade. Some participants noted that the appreciated the convenience of the virtual format, while others shared that they would have preferred to attend sessions in-person. Each participant had different learning needs that led to different experiences with the workshop series.

A final theme that emerged was the importance of evaluation as a component of the action research process. It helps schools determine the impact of their programs and informs the next cycle of action research. Facilitating semi-structured interviews and gathering data from

pre- and post-surveys helped me to understand the effects of the workshop series on participants and their families, and will help me better plan for a second cycle of action research.

Action Research Question 2

After participating in a workshop series, how do participants perceive their levels of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home?

Data sources confirmed that participants' confidence and self-efficacy increased after participating in the workshop series. Participants' self-efficacy related to literacy and general learning saw small increases, while self-efficacy related to numeracy and preparing their child to transition to first grade yielded greater increases. Participants' reported self-efficacy regarding helping their child with their feelings did not change.

Bandura (1977) offered four strategies to increase an individual's self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) built on this work and applied the four methods of increasing self-efficacy to the concept of parent involvement in a child's education. It was interesting to see how these four strategies manifested throughout data collection efforts. Mastery experiences and vicarious experiences were the most influential when it came to increasing participants' self-efficacy. Participants conveyed examples of mastery experiences in their interviews and noted that these successes at home led to increased confidence.

Participants also shared examples of two types of vicarious experiences: modeling from the session presenters and hearing others' personal experiences. Participants noted that modeling was more effective from other, traditional methods of family engagement, such as brief parent-teacher conferences or sending home packets of information at the end of the school year. Participants appreciated seeing how activities should be implemented because it helped them

better understand why the activities were beneficial and provided them with tips on how to implement the activities at home. They shared that they found the interactive environment of the sessions to be more effective than traditional methods of family engagement.

The second type of vicarious experiences participants conveyed was hearing about others' experiences. As I conducted the individual interviews, I was surprised at how many participants referenced other participants' comments from the workshop sessions. They remembered questions others had asked or concerns others had shared. This is likely because they had similar questions and concerns and found it comforting to know that their concerns were not unique. This reinforced the importance of intentionally providing vicarious experiences for participants as a strategy for increasing self-efficacy. During the workshop series, participants really only shared if they had a question they wanted to ask the presenters. Providing additional opportunities for participants to connect with each other, and to share their successes and challenges, could help participants further develop their self-efficacy.

A third strategy for increasing self-efficacy, verbal persuasion, did not build self-efficacy for participants in this study. Despite each week's presenters offering encouragement, positive affirmations, and reassurance, participants did not mention the encouragement of the presenters as a reason that they felt more confident. This is aligned to Bandura's (1977) findings that verbal persuasion is not as effective or enduring as other self-efficacy sources, such as mastery and vicarious experiences.

Bandura's (1977) fourth strategy for increasing self-efficacy is emotional arousal. In many cases, participants' emotional arousal was evident in their explanations of why they had decided to attend the workshop series. Participants gave a variety of reasons for participating: they wanted what was best for their child; they wanted to be sure they had not missed anything

that would negatively affect their child; they had a difficult school experience with an older child; or they, themselves, had negative school experiences. Understanding the reasons that participants become involved can help schools better meet the needs of individual families.

The final theme from this research question was that participants already had a moderate to strong sense of self-efficacy related to supporting their child's learning at home. This theme became evident when comparing responses on the pre- and post-surveys related to participants' knowledge and self-efficacy. The gains in participants' knowledge were much greater than their gains in self-efficacy, and although there were upward shifts in the responses to the statement, "I am able to help my child learn at home," they were not as prominent as the responses to the statement, "I know what to do to help my child learn at home."

Action Research Question 3

After participating in a workshop series, how do participants describe changes in family practices that support an effective home learning environment?

Overwhelmingly, participants shared that they made changes in their family practices and behaviors at home after participating in the workshop series. Many participants reported reading more often with their child and incorporating literacy activities such as picture walks and dialogic reading more frequently. They also reported playing math games more often. Interestingly, despite not reporting any new knowledge or increased confidence after attending the SEL session, multiple participants still shared that they made changes to their behavior related to supporting their child's social and emotional development after attending this session. For example, participants reported talking to their child about their feelings more often and supporting their child's use of self-regulation strategies using the materials and strategies provided in the session. Participants also reported making changes based on the increased

behavioral expectations of first grade, such as encouraging their child's use of problem solving and assigning their child more responsibility at home. Several participants shared that, although they had not started to address any of the academic expectations of first grade (such as sight word lists), they planned to use the summer break to work on the academic expectations.

