Parents' Perceptions of and Goals for Alphabet Books

by

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ABSTRACT

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AND GOALS FOR ALPHABET BOOKS

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This study examined parents' goals for reading ABC books with their children and their perceptions of page features. Factor analysis of a questionnaire answered by 225 parents of junior and senior kindergarten students revealed four goals for reading alphabet books. In order of importance as rated by parents the goals were: Learning to Read, Enjoyment and Bonding, Learning from Books, and Soothe the Child. Maternal education, number of ABC books owned and ABC book reading frequency were related to parents' goals. When viewing ABC pages, parents rated pages with little text, simple illustrations and letter sound-word consistency as more appropriate for fulfilling purposes related to learning to decode than pages with a lot of text, complex illustrations, and letter sound-word violations. Findings highlight that parents' perceptions of which alphabet book page features are more appropriate for decoding purposes are congruent with previous research and experts' advice.

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Parents' Perceptions of and Goals for Alphabet Books

A is for Alphabet. B is for Books. Alphabet books are plentiful in homes with young children, libraries and book stores, with some online bookstores containing over 20 000 titles related to the ABCs! Parents have reported reading alphabet books to their four to seven year old children two to three times per month and children are reportedly engaging with these books independently another two to three times a month (Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans & Jared, 2006). Despite their popularity and frequent usage, very little research has been conducted on this genre of children`s literature.

What are Alphabet Books?

Although today's alphabet books are diverse, in their most basic form alphabet books are defined as "picture books that present in sequence the letters of the alphabet, A to Z" (Harris & Hodges, 1999). Alphabet books have evolved from 15th century hornbooks which contained uppercase and lowercase letters, common syllables, and a few short prayers as a medium to teach reading. The 17th century brought about a more familiar form, primers, where a picture was presented for each letter along with a short rhyming verse having a main word beginning with the featured letter. Current versions are much more diverse and range from "Aa Apples" to stories that include multiple words, pictures (and sometimes sounds) for each letter. Furthermore, incorporation of elaborate illustrations, puzzles, themes, and rhymes, makes for an extensive realm of alphabet fun. Regardless of their format, children need substantial background knowledge to make meaning of these texts. They must know that pictures often correspond with words, that visual symbols represent the letters that make up these words, and that sounds correspond with the letters presented (Nodelman, 2001).

Features of Alphabet Books

For an alphabet book to be useful for teaching young children the letters and sounds of the alphabet, several features have been recommended when used with preschoolers. Huck and Kuhn (1968; in Criscoe, 1988) established three criteria for appropriate features of alphabet books. First, illustrations should contain one or two easily identifiable objects that are age-appropriate for the reader. Second, objects that can have several correct names, such as puppy/dog, should be avoided. Finally, the most common sounds of the letter should be presented instead of blends, digraphs or letter

combinations with silent letters. The current study will focus on two of the criteria recommended by Huck and Kuhn--, illustration and common initial sounds--, as well as a third concerning the amount of text, not identified by Huck and Kuhn.

Amount of Text. Alphabet books have a number of features which make them unique from other types of children`s literature. The print in alphabet books tends to be salient, thereby increasing the likelihood that children will attend to it. In two independent eye-tracking studies (Evans & Saint-Aubin, 2005; Justice, Skibbe, Canning & Lankford, 2005), it was found that children who were in the pre-reading stage of literacy development rarely looked at the text when being read traditional storybooks. However, given that alphabet books are thought to be more print salient, they may elicit greater fixation on print than other storybooks. Evans, Saint-Aubin and Landry (2009) found that while the extent to which five-year-old children looked at print while reading alphabet books was low overall, it was relatively higher than when listening to storybooks. In this study, children looked at a simple alphabet book that featured the target letter, one word, a corresponding picture that began with target letter, and a picture of the book's main character, a panda bear. Although there were only four areas to attend to, children often did not fixate on the target letter or word. In fact, the children never fixated on the target letter for almost a quarter of the pages and never fixated on the target word for over half of the pages studied, fixating instead on the pictures. But in comparison to storybook reading, children reading alphabet books fixated on the print overall for greater periods of time (about 22% of their viewing time). Interestingly, children who had greater letter knowledge fixated on the print for longer, more often, and more quickly than children with less letter knowledge. Therefore, emergent readers are still relatively inattentive to print, even when the print is quite salient as is seen in a simple, print salient alphabet book but this attention to print increases as letter knowledge increases.

Saint-Aubin and Evans (2009) further examined whether the amount of text affected kindergartener's attention to print. Children were asked to read an alphabet book where half of the pages contained only the letter, one word naming an object starting with the featured letter, and a relatively complex corresponding illustration containing the object (and others). For example, the word "boa" was presented along with an illustration

of a boa in a bath with bubbles. The other half contained the letter, one short sentence that included three words beginning with the featured letter, and the same corresponding illustration of these words. They found that children's fixation on print was negatively related to the amount of print because an increase in the number of words was related to a decrease in the total fixation time on print. In addition, attention to print in the multiple word condition was comparable to that when children listened to storybooks. Therefore, a reduced amount of print in alphabet books may be one factor that draws emergent readers' attention to print.

Complexity of Illustration. Illustrations for alphabet books intended to help children learn letters and sounds should be relatively simple. Experts of children's literature agree upon the original criteria set forth by Huck and Kuhn (1968, in Criscoe, 1988) - that illustrations should contain one or two easily identifiable objects and be age-appropriate for the reader (Huck et al., 2001, Norton & Norton, 1999). Additional criteria include illustrations being consistent with the text and mood of the book. However, Smolkin and Yaden (1992) argue that there is no empirical evidence for such criteria and that removing complex features of the illustration, such as objects with more than one correct name, may minimize opportunities for parents to discuss letters and sounds with their child. Currently, no parental opinions on illustration complexity are known.

While experts recommend simple illustrations, publishers are not always in agreement. In an examination of 150 English and French alphabet books intended for preschoolers, approximately only 40% of English and 65% of French alphabet books were considered to have simple drawings (Evans, O'Grady, & Lavoie, 2008), suggesting that there is a market for complexly illustrated alphabet books despite the experts' recommendations.

Letter Sound-Word Correspondence. Another criterion set forth by children's literature experts suggests that objects depicted should begin with the common sound of the page's featured letter (Huck & Kuhn, 1968 in Criscoe, 1988, Huck et al., 2001, Norton & Norton, 1999). Logically, an object and word that do not correspond with the phoneme represented by a given letter (as in P is for phone) would be confusing for emergent readers (as p does not represent the /f/ sound). In the examination of alphabet books noted above, Evans, O'Grady, and Lavoie (2008) found that it was common for

words to be used that do not begin with the phoneme most often associated with the letter for the page. Instead words with more complex orthography, beginning with spellings that violated simple letter-sound correspondence (e.g. sheep and owl), were often used. Furthermore, letters frequently are presented in a blend with another letter (e.g., s in skip). Previous research has shown that it is more difficult for children to isolate the initial sound in such blends (Treiman & Weatherston, 1992).