Participants also stated the importance of being given the materials to implement the activities and strategies shared in the sessions. Having the materials provided to them was helpful and convenient, making it easier to immediately implement the activities, and thus, making it more likely that they would try the activities at home with their child.

Both qualitative and quantitative data supported the finding that participants made changes to their family practices after participating in the workshop series. However, because of the high *p*-values associated with the differences in means from pre- and post-surveys and pre- and post-daily reflection charts, these differences were not statistically significant and can only be interpreted with limited utility. This is likely due to two factors: a small sample size and high variability within the samples. It would be prudent to implement a similar workshop series again with a larger sample size to see if similar differences in means produced statistically significant differences.

Discussion of Findings

Findings Related to Literacy

After attending the literacy session, responses from the post-survey, daily reflection charts, and interviews indicated that all participants increased their literacy knowledge. In addition, all 8 participants who volunteered to be interviewed shared that they were now reading more often with their child at home. However, research has found that simply reading to children does not influence their literacy development (Morrow & Brittain, 2009; Sénéchal & Young,

2008). Thus, it was encouraging that in addition to reading more often with their children, 6 of the 8 participants stated that they were also talking with their child about their reading more often. It is this verbal interaction and discussion of texts that promotes literacy development (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006).

I was initially surprised at the number of participants who knew that it was important to read *to* their child but did not realize the importance of reading *with* their child. These families knew that reading was important, but they were missing the essential piece of engaging in discussion with their child before, during, and after reading. This underscores the notion that too often, schools make assumptions about what families know and are able to do, such as knowing how to effectively read with their child. Although families are eager and willing to support their child's reading at home, many are unsure of how to do so effectively (Epstein, 2011). Schools have a unique opportunity to show families how to facilitate shared reading strategies such as picture walks or dialogic reading that can have a positive impact on students' literacy development (Sénéchal & Young, 2008).

Inconsistency Regarding SEL Results

Of the 4 workshop sessions, 3 sessions (literacy, numeracy, and transitioning from kindergarten to first grade) had consistent responses across all data collection instruments that demonstrated that participants increased their knowledge and confidence in these areas and made changes to their family practices after attending these workshop sessions. However, the same trends did not hold true for the SEL session. In their interviews, participants did not indicate that they learned any knew knowledge after attending the SEL session; this notion was reinforced in their pre- and post-survey responses and on their pre- and post-daily reflection charts. In fact, the results of the post-daily reflection chart indicated that participants reported a decrease in the

number of times they spoke to their child about their emotions during the week. This session was also the least attended session, with only 6 participants attending live.

One possible reason for these inconsistencies is that participants did not have a strong understanding of what the SEL session would entail or how the strategies shared could support their family practices at home. Their understanding of SEL could have been shaped by how SEL has recently been portrayed in the media, especially since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, recent news articles with titles such as "'Social-Emotional Learning': The Next Fight in Education" (Buck, 2021) and "There's Pushback to Social-Emotional Learning. Here's What Happened in One State" (Blad, 2020) position SEL as a controversial topic for schools to be addressing. Another possible explanation is that participants might have already felt confident about helping their child talk about feelings and use self-regulation strategies, and they did not feel as though this session was applicable to them. A third possibility is that the date of this session overlapped with other family obligations, and participants were simply unable to attend.

Although participants did not report any new learning from this session, multiple participants reported that they enjoyed the session and that it validated what they already knew and were doing at home. Other participants shared that this session equipped them with more effective SEL strategies to use at home. In fact, several participants stated that this was their favorite session, that they were immediately able to implement some of the strategies shared in the session with their child at home, and that they experienced positive outcomes. One participant even commented that the SEL session should be the first session in the series, stating, "Let's get our, you know, social and emotional everything under control first, because you can't use the reading and the math stuff if your kid is having a meltdown."

I spent a lot of time reflecting on the SEL results and the reasons for such inconsistent responses on all data collection instruments. If I were to repeat this study, I would promote the SEL session differently. I would remove the phrase "Social and Emotional Learning" from the description entirely and instead focus on the small sliver of SEL that was actually addressed in the session: self-awareness of feelings and helping kindergarten students identify, manage, and self-regulate their feelings, which are essential skills for all children to develop (CASEL, 2017).

Changes in Participants' Knowledge Versus Self-Efficacy

During the data analysis, I analyzed the differences between pre- and post-survey responses about participants' knowledge compared to their self-efficacy. The increases in participants' knowledge from pre- to post-surveys were greater than the increases in participants' self-efficacy from pre- to post-surveys. For example, 0 participants strongly agreed with the statement, "I know what to do to help my child learn at home" prior to attending any of the workshop sessions. After attending the workshop sessions, 6 participants strongly agreed with this statement. Conversely, 3 participants strongly agreed with the statement, "I am able to help my child learn at home" prior to attending any of the workshop sessions. After attending the workshop sessions, 5 participants strongly agreed with this statement. Participants shared in their semi-structured interviews that attending the sessions helped boost their confidence, however, the results from the pre- and post-surveys indicated these increases were smaller compared to participants' increases in their knowledge.

These results indicate that many of the participants already had a moderate to high level of self-efficacy for helping their child learn before they attended any of the workshop sessions. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) noted that "a personal sense of efficacy for helping children is a necessary condition for parent involvement" (p. 314). The participants that signed

up to participate in the workshop series understood the value of working with their child at home, and many felt confident that they were able to do so. The missing piece was that parents were not always knowledgeable about *how* to help their child or what activities would be most effective. The workshop series provided participants with information, ideas, activities, and materials to implement the activities. It helped participants see what to do to support their child's learning at home.

Statistical Significance Versus Practical Significance

Although this action research study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments, the focus was on the qualitative measures. Because responses to the surveys and daily reflection charts were low (between 10 and 12 for each item), and the variability in the samples was high, the power of the statistical tests was hampered. Thus, the differences in pre- and post-surveys and pre- and post-daily reflection charts were not statistically significant.

However, the results from quantitative data collection efforts are encouraging and should not be completely discounted. The quantitative measures complemented the qualitative measures, and the results from the quantitative data were consistent and in line with the findings from the qualitative data. Additionally, the quantitative results appeared to have practical significance (e.g., participants indicated on both the post-surveys and post-daily reflection charts that they read an additional 1 day per week with their child). A larger and more robust sample is necessary to determine whether the quantitative results are statistically significant.

Overall Reactions

Gender of Participants

One element of the study that immediately stood out to me was that all 14 participants identified as female. Most were mothers (12), and two were grandmothers. Although two fathers completed the interest flyer to participate in the study, neither became a participant. Although this is not atypical for a school's family engagement events, it is something that schools should consider as they plan their family engagement efforts. The involvement of fathers, grandfathers, and other male figures leads to positive educational and behavioral outcomes for children (Jeynes, 2015), and schools should make extra efforts to recruit, include, and welcome them in family engagement efforts.

Staff Members' Presence at Workshop Sessions

As the researcher and assistant principal of the school, I attended all four sessions as the facilitator. To show her support for the workshop series, the school's principal attended 3 of the 4 sessions. Then, a kindergarten and a first-grade teacher asked to attend the first workshop session, to gain an understanding of what to expect when they presented in the fourth workshop session. Their presence at the meeting was valuable; they were able to answer participants' questions and provide insight about how they structure their classrooms. Their unique perspectives were such an asset to the session that I asked if they would be willing to attend all four sessions and they both agreed. The presence of the teachers and principal added a more personal element to the sessions and demonstrated to families that the workshop series was important to school staff. It also allowed families to have a "seat at the table" with school leaders, something that is not typically available except to a small subset of very engaged families (e.g., PTA board members). Based on the positive feedback I received from participants

about having the principal and the teachers there, I believe the staff members' commitment to the workshop series helped strengthen the connections between home and school. Improved relationships between families and school staff are one benefit of collaborative family engagement practices (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

However, deeper reflection led me to consider the possibility that the presence of additional school staff could have had the opposite effect. Rather than feeling supported and connected, the presence of the teachers and principal could have restricted participants' involvement. I noticed that most participants did not engage with the presenter, ask many questions, or interact with the chat box feature. They might have felt nervous or embarrassed to speak up in front of their child's teacher and the school's principal, and they could have viewed staff members' presence as an unwanted and unwelcome surprise. Although some participants positively commented about the teachers' presence at the workshops, in another cycle of action research, it would be prudent to include a survey question asking participants about their perceptions of the teachers' presence at the workshops.

Importance of Personal Invitations

Data analysis confirmed that participants reported increases in their knowledge and self-efficacy after participating in the virtual workshop series. This was consistent across data sources. However, the data showed that gains in self-efficacy were not as large as gains in knowledge. A possible explanation for this is that the family members who participated already had high levels of self-efficacy regarding their abilities to influence their child's education before attending any of the workshop sessions. This raises the question: How can schools increase engagement among families who might not have high levels of self-efficacy?