Benefits of Alphabet Books

Despite the sometimes problematic features of alphabet books, they have been thought to promote early literacy skills. In order to become skilled readers, children must become familiar with the alphabetic system, including letter-name correspondence and phonics (letter-sound correspondence). According to the National Reading Panel (2000), phonics is one of the five essential components necessary to become a successful reader. Alphabet books are one way in which emergent readers can gain valuable "reading" experience during the early reading phases. During the pre-alphabetic phase, children read sight words by connecting a visual cue, such as a picture or logo, with their pronunciation (Ehri, 2002). In the most basic of alphabet books, a single printed word can be identified by a young reader by the solitary picture that is presented. Similarly, for children who have learned the names of the letters, the rest of the sentence "*letter* is for…" can potentially be read by identifying the picture. However, once the visual cue is removed the early reader can no longer read the word. During the partial alphabetic phase, young readers begin to read words by making some letter-sound connections within the word (Ehri, 2002). For example, knowing that the letter p makes the /p/ sound, along with a picture of young dog, will help the child read that "P is for puppy" rather than "P is for dog" which may be endorsed by a child who has not yet made this letter-sound connection. Since the name of this letter also contains the related sound, *puh*, the link between letter sound and name is easier to learn (the acrophonic principle; Evans, Bell, Shaw, Moretti & Page, 2006; McBride-Chang, 1999; Templeton & Bear, 1992; Treiman, Tincoff, Rodriguez, Mouzaki & Francis, 1998).

Studies of these emergent literacy populations have shown that the use of alphabet books can be beneficial in learning fundamental reading skills. Murray, Stahl and Ivey (1996) found that pre-kindergartners, who were read conventional alphabet books where

letter names as well as example words were presented, made greater gains in phoneme awareness than children who were read stories with letter names but no corresponding words and regular storybooks. Although a relatively short intervention, these children developed more knowledge of letter-sound correspondence in only three weeks, than the children in the other conditions. Interestingly, the teachers in this condition did not emphasize the phonemes (such as by saying *bbb bear*), which is a method of teaching letter sound correspondence. Brabham, Murray and Bowden (2006) examined the effect of reading alphabet books while emphasizing the phonemes in comparison to emphasizing the meaning of words. Greater gains in phoneme awareness were made when the phoneme was emphasized rather than the meaning of the text being read. This suggests that what is said outside of the text (i.e. extratextual comments) is of great importance to promoting literacy through alphabet books.

The unique format of alphabet books encourages parents to share these books with their children while adding extratextual information (as in the Brabham et al., 2006, study). In a study of 72 parent-child dyads, Stadler and McEvoy (2003) found that reading alphabet books elicited behaviours such as telling the child the sound the letter made (phonic knowledge) and using their finger to follow the words or pointing to a letter (print concept). In contrast, storybooks did not elicit behaviours that would encourage print concept or phonic awareness. Unfortunately, many parents did not engage in such behaviours with either text, but it does seem that alphabet books provide the *opportunity* to address these early literacy skills more so than traditional storybooks and it is up to the parent to engage in these specific behaviours. A second study of parent's extratextual utterances while reading an alphabet book with their three-to-five year old child, revealed many instances of letter-related speech (Lachner, Zevenbergen & Zevenberger, 2008). As in Stadler and McEvoy's (2003) study, there was significant variation in the number of extratextual utterances, with some parents not engaging in any extratextual speech, leaving the literacy promoting behaviours entirely to the book itself.

Parents' Goals

Therefore, it is important to understand what parents are intending to achieve by reading alphabet books with their children, how they evaluate alphabet books, and ultimately how this may affect reading behaviours and literacy development in children.

Studying parents' goals may provide insight to their behaviours (Austin and Vancouver, 1996). While parents` goals for reading alphabet books have not been reported, an examination of parents` goals for shared reading (Study 1, Audet, Evans, Williamson & Reynolds, 2008) revealed that parents' goals could be classified into five groupings; to stimulate development, foster reading, bond with the child, soothe the child, and enjoy books. The goals of enjoying books and bonding with the child were rated the highest at each grade level (junior kindergarten through grade three). However, the parents' goal to foster reading was most prominent in grade one where this is a main goal of the curriculum.

A second study by Audet et al. (2008) examined whether parents' print-referencing behaviours when reading storybooks to their children in junior kindergarten were related to their goals for shared book reading. They found that parents who rated the goal of learning to read as higher than creating a positive mood and/or stimulating development made more print-referencing comments. As in Stadler and McEvoy's (2003) study, the mean level of print referencing was quite low, with a mean of 3.42 print references for parents who favoured the goal of learning to read and only 1.19 print references among parents who did not rank this goal as the most important.

While print referencing is relatively low for storybooks when the parent is reading to the pre-reader, print-related feedback when a child takes on the role of the reader is common for both simple storybooks (Mansell, Evans & Hamilton-Hulak, 2005) and alphabet books (Davis, Evans & Reynolds, 2010). For example, when observing 52 parent-child dyads with an alphabet book with the text form "Letter is for object" for the child to read, it was found that only 4% of children's miscues or reading errors were ignored (Davis, Evans & Reynolds, 2010). This suggests that parents coach their children about print and correct their reading attempts when the child is the reader of a relatively simple book such as an alphabet book. Considering the two studies together, it appears that parents' goals are reflected in how often they reference print during storybook reading, but also that there is more print referencing and miscue correction in alphabet book reading. This may reflect the nature of alphabet books and/or a difference in parents' goals for reading them with their child.

The Current Study

The general purpose of the current study was to examine parents' perceptions of alphabet books and goals for reading them with their children. The Parent Goals for Shared Reading Questionnaire (PGSR; Evans & Williamson, 2003) used by Audet et al. (2008) in their study of parent goals for shared story book reading provides an opportunity for learning about parents' goals for reading alphabet books with their children. Furthermore, by surveying parents' goals and perceptions of alphabet books in one study, how one is associated with the other can be examined.

The first aim of this study was to examine how important the goals identified for shared reading were for reading alphabet books with their child. It was hypothesized that since alphabet books are explicitly focused on the letters of the alphabet, and contrary to previous research on shared book reading with children in kindergarten, items reflecting the general goal of learning to read would be rated higher than items for non-literacy focused goals such as enjoyment.

The second aim of this study was to examine parents' judgments of the appropriateness of previously identified features of alphabet books for achieving common purposes for shared reading. Specifically, does the amount of text (a lot vs. a little), complexity of illustration (simple vs. complex), or letter sound-word pairing (violation vs. correspondence) affect parents' ratings of how appropriate an alphabet book is for meeting these purposes? On the one hand it may be hypothesized that parents are naïve about the recommended characteristics of alphabet books and will not differentiate between the two forms of each feature. If so, the rating of appropriateness would not be significantly different between the two types of text, illustrations, and letter sound-word pairings. On the other hand, it might be argued that parents' knowledge of development, parenting, and literacy may lead them to rate pages with letter sound-word violations lower in appropriateness than pages with letter sound-word correspondence and those with complex illustrations lower in appropriateness than those with simple illustrations. However, they may rate pages with more text higher in appropriateness than those with less text, thinking mistakenly that children look at the print more when more print is on the page.

The final aim of the study was to identify whether parent variables and their goals for reading alphabet books with their child were related to their ratings of page appropriateness for purposes of learning to decode (i.e. learning letters, learning sounds, and learning to read words). Because violating simple letter sound-word correspondence (e.g. K for knight) is potentially more problematic than variations in the amount of text or complexity of illustrations, we examined whether ratings for pages with letter sound-word violation versus pages with letter sound-word correspondence were affected by parent variables and their importance ratings of goals for ABC books. It was hypothesized that there would be a negative linear relation between goals and ratings such that parents who rated the goal of Learning to Read higher would rate pages with letter sound-word violations as less appropriate for purposes related to decoding.

Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited from two Ontario school boards. Of the 235 parents of children in Junior Kindergarten or Senior Kindergarten who anonymously completed the questionnaire, two requested and completed a paper version of the questionnaire, while the remaining completed and submitted their questionnaire online. Because the current study is interested in both the goals for and perceived appropriateness of ABC book features, one participant was excluded because the goal items were not rated and nine others were dropped because their ratings of goal items and/or pages lacked variability. The final sample included 225 parents of 117 Junior and 108 Senior Kindergartners (108 girls, 116 boys and 1 unknown). The majority of respondents, 95%, were women, and 67% of respondents indicated that they were an urban family. Furthermore, 18% of families indicated that at least one parent was born outside of Canada.

Questionnaire

Basic demographic information as well as information about the family's reading habits were collected in order to describe the sample of parents who completed the questionnaire. See Appendix A for demographic and reading habits portion of the questionnaire. Due to the small number of responses in some categories, some response categories were combined. The maternal and paternal education categories of "did not

complete high school" and "high school diploma" were collapsed into "high school or less" and "master's degree" and "PhD/professional degree" were collapsed into "graduate degree". Frequency of reading and number of children's books owned was asked first. The number of books owned categories of "1-10", "11-20" and "21-35" were collapsed into "35 or less". The frequency of reading children's books categories of "0", "1-5", "6-10", and "11-20" were collapsed into "20 or less" times per month. Parents were then provided with a description of what an alphabet book is and asked the frequency of reading and number of alphabet books owned. The number of alphabet books owned categories of "0" and "1-5" were collapsed into "0-5". The frequency of reading alphabet books categories of "11-20", "21-30" and "everyday" were collapsed into "11 or more" times per month. Frequency of reading and number of books owned were used as indicators of home reading environment and behaviours.

Parents' Goals for Alphabet Books. The Parent Goals for Shared Reading Questionnaire (Evans & Williamson, 2003) was used to ask parents how important specific purposes were when reading alphabet books with their child. In a previous study, Audet et al. (2008) identified five factors reflecting different goals for shared storybook reading --to stimulate development, foster reading, bond with the child, soothe the child, and foster the child's enjoyment of books. Five of the original items which were not identified as falling on any of the five factors identified by Audet et al. were removed, resulting in 36 specific items being included in this questionnaire. One item (i.e. To experience physical closeness with my child) was modified by removing the word "physical" to make the item more appropriate for a separate study of teacher use of ABC books. The items were rated for importance on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (greatest importance).

Ratings of Sample Alphabet Book Pages. The second portion of the questionnaire consisted of 16 colour alphabet book pages and parents were asked to answer how appropriate each page was for promoting each of five specific purposes --learning the names of the letters of the alphabet, learning the sounds of the letters of the alphabet, learning to read words, spending quality time, and instilling a love of reading. Note that the first three specifically relate to learning to decode and the last two are related to enjoyment aspects of reading. Items were rated for appropriateness on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging

from 1 (not appropriate) to 5 (very appropriate). Pages were selected from existing published alphabet books, and if necessary altered by changing the text or illustration to provide sample pages contrasting the amount of text appearing on the page (a little versus a lot), complexity of illustration (simple versus complex) and consistency of the sound of the featured letter with the initial phoneme of the printed word for the illustration corresponding to that letter (correspondence versus violation) as described in Table 1. These contrasts were counter balanced, resulting in eight different combinations (2x2x2) and two examples of each combination were presented. The 16 pages were presented in four randomly selected sequences to prevent order effects. Pages with a lot of text had on average 14.6 words (range 7 to 19) and those with little text just 2.5 words (range 1 to 4). Although an effort was made to keep font sizes consistent, due to differing page layouts, font sizes varied slightly ranging from 0.4 to 1.0cm. Words appearing on the consistent and inconsistent letter sound-word pages varied to include both higher and lower frequency vocabulary. See Appendix B for words used and frequency in the English language.

Table 1

Description of Page Features

Little Text (4 words of less)	**Lot of Text (10 words or more or across 2 lines)**
Letter is accompanied by single word starting with target letter; or Page uses the pattern "letter is for" word starting with target letter.	Sentence in which multiple words start with the target letter; or Multiple sentences on the page
Simple Illustration	**Complex Illustration**
Illustrations are simple and clear. They may contain a depiction of only the target word, only the target word along with the books main characters or only the target word with a few other items. The background is simple, blank or a solid colour.	Illustrations are detailed and complex. They may contain a depiction of the target word in a detailed setting or depict multiple items. Other items may or may not start with target letter. The background may be detailed or complex. There may be multiple characters or elaborate scenes.
Letter Sound-Word Correspondence	**Letter Sound-Word Violation**
Letter makes either the hard consonant sound or the long vowel sound represented as a single letter onset in the word; or Letter makes the short vowel sound (e.g. apple).	Here the letter on its own does not make the sound appearing at the beginning of the word/illustration appearing on the page (e.g. P for phone, K for knight, G for gnat, T for thimble, O for owl, C for chimp, E for eyes).

Procedure

Approximately 5200 informational letters were distributed to 77 schools with Junior Kindergarten or Senior Kindergarten classrooms, inviting parents to complete an anonymous online questionnaire about alphabet books. Parents who did not wish to complete the survey online were invited to contact the researcher and a paper copy was mailed to them. Parents were given approximately three months to complete the survey and were eligible to win one of six gift cards for their participation, if they chose to enter. The researchers have no indication of how many letters were actually distributed to children, how many made it home, or how many were read, making consent rates impossible to estimate.

Results

Alphabet books were reported to be present in all but two of the homes of the participants, with 66% of parents reporting that they had six or more alphabet books. How frequently families read ABC books substantially varied. Some parents, 13%, indicated that they did not read alphabet books with their child on a monthly basis. However, many parents reported reading ABC books quite frequently each month; 23% once or twice, 28% three to five times, 19% six to ten times, and 17% 11 or more times.

Parents' Goals for Alphabet Books

In this data, 31 participants were missing one to two data points and the missing point was replaced using the mean rating for that particular item. The initial principal components analysis with varimax rotation revealed seven components with eigenvalues greater than one, however, some components contained three or fewer specific purposes with factor loadings greater than 0.5. A second principal components analysis with varimax rotation with a fixed number of factors, five – the number of components found in Audet et al. (2008) – was conducted. However, the fifth factor had relatively low factor loadings, below 0.6, and the items did not have a theoretical basis to hang together. The final principal components analysis with varimax rotation identified four main components which explained 18%, 17%, 12%, and 11% of the variance, respectively, accounting for 57.76% of the variance altogether. Eigenvalues were 14.63, 2.61, 2.07, and 1.49 respectively. Furthermore, the items within each component appeared connected on a theoretical basis and many of the components had similar groupings as those found

by Audet et al. (2008). Factor loadings of the items for ABC books are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Factor Loadings of the Components Reflecting Different Goals for ABC Book Reading