I found that personal invitations were one strategy to overcome this barrier. Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues' (2005) noted that personal invitations from others are often strong motivators for parents to become involved, and can be especially powerful when parents do not have a high level of self-efficacy. They added that personal invitations highlight the importance of parents' active engagement in their child's learning, and signal to the parent that their participation in their child's learning is worthwhile and beneficial. Thus, schools need to do more than just send home generalized invitations through flyers or a post on social media. In addition to these methods of communication, school staff should each issue personal invitations to families every time a family engagement program is offered. Although not all families will accept the invitation or be able to participate in the program, these personalized invitations might encourage hesitant families to become engaged.

Prior to the workshop series, I asked each of the school's 3 kindergarten teachers to provide me with the name of one student whose family could benefit from participating in the workshop series. Then I made phone calls to those families and issued a personal invitation to join the workshop series. One parent shared that this would not be a good time for her to participate, but the other two enthusiastically accepted and became two of the study's most active participants. Thus, personally inviting families who might not already have a strong sense of self-efficacy related to helping their child learn can be a powerful method to encourage participation.

Role of Evaluation in the Action Research Cycle

Throughout the duration of the workshop series, it was difficult to determine how participants perceived the workshop sessions. I constantly reflected on whether participants were learning new information from the sessions, and whether they were finding the sessions

worthwhile and beneficial. It was not until I analyzed the results from the post-surveys and facilitated semi-structured interviews with participants that I began to understand the impact of the workshop series on participants and their families. They reported they increased their knowledge about helping their children at home and offered concrete examples of changes to their family practices that they had made after attending the workshop sessions. Without engaging in some form of post-data collection and analysis, I would not have developed a deeper understanding of the impact of the workshop series on participants. This reinforced the notion that evaluation is an essential component of the action research process.

Action research is a cyclical process. The results from earlier cycles should be used to inform subsequent cycles. As additional cycles are conducted, practitioners learn more and their findings become more credible (Mertler, 2017). Mertler (2017) noted that during the final stage of action research, the reflecting stage, it is important for practitioners to determine the effectiveness of the intervention, and then make decisions for future cycles of action research. In fact, after conducting the first cycle of action research with the families of kindergarten students, I will soon be conducting a second cycle of action research with the families of third grade students. I will use what I learned through the implementation of this first cycle of action research to improve the second cycle. For example, I will remove the phrase "social and emotional learning" from the description of the SEL session and will work with the presenter to develop a more specific and targeted description of the session.

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings from this study, I offer several implications for practice through the context of four recommendations. These recommendations are focused on ways that schools can

improve family engagement at home through the implementation of a workshop series. Table 19 summarizes the study's findings, related recommendations, and supporting literature.

Table 19

Study Recommendations Based on Findings

Finding	Related Recommendation	Supporting Literature
The workshop series strengthened school-home connections while also providing a unique experience for each participant, based on their family's needs.	Schools should offer a variety of workshop opportunities for families.	Epstein, 1995, 2011 Foster, 2012 Henderson et al., 2007
Evaluating the impact of family engagement programs can provide valuable data to inform the next cycle of action research.	Schools should evaluate the impact of their family engagement efforts and use the data to inform the next cycle of action research.	Hanover Research, 2016
Mastery and vicarious experiences are effective strategies to increase families' self-efficacy.	Workshop sessions should incorporate opportunities for families to share their successes and challenges.	Bandura, 1977 Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997
With their increased knowledge and self-efficacy, participants used the materials provided to engage in more academic activities at home with their child.	Schools should ensure families have the knowledge, skills, and materials necessary to implement activities.	Epstein, 1995 Henderson et al., 2007

Recommendation 1: Offer a Variety of Workshop Opportunities for Families

Many families want to help their children reach their maximum academic potential. However, unlike teachers who complete some type of coursework or training designed to help them teach effectively, families might not be knowledgeable about how to purposefully support their child's learning at home (Epstein, 1986; Henderson et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Yet families want to know what their children are learning at school, and they want ideas and recommendations about how to support their child's learning at home (Foster, 2012).

Schools must take the lead in building strong relationships with families, and one way to do this is by offering workshops that focus on how to help children learn at home.

Every family is different, with their own unique experiences and challenges. Some families are interested in learning more about how to support their child's academics, while others are interested in understanding and supporting their child's social and emotional development. Still others might be interested in learning about the academic and behavioral expectations for the next grade level, curious about the programs implemented at the school, or wondering how to be an educational advocate for their child. Additionally, some families like the convenience offered by a virtual workshop session, including the opportunity to watch the recording of the session at a later time if they are not able to attend the session live. Yet other families prefer the personal connections that stem from in-person sessions. Thus, in order to meet the needs of all families, schools should offer a range of workshop sessions using a variety of formats.

Recommendation 2: Create Methods to Evaluate Family Engagement Programs

Too often, school staff spend weeks planning a family engagement program. Then they implement the program, breathe a sigh of relief when it is over, and begin planning the next program. They engage in this cycle without ever truly understanding the effects of the programs they are implementing. They cannot be sure whether programs are helpful, beneficial, or effective at meeting the needs of their families. Thus, it is imperative that schools engage in some type of program evaluation after implementing a family engagement program. The National PTA (2021) states that "because family engagement is complex and relational, it can feel difficult to measure, but even small steps towards understanding the outcomes of your [family engagement] work can go a long way" (para. 4). In a 2016 brief, Hanover Research

outlined four steps to evaluating family engagement: prepare, collect, analyze and aggregate, and share and use. In the *prepare* stage, they recommended compiling information on school demographics and ongoing family engagement efforts. Next, they suggested *collecting data* through surveys, questionnaires, sign-in sheets, attendance logs, and interviews. Then, they recommended *analyzing and aggregating* the data into meaningful findings. Finally, they suggested *sharing* the results of evaluation efforts and *using* the results to guide future engagement programs. Schools who take the time to investigate the effects of their programs will have a better understanding of the needs of their families and can use this knowledge to design and implement better programs that are tailored to meet these needs.

Recommendation 3: Incorporate Opportunities for Families to Share Successes and Challenges

Workshop sessions should help participants increase their knowledge about a specific topic, but they should also help build participants' self-efficacy. Two effective ways to increase families' self-efficacy are through mastery and vicarious experiences. Bandura (1977) found that mastery experiences are the most powerful because they are built on a foundation of authentic experiences. Vicarious experiences, such as seeing workshop presenters model activities or hearing other participants share their experiences, can be effective as well.

As schools plan family engagement workshop sessions, they should include time for families to share with each other. This can be done in a whole group or small group setting, including on virtual platforms by using breakout rooms. Guiding questions can be used to facilitate discussions and prompt participants, such as "Did you try any of the activities presented in the last session?"; "What worked well (or didn't work well) from last week's session?"; or "What are you hoping to learn from today's session?" During this time, willing participants can

share their successes, challenges, or motivations for attending the workshop session. Hearing about others' successes is one way to engage in a vicarious experience. Additionally, hearing about others' challenges can also be powerful. It creates a sense of community, with family members realizing that their own concerns and challenges are not unique. This can lead to participants sharing and problem-solving together, resulting in a stronger sense of camaraderie. Hearing about families' experiences also helps school staff become more attuned to families' needs so they can provide better support to families.

Recommendation 4: Ensure Families Have Knowledge, Skills, and Necessary Materials

Offering a variety of workshop sessions can provide families with the knowledge and skills to support their child's learning at home. However, it is also essential that schools provide families with the necessary materials to implement the activities shared in the workshop sessions. In their review of survey data, Henderson et al. (2007) reported that families wanted books, technology, and other learning materials to help their child at home. Facilitating workshop sessions that require participants to go out and create, purchase, or prepare their own materials greatly decreases the likelihood that participants will actually implement the activities. Instead, schools should ensure that workshop participants have the requisite materials they need to immediately implement activities.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study offer some important insights for schools who wish to implement effective workshop programs for their families. However, more research is needed. This research could take several paths. First, this action research study was conducted on a small scale, with the workshop intervention available to the families of one grade level in one school. Because of the small sample size, the results from the quantitative data, while promising, were

not statistically significant. It would be prudent to implement this workshop series again with a larger, more robust sample size. Then the quantitative findings might result in statistically significant differences.

The focus of this action research cycle was a 4-part virtual workshop series. Although many participants commented that they liked the virtual format and appreciated its convenience and flexibility, some noted that they learn better in-person rather than online. Thus, implementing the workshop series using an in-person or hybrid approach (offering both in-person and virtual formats simultaneously) might be beneficial. Similarly, the workshop series investigated in this study was implemented for 4 consecutive weeks at the end of students' kindergarten school year. It would be interesting to see if workshop sessions were received differently if they were offered earlier in the school year or were scattered throughout the school year.