	Component			
Item	1	2	3	4
Learn from Books (1)				
Develop ability to see different perspectives	.80	.23	.34	.10
Learn about people, places, and things	.76	.12	.16	.01
Learn new facts and things about the world	.75	.25	.13	.11
Discuss new ideas and explain new concepts	.69	.15	.28	.21
Experience/understand different emotional responses	.69	.31	.31	.12
Develop problem-solving abilities	.65	.22	.18	.26
Develop moral/ethics through books	.63	.25	.39	.09
Develop vocabulary	.62	.34	-.09	.29
Increase reading comprehension skills	.58	.20	.23	.38
Expand child's world	.56	.43	.17	.14
For child to enjoy hearing a good story	.56	.48	.35	.07
Enjoyment and Bonding (2)				
Experience closeness with child	.24	.74	.20	.15
Share quality time with child	.29	.71	.31	.09
Create positive childhood experience to remember	.39	.70	.19	.18
Share an activity I enjoy with my child	.16	.66	.27	.12
For child to have fun	.18	.65	.03	.13
Strengthen relationship with child	.30	.64	.48	.13
Increase chance child will later read for enjoyment	.21	.58	.21	.29
To make reading a habit	.20	.57	.20	.23
Develop child's respect for literature and books	.40	.56	.28	.21
Soothe the Child (3)				
Soothe child when he or she is upset	.26	.17	.66	.13
Develop a predictable bedtime routine	.14	.36	.62	.10
Prepare my child for bed/sleep	.10	.43	.59	.00
Learn and understand different forms of humour	.49	.08	.58	.06
Help my child relax	.23	.46	.56	.02
Expose to different types of language	.24	.04	.53	.32
Learn to Read (4)				
Prepare child for formal reading instruction	.15	-.06	.26	.73
Develop understanding of sound to letter correspondence	-.05	.19	-.07	.71
Provide a context for the teaching of literacy skills	.31	.23	.09	.66
Monitor the development of children's literacy skills	.16	-.01	.31	.65
Increase knowledge of printed letters and words	-.04	.44	-.09	.64
Develop confidence in learning to read	.22	.23	.17	.63
Help child learn to read	.18	.16	.08	.62

Three items (i.e. expose to different books and genres, give experience participating in quiet activities, and give my child one to on attention) did not load highly, < .5, on any component and were dropped from further analyses. The first subset, Learn from Books, included 11 items and reflects the parents' aim to expand their child's knowledge base about the world and develop higher order skills such as reading comprehension and problem solving. The second component, Enjoyment and Bonding, included nine items that reflect the parents' aim to have their child enjoy books, as well as spend quality time together. The third component, Soothe the Child, included six items and generally reflects the parent's aim to soothe their child and prepare them for bedtime. This component also included exposing the child to different forms of humour and language. Finally, the fourth component, Learn to Read, included seven items and reflects the parents' aim to teach their child the skills needed to read, as well as monitor their developing literacy skills.

Items that loaded above .5 were retained to calculate a mean for each of these four goals. Reliability analyses for the four components using these items resulted in the following reliability coefficients: Learn from Books ($\alpha = .93$), Enjoyment and Bonding ($\alpha = .92$), Soothe the Child ($\alpha = .81$), and Learn to Read ($\alpha = .83$).

To examine the relative importance of the goals, a series of paired t-tests ($df = 224$), with alpha set at .008 as a Bonferonni correction, were conducted. Means and standard deviations for all goals sets are presented in Table 3. The ratings of all goals were significantly different from one another ($p < .001$) and the Learn to Read goal was rated as more important than all other goals, followed by the goals of Enjoyment and Bonding, Learn from Books, and Soothe the Child. Furthermore, the least variance was seen in the Learn to Read goal. Independent sample t-tests revealed no significant differences between the ratings by parents of Junior and Senior Kindergarten students nor boys and girls. Parent's age was not significantly correlated with any of the goals.

Relation of Parent Variables to Goals

Because the goals of Learning to Read and Enjoyment and Bonding were rated by parents as the most important for reading ABC books with their child, further analyses were conducted to see whether other variables played a role in these two parents' goals for alphabet books.

Table 3

Mean and SD for Parents' Ratings of Goals for Alphabet Books

Goal	Mean	SD
Learn from Books	3.50	0.88
Enjoyment and Bonding	4.06	0.76
Soothe the Child	3.15	0.83
Learn to Read	4.23	0.62

Given the unequal sample sizes, which makes contrasts vulnerable to violations of the assumption of homogeneity, of maternal education (i.e. high school or less, n = 35; college diploma, n = 61; university degree, n = 92; graduate degree, n = 37), number of ABC books owned (i.e. 0-5, n = 76; 6-10, n = 80; 11-20, n = 45; 20 or more, n = 23), frequency of reading ABC books (i.e. 0 times per month, n = 30; 1-2 times per month, n = 51; 3-5 times per month, n = 62; 6-10 times per month, n = 43, 11 times or more per month, n = 38), and frequency of reading children's books (i.e. 20 times or less per month, n = 35; 21-30 times per month, n = 46; everyday, n = 143) the Tukey-Kramer approach for unequal sample sizes was used. The Tukey-Kramer approach replaces the denominator of the traditional Tukey test (squareroot of the quotient of mean squared error divided by n) with a denominator that divides the mean squared error for each group by the number of participants in that group for each of the two groups, before adding them together, dividing by two and taking the square root (Howell, 2002) thereby taking into account the varying sample sizes.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using the Tukey-Kramer approach revealed that maternal education had a significant effect on how highly parents rated Enjoyment and Bonding as a goal, $F(3, 221) = 4.39$, $p = .005$, but no effect on parents' ratings of Learning to Read, $F(3, 221) = 2.37$, *ns.* Specifically families where the mother had completed a graduate program (e.g., Masters, PhD; $M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.91$) rated the goal of Enjoyment and Bonding as significantly less important for ABC books than families where the mother had completed college ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.52$), $q(4, 221) = 4.87$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.72$, or high school education or less ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.75$), $q(4, 221) = 3.99$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.59$.

The number of ABC books in the home also had a significant effect on parents' ratings of the goal of Enjoyment and Bonding, $F(3, 220) = 6.72$, $p < .001$, but not on

parents' ratings of the goal of Learning to Read, $F(3, 220) = 2.03$, *ns.* Specifically, parents who reported having 20 or more ABC books in their home ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.44$) rated the goal of Enjoyment and Bonding as significantly more important than parents who reported having five or less ABC books in their home ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.91$), $q(4, 220) = 5.74$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.99$.

As seen in Figure 1, how often parents read ABC books with their child was the only reading habit that had a significant effect on both parents' ratings of goal importance for Enjoyment and Bonding, $F(4, 219) = 6.52$, $p < .001$, and goal of Learning to Read, $F(4, 219) = 3.50$, $p = .009$. Specifically, parents who reported reading ABC books with their child less than once a month rated the goal of Enjoyment and Bonding as significantly less important than parents who reported reading ABC books with their child three to five times per month, $q(5, 219) = 3.95$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.57$, six to ten times per month, $q(5, 219) = 4.69$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.75$, or 11 or more times per month , $q(5, 219) = 5.84$, $p<.01$, $d = 1.00$. Also, parents who reported reading ABC books with their child once or twice a month rated Enjoyment and Bonding as a goal as significantly less important than parents who reported reading ABC books with their child six to ten times per month, $q(5, 219) = 4.03$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.76$, or 11 or more times per month, $q(5, 219) = 5.34$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.81$.