Finally, this study was implemented with the families of kindergarten students, many of whom were experiencing their oldest (or only) child's first year of formal schooling. It would be interesting to implement a similar workshop series for the families of students in other elementary grade levels to determine if the workshop sessions had similar effects on participants.

Summary

Generally, families want to be involved in their children's learning, and schools want families to be engaged (Epstein, 2011). Although there is evidence that a gap exists between what families know and what they feel they need to know to support their child's learning (Arce, 2019; Epstein, 2011; Henderson et al., 2007; Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020), schools can take steps to engage families and provide them with the knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy they need to improve their children's learning at home. One promising way to engage families and

strengthen relationships between home and school is through a workshop series, comprised of a variety of sessions to meet the unique needs of all families. Implementing such a program allows for meaningful two-way communication between families and schools and can equip families with the tools they need to create an effective home learning environment.

The workshop series that was implemented as the intervention in this action research cycle investigated the effects of the series of a virtual workshop series on participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices. Although this study had a small sample size and was conducted at a single elementary school, the results of this study are important and represent a small, but significant, contribution to the body of research on family engagement. The study found that schools can equip their families with the knowledge, self-efficacy, and materials they need to support their child's learning at home through targeted workshop sessions. Both families and school staff want what is best for children, and when schools reach out to meet the needs of their families, it is ultimately the students who reap the benefits.

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APPENDIX A

Permission to Reprint Action Research Figure

W&M

Jessica Brown <jland2@email.wm.edu>

RE: Your Request to SAGE College Has Been Submitted

1 message

Craig Myles <Craig.Myles@sagepub.com> Fri, Jan 22, 2021 at 10:40 AM
To: Jessica Brown <jland2@email.wm.edu>

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APPENDIX B

Pre- and Post-Survey

Survey Directions: Thank you for participating in this (pre/post) survey. The survey should take approximately 5–10 minutes to complete and your answers will remain anonymous. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Jessica Brown at jessica.brown@gc.k12.va.us or (804) 642-9140. Thank you for your time.

Section 1 Directions: For each item in this section, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the given statement.

1. I **know what to do** to help my child learn at home.

   Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

2. I **am able** to help my child learn at home.

   Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

3. I **know what to do** to help my child with reading at home.

   Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

4. I **am able** to help my child with reading at home.

   Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

5. I **know what to do** to help my child with math at home.

   Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

6. I **am able** to help my child with math at home.

   Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

7. I **know what to do** to help my child with their feelings.

   Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

8. I **am able** to help my child with their feelings.

   Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

9. I **know how** to help my child get ready for first grade.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

10. I **am able** to help my child get ready for first grade.

    Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Section 2 Directions: For each item in this section, please indicate the number of days in the last week you have engaged in each activity.

1. In the last 7 days, how many days have you read with your kindergarten child?

   0 days, 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days, 5 days, 6 days, 7 days

2. In the last 7 days, how many days have you done a math activity with your kindergarten child?

   0 days, 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days, 5 days, 6 days, 7 days

3. In the last 7 days, how many days have you talked with your kindergarten child about their feelings?

   0 days, 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days, 5 days, 6 days, 7 days

4. In the last 7 days, how many days have you talked with your kindergarten child about first grade?

   0 days, 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days, 5 days, 6 days, 7 days

Section 3: (post-survey only)

- Is there anything else you'd like to share about your participation in the virtual workshop series?
- Are you willing to participate in a 30-minute Zoom interview with me to share about your experiences with the virtual workshop series?
    - If yes: Please provide your name and contact information. Thank you for your response.
    - If no: Thank you for your response.

APPENDIX C

Daily Reflection Chart

Thursday April 29	Friday April 30	Saturday May 1	Sunday May 2	Monday May 3	Tuesday May 4	Wednesday May 5

Directions:

- Use the key below to record which activities you do with your kindergarten child each day.
- You can record more than one activity per day.
- Please only count activities that are done outside of your child's regular virtual learning work.
- *Example*: If you did a math activity and talked with your child about their feelings on May 3rd, you would write B and C in the May 3rd box. If you only talked with your child about math during their virtual learning time, you would not record that activity.

Key:

Letter	Description
A	Used an interactive reading strategy with my kindergarten child (e.g. picture walk or reading with dialogue)
B	Did a math activity with my kindergarten child (e.g. practice with numbers; play a game that uses math)
C	Talked with my kindergarten child about their feelings (e.g. helped them identify what feeling they were experiencing)
D	Supported my kindergarten child's use of one or more self-regulation strategies (e.g. had a discussion about how they felt after using a self-regulation strategy)
E	Did another type of learning activity with my child (please specify on the back)

If you have any questions about the Daily Reflection Chart, please contact Jessica Brown at jessica.brown@gc.k12.va.us or (804) 642-9140.