Finally, parents who reported reading ABC books with their child 11 or more times per month rated the goal of Learning to Read as significantly more important than parents who reported reading ABC books with their child once or twice a month, $q(5, 219) = 4.00$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.64$, or less than once a month, $q(5, 219) = 4.54$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.66$. Interestingly, no effect was seen between how often parents read children's books with their child and parents' ratings of goal importance for Enjoyment and Bonding, $F(2, 221) = 1.27$, *ns*, and Learning to Read, $F(2, 221) = 0.44$, *ns*.

Parents` Ratings of Appropriateness of Alphabet Book Features According to Specific Purposes

Although four sequences of ABC book pages were presented, a concern was that parents might come to recognize letter sound-word violations as they progressed through the questionnaire and were exposed to contrasting pages. To examine whether participants ratings for the first four pages with letter sound-word violations and the

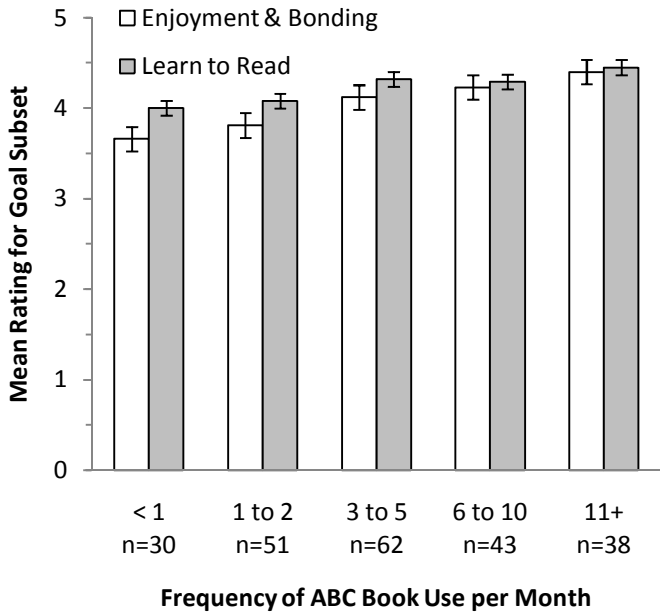

Figure 1. Mean ratings (and SE) of goals by frequency of ABC book use.

second four with these violations differed, a series of paired sample t-tests was conducted, with alpha set at .017 as a Bonferonni correction, of how appropriate the pages were for specific purposes related to learning to decode (learn letters, learn sounds, and learn to read). No order effect was found. Parents' mean ratings of the first four violations did not differ significantly from the mean ratings of the latter four violations for any of these purposes, learning letters, $t(224) = 0.66$, *ns*, learning sounds, $t(224) = 0.72$. *ns*, and learning to read, $t(224) = -0.36$, *ns*.

Mean ratings of appropriateness for each page for all five purposes are presented in Appendix C. In order to make comparisons between the types of pages presented, a mean was calculated for each page type by averaging the parent's ratings for all eight pages with that feature for each of the five purposes presented. Given the six types of pages (lot/little text, letter sound-word correspondence/violation, simple/complex illustrations), and five purposes (learn letters, learn sounds, learn to read, spend quality time and instill love of reading), there were 30 means calculated. A series of paired-sample t-tests ($df = 224$) were conducted with alpha set at .003 as a Bonferroni correction to identify whether parents' ratings of the appropriateness of page for each purpose would differ by page type. See Table 4 for the three specific purposes related to decoding

and Table 5 for the two specific purposes related to enjoyment for page descriptive statistics, *t* values, and effect sizes.

As hypothesized, parents rated pages with letter sound-word violations as significantly less appropriate than pages with correspondence for all three purposes related to learning to decode, as well as for the two purposes for enjoyment. Similarly, as hypothesized, parents rated pages with complex pictures as significantly less appropriate than pages with simple pictures, for all three decoding purposes but as more appropriate than a simple illustration for instilling a love of reading. Finally, although it was hypothesized that parents would mistakenly rate a lot of text as being more appropriate for decoding purposes, parents rated pages with this feature as significantly less appropriate than pages with little text, for learning letters, learning letter sounds, and learning to read. In contrast, these same pages were seen as more appropriate for instilling a love of reading than pages with little text. The amount of text and illustration

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics, t Values and Effect Sizes of Page Types – Decoding Purposes

Learning Letters		Mean	SD	*t*(224)	*d*
Amount of Text	Little	3.82	.72	7.76**	0.36
	Lot	3.55	.77		
Letter Sound-Word	Correspondence	3.85	.68	9.40**	0.45
Pairing	Violation	3.52	.81		
Illustration	Simple	3.87	.72	10.37**	0.50
	Complex	3.50	.77		
Learning Sounds					
Amount of Text	Little	3.42	.76	5.94**	0.26
	Lot	3.21	.79		
Letter Sound-Word	Correspondence	3.63	.69	13.55**	0.78
Pairing	Violation	3.00	.92		
Illustration	Simple	3.42	.79	5.59**	0.26
	Complex	3.21	.78		
Learning to Read					
Amount of Text	Little	3.33	.81	3.56**	0.18
	Lot	3.18	.89		
Letter Sound-Word	Correspondence	3.44	.76	11.09**	0.45
Pairing	Violation	3.07	.88		
Illustration	Simple	3.38	.85	6.63**	0.29
	Complex	3.13	.82		

**significant at $p < .001$

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics, t Values and Effect Sizes of Page Types - Enjoyment Purposes

Quality Time		Mean	SD	*t*(224)	*d*
Amount of Text	Little	3.32	.88	2.12	
	Lot	3.39	.83		
Letter Sound-Word	Correspondence	3.41	.83	4.24**	0.13
Pairing	Violation	3.29	.86		
Illustration	Simple	3.31	.90	2.33	
	Complex	3.39	.82		
Love of Reading					
Amount of Text	Little	3.14	.89	4.29**	0.19
	Lot	3.30	.81		
Letter Sound-Word	Correspondence	3.31	.81	6.72**	0.22
Pairing	Violation	3.13	.85		
Illustration	Simple	3.16	.90	3.10*	0.14
	Complex	3.28	.80		

*significant at $p < .003$
**significant at $p < .001$

type did not significantly affect parents' rating of appropriateness for spending quality time with their child.

In summary, parents rated that ABC book pages with little text, letter sound-word correspondence, and simple illustrations as more appropriate for fulfilling purposes related to learning to decode than their alternate forms. While enjoyment focused purposes were exploratory in this study, it was seen that letter sound-word violations were also rated less positively for contributing to enjoyment, but that a lot of text and complex pictures were rated as more appropriate for instilling a love of reading in their child.

Relation of Parent Variables to Page Ratings

All four goal means and all 30 page means were significantly positively correlated with one another with correlations ranging from 0.14 to 0.96. Generally, pages were more highly correlated with other pages and goals more highly correlated with other goals. For correlations of all goals means and page means see Appendix D.

Appropriateness ratings for pages with letter sound-word violations and correspondences for the purpose of learning the sounds of letters were significantly positively correlated with one another, $r = 0.65$, $p < .001$. Contrary to prediction, the goals of Learning to Read and Learning from Books were positively correlated with

mean ratings of the appropriateness of learning sounds for violation pages, $r = .33$, $p < .001$ and $r = .36$, $p < .001$ respectively. The goals of Learning to Read and Learning from Books were also positively correlated with mean ratings of the appropriateness of learning sounds for correspondence pages, $r = .38$, $p < .001$ and $r = .23$, $p = .001$ respectively.