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

Participation in the Virtual Workshop Series

Introduction/Directions: (Interviewer will read aloud to participant prior to beginning) Good [morning/afternoon]. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. My name is Jessica Brown and I will be the facilitator for today's interview. The purpose of today's interview is for you to share information about your experience with and the impacts of the Warrior Workshops, a series of virtual workshop sessions that focused on literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning, and the transition from kindergarten to first grade. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. In fact, I am interested in hearing various viewpoints and would like to hear your honest thoughts, feelings, and opinions. With your permission, this interview will be recorded. However, your responses will remain confidential. Is it okay for me to record our talk? [pause for consent]. There will be time at the end for you to add any final thoughts or to ask additional questions. Before we begin, do you have any questions about this study?

1. Will you tell me a little bit about your family, your kindergarten child, and why you signed up to participate in the virtual workshop series?
    a. Is your kindergarten child the oldest child in the family?
2. Before participating in the workshop sessions, what kinds of activities did you do at home to support your child's learning?
3. During your participation in the workshop series, has there been any change in the activities you do to help your child learn at home?
    a. If no: Why do you think that is?
    b. If yes: Describe the ways the activities have changed?
4. Since participating in the workshop series, describe changes in your confidence level and ability to implement the strategies or activities shared in the sessions at home?
5. Which workshop sessions did you attend? (Literacy, numeracy, SEL, K → 1st transition)
6. What did you find to be the most helpful during the _____ session? (Repeat the question for each session attended)
7. Some of the strategies shared during the sessions included interactive reading, picture walks, numeracy activities, feelings identification and regulation, and suggestions for preparing your child for first grade. Which workshop sessions, if any, gave you new ideas about helping your child learn at home?
8. What suggestions do you have for making the workshop series more helpful or more effective for you?
9. Are there other topics or strategies you would like to know more about related to supporting your child's learning?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me on the topic of your child's learning?

Possible follow-up questions/prompts to use:

- Will you tell me more about that?
- What do you mean by that?
- Can you help me to understand what you mean by _____?
- Can you give me an example of what you mean by _____?

Conclusion: (Interviewer will read aloud to participant at the conclusion of the interview)
As we conclude today's discussion, I'd like to sincerely thank you for your participation in this interview. Your responses will help me develop a deeper understanding of the impact of the virtual workshop series. I appreciate your willingness to share your honest thoughts and observations. If there are no further questions, this interview is complete. Have a great day.

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

Consent Form for Warriors Workshop Series

You are being asked to participate in a research study of the effects of a virtual workshop series designed for the families of kindergarten students.

This project was found to comply with appropriate ethical standards and was exempted from the need for formal review by the W&M Protection of Human Subjects Committee (Phone 757-221-3966) on 2021-04-10 and expires on 2022-04-10.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to investigate the short-term effects of a virtual workshop series on participants' knowledge, self-efficacy, and family practices at home.

What you will be asked to do: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the tasks outlined in the table below.

Task	Approximate Time to Complete
Attend all **4 workshop sessions** on Zoom (May 6, 13, 20, 27)	45 minutes per session; 4 sessions
Complete a **daily reflection chart** for 1 week before the first session and for 1 week after the final session	2 minutes per day; 14 days
Complete a **pre-survey** before the first session and a **post-survey** after final session	5–10 minutes per survey
(Optional) Participate in a **one-on-one interview** to share your experiences with the workshop series; interview will be recorded with your permission.	30 minutes

Benefits of participation: In each session, you will learn ways to support your child's learning at home. In addition, you will be provided with materials to use to implement all of the strategies shared during the sessions. This includes books, math games and activities, and school supplies.

Risks of participation: There are no anticipated risks to participating in this study.

Privacy: The information collected during this study will be kept private. Survey results will be maintained in an online file that is password protected. Interview recordings will be destroyed after transcription. Reflection logs will be kept in a locked file and your name will not be connected to the information you share. In addition, when the results of this study are reported, personally identifying information will be removed.

Participation is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, with no penalty to you.

If you have questions or concerns: The researcher conducting this study is Jessica Brown. You may contact her at any time at (804) 642-9140 or jessica.brown@gc.k12.va.us. You may also contact Dr. Steven M. Constantino at the College of William and Mary at (757) 221-2144 or smconstantino@wm.edu or Dr. Tom Ward at the College of William and Mary at (757) 221-2358 or tjward@wm.edu. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

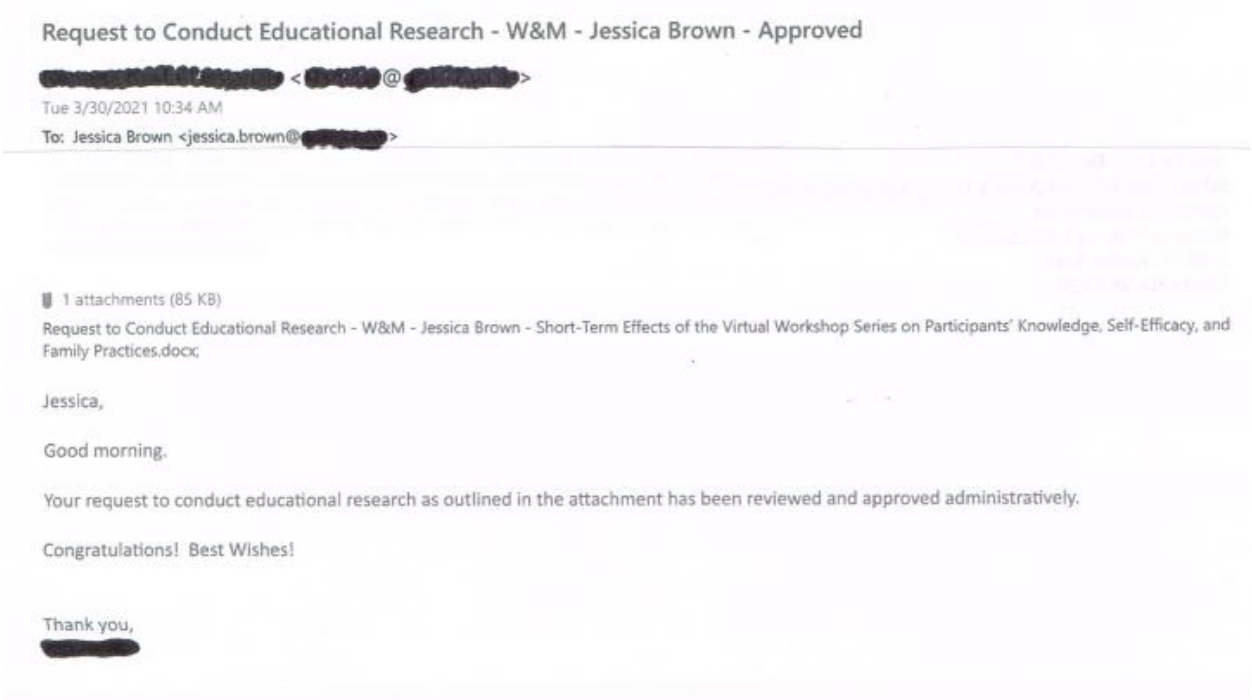
Statement of Consent: My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have read and understood the information included on this consent form, and that I consent to participate in this research study.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant _____ Date_____

APPENDIX F

Approval from the School District



Request to Conduct Educational Research - W&M - Jessica Brown - Approved

[redacted] <[redacted]@[redacted]>

Tue 3/30/2021 10:34 AM

To: Jessica Brown <jessica.brown@[redacted]>

1 attachments (85 KB)

Request to Conduct Educational Research - W&M - Jessica Brown - Short-Term Effects of the Virtual Workshop Series on Participants' Knowledge, Self-Efficacy, and Family Practices.docx;

Jessica,

Good morning.

Your request to conduct educational research as outlined in the attachment has been reviewed and approved administratively.

Congratulations! Best Wishes!

Thank you,

[redacted]

VITA

Jessica Anderson Brown

Educational Background

Ed.D. The College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA
Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership, January 2021
Endorsement, K-12 Administration, August 2018

M.Ed. The College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA
Curriculum and Instruction: K-8 Math Specialist, May 2014
Endorsement, Gifted Education, May 2012

B.S. The College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA
Mathematics, May 2009
Elementary Education, May 2009

Professional Experience

Assistant Principal (October 2020–present), VA

K-5 Mathematics Interventionist (August 2015–October 2020), Achilles Elementary, Hayes, VA

Summer School Coordinator (2017, 2018)

Elementary Teacher (2014–2015) Achilles Elementary School, Hayes, VA
Fourth grade classroom teacher

Elementary Teacher (2009–2014) Petsworth Elementary School, Gloucester, VA
Third grade classroom teacher