Analyses were conducted to see whether maternal education, ABC book usage, or parents' ratings of ABC book goals played a role in parents' ratings of ABC book pages with letter sound-word correspondence and violations. The specific purpose of learning the sounds was selected for further examination, as it showed the greatest effect size when contrasting page types, and more importantly is most directly affected by letter sound-word inconsistency, a feature known to be violated in numerous alphabet books (Evans, O'Grady, & Lavoie, 2008).

With respect to SES, an ANOVA using the Tukey-Kramer approach for unequal sample sizes revealed that parents' ratings for violation pages differed by parent education, $F(3, 224) = 5.55$, $p = .001$. Specifically, parents with maternal education of high school or less ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.80$) rated pages with letter sound-word violations as significantly more appropriate for learning the sounds of the letters than parents with maternal university education ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 0.89$), $q(4, 221) = 4.76$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.72$, or graduate education ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.94$), $q = 5.13$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.94$. No relation was seen between maternal education and ratings for pages without these violations, $F(3, 224) = 2.45$, *ns.* Another ANOVA revealed no significant effect of the number of ABC books in the home, $F(3, 220) = 1.25$, *ns*, nor how often parents read ABC books with their child, $F(4, 219) = 2.12$, *ns*, on parents' ratings of pages with violations. Similarly, there was no significant effect of the number of ABC books in the home, $F(3, 220) = 1.34$, *ns*, nor how often parents read ABC books with their child, $F(4, 219) = 0.60$, *ns*, on parents' ratings of pages with letter sound-word correspondence.

Discussion

Goals for Alphabet Books

As indicated by Levy and colleagues (2006) and found here, alphabet books are popular in the homes of many young children. Previous research has not examined what

purposes parents have for acquiring and using these books with their children, and how discriminating they are of features of these books. The present research showed that parents have goals for reading ABC books with their children that appear to differ from their goals for reading storybooks and that their perceptions of which alphabet book page features are more appropriate for purposes related to learning to decode are congruent with previous research and experts' advice.

First, by using a goal survey previously developed and used for shared story book reading and conducting a factor analysis of the items, four distinct goals for reading ABC books with a child were revealed. In order of importance as rated by parents, the goals for ABC book reading were to learn to read (i.e. to teach the skills needed to read and monitor their child's developing literacy skills), to provide enjoyment and bond with the child (i.e. to have the child enjoy books, as well as spend quality time together), to learn from books (i.e. to teach the child about the world through books, including learning higher order reading skills such as vocabulary development and reading comprehension), and to soothe the child (i.e. to calm the child and prepare him or her for bedtime, as well teaching the child about different forms of humour and language).

These four goals for alphabet book reading varied slightly from the five goals for shared book reading previously identified by Audet and her colleagues' (2008) – to stimulate development, foster reading, bond with the child, soothe the child, and enjoy books. Most notably, the goals from the Audet et al. study of enjoying books and bonding with the child combined into one goal for ABC book reading and the items of vocabulary and reading comprehension shifted from the goal of fostering reading to Learning from Books, a subset similar to the goal of stimulating development identified by Audet et al.. While the different factors that emerged here may reflect sample variations, it suggests that they may reflect parent perceptions that alphabet books are a unique form of children's literature to be used differently than storybooks. Future research could confirm this suggestion by comparing parents' goals for alphabet books and children's books in the same study.

What goals were highest rated for ABC books also differed from those for storybooks studied by Audet et al. (2008). Whereas enjoying books and bonding with the child were the highest rated goals for shared book reading with kindergarten children in

Audet et al. (2008), the goal emphasizing Learning to Read was rated as most important for alphabet book use. Of lesser importance, other goals for ABC book reading included Enjoyment and Bonding, Learning from Books and Soothing the Child. The importance of these goals did not differ between parents of Junior and Senior Kindergarten children, by gender of the child, nor by the age of the parent. However, how highly parents rated the goal of Enjoyment and Bonding varied as a factor of maternal education. Generally, parents with higher maternal education (i.e. Masters or PhD) rated enjoyment and bonding as less important when using ABC books than parents with lower levels of maternal education (i.e. college, high school or less). This suggests that mothers with higher education had more differentiated goals for reading alphabet books than mothers with lower education. In addition, parents who reported having more ABC books in their home and reading them with their child more frequently rated the goal of Enjoyment and Bonding higher than those with fewer ABC books and who read them less often. This may be because people tend to partake in activities they enjoy more often than activities that are less enjoyable, and because reading alphabet books may be part of a menu of shared book reading activities including storybooks, information books, and children's magazines. The only demographic variable which had an effect on parents' ratings of the goal of Learning to Read was how often they read ABC books with their child. Specifically, parents who reported reading ABC books with their child the most rated the goal of Learning to Read as more important than those who reported reading ABC books infrequently. Although it cannot be determined in this study, parents' goals may be providing insight into their behaviour, as has been suggested by Austin and Vancouver (1996) in that parents with these goals may see themselves as more responsible for helping their child learn to read (see Evans, Fox, Cremaso & McKinnon, 2004) and engage in more frequent coaching of reading with their children including the use of alphabet books.

The goals for shared book reading endorsed by parents have been found to be related to the behaviours they engage in while participating in this activity with their child (Study 2; Audet et al., 2008). Most relevant to the current study, parents who rated the goal of fostering reading (most similar to the goal of Learning to Read in the current study) as more important than affect related goals made more print-referencing comments

(e.g., naming a letter, emphasizing a phoneme) and engaged in more echo reading with their child than other parents. However, these behaviours were still relatively scarce during shared book reading. When reading a simple ABC book, children of the same age range, Davis and her colleagues (2010) found that parents made a substantial number of print referencing behaviours during this activity. However, the significant variation in the amount of extratextual utterances dealing with print and elaborating on the books found in this and other previous studies (Lachner et al., 2008; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003) may be a reflection of variation in the importance parents attach to various goals for alphabet books, as was found for shared book reading (Study 2, Audet et al., 2008). However, in order to confirm this trend, goals for alphabet books and related behaviours would have to be examined within the same study.

Parents` Ratings of Appropriateness of Alphabet Book Features

By investigating how appropriate parents believed sample ABC books pages to be for meeting a number of purposes, it could be seen how perceptive parents are as to certain contrasting book features. As Huck and Kuhn (1968; in Criscoe, 1988) established, for alphabet books to be useful in teaching children the letters' names and sounds, the accompanying illustration should be simple and contain only one or two easily identifiable objects. Parents' ratings parallel these experts' views in that they rated pages with simple pictures as more appropriate for promoting decoding purposes than pages with complex pictures. In contrast, pages with complex pictures, which provide more stimulation and, as Smolkin and Yaden (1992) argued, provide greater opportunity for parent-child conversation, were rated by parents as more appropriate for instilling a love of reading in their child than those with simple pictures. Since the majority of English alphabet books have complex pictures (Evans et al., 2008), publishers appear to be gearing alphabet books towards fostering the goals of general enjoyment and child-parent bonding. However, this is potentially at the expense of meeting parents' goals for helping their child learn to read given the numerous pages in alphabet books in which the pictured objects begin with a different phoneme than that commonly signified by the letter featured on that page.

While it was hypothesized that parents may mistakenly believe that more words would be better for teaching their child early literacy skills, parents identified alphabet

books pages with a little bit of text as more appropriate for purposes related to decoding than pages with a lot of text. As Evans and Saint-Aubin (2009) demonstrated through their eye-movement study, alphabet book pages with less text draw greater attention to print, which may result in greater opportunity for learning literacy skills. It is likely that the parents used their knowledge of literacy development to reason that shorter words and sentences would be easier for the child to track as the parent read or to process in some way. Given that font size was held relatively constant, the physical size of the text should not have had a significant contribution to parents' page ratings.

The most interesting contrast, because of its frequency and problematic nature in alphabet books pages, is that of inconsistency between the phoneme the letter most commonly represents and the phoneme the pictured object begins with, even though the beginning letter matches. Numerous researchers have suggested that the words and objects depicted should begin with the common initial sound. Furthermore, if alphabet books are to promote early literacy skills such as knowledge of letter-sound correspondence, it is helpful if the sound made by the initial letter is its most common. Parents did recognize that pages with letter sound-word violations were less appropriate than pages with correspondence for learning the letters, the sounds that letters make and to read words, The effect size of these contrasting pages was larger than all other contrasting types. While the violation should not affect how appropriate the page is for spending quality time with their child nor for instilling a love of reading, the undesirability of such letter sound-word violations was so pervasive that parents rated these pages as less appropriate for even these enjoyment based purposes.

Further investigation into what factors may play a role in how pages were rated revealed that maternal education was the only factor which had a significant impact on parents' ratings of pages with letter sound-word violations. Families who reported higher levels of maternal education (i.e. university or greater) indicated that they believed pages with violations were less appropriate for learning the sounds of the letters, than families who reported lower levels of maternal education (i.e. high school or less). No difference in maternal education was seen for parents' ratings of pages with letter sound-word correspondence. Thus it was not simply a response tendency of families with higher education to be more critical or reflective in rating pages and in doing so rate pages

lower, but a greater differentiation between the two contrasting page types. Interestingly, parents who rated the goal of Learning to Read more highly tended to rate pages with letter sound-word violations more highly as well. While this pattern seems counterintuitive, this positive correlation may be a reflection of response perseveration, whereby parents who provided higher ratings in one area were more likely to provide higher ratings in other areas, and not an effect of goals on ratings of page type.

Moreover, exposure to the different types of letter sound-word violations across the study did not affect parents' ratings of pages. In congruence with this finding, parents who reported owning more ABC books or reading them with their child more often did not differ in their ratings from other parents. Therefore, it is not simply that the parent with greater exposure to ABC books is better able to differentiate the better and inferior features of pages for promoting literacy purposes.

Limitations and Future Directions

As is the case in much survey research, this study assumed that people are aware of their goals for reading alphabet books with their children and that these goals are an accurate reflection of their intentions for using ABC books. In addition, while an effort was made to make the survey available to a range of families, and responses indicated that a wide range was reached (e.g. urban and rural, all levels of maternal and paternal education, varying country of origin), the topic may have only interested parents who owned and read ABC books with their children. The low number of responses in which the family did not own any alphabet books may be a reflection of this selective responding. However, given that 13% of parents who participated reported rarely reading ABC books with their child suggests the possible selection bias was not complete.

The results also may be culturally specific to Canada, North America or English speakers. In addition, alphabet books may be near irrelevant in non-alphabetic languages, or serve different parental goals than those found in this study. It may also be the case that parents who were particularly interested in literacy or educational issues elected to participate in this study, and therefore the findings may not be generalize to all parents of children in Junior and Senior Kindergarten.

A second type of limitation is that only three features of alphabet books were examined by this study. While an effort was made so that the pages selected did not

systematically vary in any other way, parents may have paid attention to other features of the pages such as specific vocabulary, quality or aesthetics of the illustration, or how interested they thought their child would be in the subject of that page. Furthermore, to keep the survey to a reasonable length, each sample page contained one type of each of the three contrasting features (e.g. simple illustration, a lot of text, and letter sound-word violation) and parents were asked to rate the page as a whole, not based on any one feature presented. Although the pages were counterbalanced so that two examples of each set of features were presented and no conditions appeared together more often than any other conditions, the fact that the same ratings were used in the calculation of three different page type means inevitably contributed to the high intercorrelations found between the page types. This could potentially be corrected in future research by administering a longer survey in multiple sessions.

Finally, parents' ratings were restricted to a five point Likert scale for all goal items and page ratings. Given the high endorsement of items making up the goal of Learning to Read, a ceiling effect may have occurred. This may have precluded the ability to find a relation between this parent goal and ratings of contrasting page types. Revising the rating scale to encourage a greater range of response may have allowed for greater differentiation amongst the majority of parents who endorsed this goal as highly important.

While this study revealed that parents' use of alphabet books was related to their goals for reading ABC books as well their perceptions of page features, future research should examine children's perceptions of these books. This would serve to provide some sense of what children prefer and of their awareness of how different genres of books may have different benefits. Furthermore, although Evans, Saint-Aubin and Landry (2009) have found that little amounts of text captured children's attention to print better, it is not known whether increased fixation on print in alphabet books in fact results in greater learning of the alphabetic principle and facilitation of beginning reading development. Similarly, along with little amounts of text, simple illustrations and correspondence in letter sound-word pairings have yet to be used together in the study of alphabet books and their effects. Comparisons of children's literacy skill development using alphabet books following the principles outlined in this study and a random

selection of alphabet books should be conducted. Finally, researchers of alphabet books, and all children's literature genres, should aim to share the results of their studies with children's book publishers so that what is learned in the research realm can be acted upon in the greater society.

Summary

Despite these limitations, this study clearly showed that parents have specific goals for reading alphabet books with their children and that teaching their children to read and monitoring their developing literacy skills is of highest importance in this activity. Furthermore, the goals when reading alphabet books appear to be different than parents' goals for shared storybook reading where the goal of learning to read is of lesser importance at this age level than more affect focused goals. It also indicated that parents are aware that alphabet book pages which are simply illustrated, have a little bit of text and have illustrations that exemplify the common sounds represented by the letter featured on each page are most appropriate for fulfilling purposes related to learning to decode. However the extent to which parents critically appraise ABC books along these dimensions when actually selecting or buying them for reading with their children, as opposed to defaulting to what seems attractive and interesting through complex illustrations, is unknown.

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Appendix A

This questionnaire asks for your views of reading alphabet books with your child and what you hope to be gained from this activity. Please answer with respect to your child who is now in Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten. There are no right or wrong answers. We are simply interested in the views of the parents.

To be able to see whether views differ according to various demographic features, please answer a few questions below about yourself and child.

Sex of child:
○Girl ○Boy

Grade of child:
○Junior Kindergarten ○Kindergarten

Sex of parent completing questionnaire:
○Female ○Male

Age of parent completing the questionnaire: _____

Highest level of school completed by maternal caregiver:
○Did not complete high school
○High school diploma
○College diploma
○University degree
○Master's Degree
○PhD/Professional Degree

Highest level of school completed by paternal caregiver:
○Did not complete high school
○High school diploma
○College diploma
○University degree
○Master's Degree
○PhD/Professional Degree

If the caregivers were not born and raised in Canada please note where they grew up: _____

Do you consider yourself to be a rural or an urban family?
○Rural ○Urban

When an adult in your household reads with your JK/K child is there another child present?

○Yes ○No

If yes, what percentage of time is the other child there? _____

If yes, what is the age of the other child? _____

Roughly how many children's books do you have in your home?

○1-10
○11-20
○21-35
○36-75
○76-100
○101-200
○201 or more

How many days in a month does an adult in your home typically read books with your child?

○0
○1-5
○6-10
○11-20
○21-30
○Everyday

Alphabet books (ABC, letter sound books) are children's books that focus on the letters of the alphabet from A to Z. Often the letter is presented with a word and image that begin with the featured letter, as in "A is for apple" but can also include many sentences and pictures much like a storybook.

Roughly how many of the children's books in your home are alphabet books?

○0
○1-5
○6-10
○11-20
○20 or more

How many days in a month does an adult in your home typically read alphabet books with your child?

○0
○1-2
○3-5
○6-10
○11-20
○21-30
○Everyday

Appendix B

Letter Sound-Word Vocabulary Presented on Each Sample Alphabet Book Page

Letter Sound-Word Correspondence	
Word/Object Pairing	Frequency*
Encyclopedia, Earnest	69/28
Kangaroo	43
Nut	59
Party	625
Pizza	16
Top, Toy, Turtle	1741/146/104
Unicorn, Utensils	5/29
Zebra	25

Letter Sound-Word Violations	
Word/Object Pairing	Frequency*
Cherry, Chew	71/49
Chimpanzee	15
Eyes	2303
One	19976
Sharing	51
Shoes	146
Wrecking	10
Write	9846

*Frequency (number of times this word occurred in the 5 088 721 tokens reviewed) as indicated by The American Heritage Word Frequency Book (1971).

Appendix C

Mean (Standard Deviation) Appropriateness Ratings for Sample Pages Presented for the Three Decoding Purposes

		Letter Sound-Word Consistency		Letter Sound-Word Violation	
Learning Letters		Simple Illustration	Complex Illustration	Simple Illustration	Complex Illustration
Lot of Text	Example 1	4.06 (.88)	3.37 (1.40)	3.79 (1.13)	3.20 (1.24)
	Example 2	3.69 (1.13)	3.53 (1.13)	4.02 (.97)	2.76 (1.28)
Little Text	Example 1	4.37 (.79)	4.04 (.88)	3.62 (1.21)	3.44 (1.31)
	Example 2	4.23 (.88)	3.89 (.97)	3.21 (1.29)	3.73 (1.21)
Learning Sounds					
Lot of Text	Example 1	4.04 (.87)	3.54 (1.39)	3.14 (1.38)	2.61 (1.36)
	Example 2	3.31 (1.16)	3.16 (1.19)	3.40 (1.25)	2.51 (1.23)
Little Text	Example 1	4.03 (.97)	3.86 (.93)	2.82 (1.39)	2.72 (1.45)
	Example 2	3.97 (.92)	3.79 (.98)	2.65 (1.30)	3.53 (1.34)
Learning to Read					
Lot of Text	Example 1	3.84 (1.03)	3.00 (1.40)	3.35 (1.26)	2.92 (1.27)
	Example 2	3.34 (1.24)	2.70 (1.27)	3.48 (1.20)	2.79 (1.23)
Little Text	Example 1	3.50 (1.18)	3.71 (1.01)	2.98 (1.34)	2.92 (1.28)
	Example 2	4.02 (0.97)	3.66 (1.05)	2.71 (1.29)	3.37 (1.18)

Mean (Standard Deviation) Appropriateness Ratings for Sample Pages Presented for Two Enjoyment Purposes

		Letter Sound-Word Consistency		Letter Sound-Word Violation	
Quality Time		Simple Illustration	Complex Illustration	Simple Illustration	Complex Illustration
Lot of Text	Example 1	3.48 (1.05)	3.44 (1.26)	3.42 (1.11)	3.16 (1.14)
	Example 2	3.52 (1.04)	3.25 (1.04)	3.42 (1.09)	3.39 (1.13)
Little Text	Example 1	3.31 (1.11)	3.30 (1.06)	3.22 (1.10)	3.32 (1.12)
	Example 2	3.21 (1.16)	3.62 (1.00)	2.90 (1.24)	3.64 (1.05)
Love of Reading					
Lot of Text	Example 1	3.48 (1.08)	3.44 (1.33)	3.32 (1.11)	2.93 (1.15)
	Example 2	3.46 (1.12)	3.15 (1.13)	3.35 (1.13)	3.27 (1.17)
Little Text	Example 1	3.04 (1.23)	3.19 (1.07)	3.04 (1.19)	3.21 (1.14)
	Example 2	2.93 (1.21)	3.50 (1.02)	2.67 (1.22)	3.51 (1.09)

Appendix D

Correlations of Goals and Mean Ratings of Page Types – 1 through 12

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Learn from Books (1)	1.00											
Enjoyment and Bonding (2)	0.71	1.00										
Soothe Child (3)	0.68	0.69	1.00									
Learn to Read (4)	0.49	0.51	0.41	1.00								
Lot of text – Letters (5)	0.21	.14*	0.20	0.30	1.00							
Lot of Text – Sounds (6)	0.31	0.26	0.31	0.34	0.82	1.00						
Lot of Text – Read (7)	0.28	0.24	0.29	0.30	0.76	0.85	1.00					
Lot of text – Quality Time (8)	0.37	0.43	0.41	0.30	0.66	0.68	0.64	1.00				
Lot of text – Love of Reading (9)	0.35	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.66	0.72	0.74	0.89	1.00			
Little Text – Letters (10)	0.23	0.17	0.18	0.30	0.76	0.64	0.60	0.52	0.55	1.00		
Little Text – Sounds (11)	0.32	0.26	0.32	0.39	0.63	0.78	0.72	0.57	0.64	0.78	1.00	
Little Text – Read Words (12)	0.34	0.24	0.32	0.37	0.54	0.65	0.71	0.55	0.64	0.69	0.86	1.00
Little Text – Quality Time (13)	0.42	0.40	0.40	0.35	0.50	0.56	0.54	0.83	0.77	0.59	0.67	0.71
Little Text – Love of Reading (14)	0.42	0.36	0.40	0.34	0.47	0.57	0.58	0.71	0.78	0.56	0.73	0.77

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Violation – Letters (15)	0.23	.15*	.16*	0.28	0.85	0.72	0.67	0.53	0.56	0.93	0.73	0.63
Violation – Sounds (16)	0.36	0.29	0.31	0.33	0.63	86.00	0.77	0.55	0.62	0.68	0.90	0.76
Violation – Read Words (17)	0.32	0.24	0.29	0.32	0.65	0.78	0.88	0.58	0.68	0.69	0.83	0.90
Violation – Quality Time (18)	0.40	0.42	0.40	0.33	0.59	0.63	0.59	0.91	0.84	0.60	0.65	0.66
Violation – Love of Reading (19)	0.40	0.37	0.40	0.31	0.57	0.66	0.67	0.79	0.88	0.61	0.73	0.76
Consistent – Letters (20)	0.22	.16*	0.23	0.32	0.92	0.75	0.70	0.65	0.66	0.81	0.67	0.59
Consistent – Sounds (21)	0.23	0.20	0.29	0.38	0.80	0.86	0.75	0.67	0.70	0.69	0.80	0.69
Consistent – Read Words (22)	0.32	0.25	0.33	0.37	0.71	0.78	0.90	0.66	0.75	0.63	0.79	0.85
Consistent – Quality Time (23)	0.40	0.43	0.42	0.33	0.59	0.63	0.60	0.95	0.85	0.52	0.61	0.62
Consistent – Love of Reading (24)	0.39	0.39	0.41	0.31	0.59	0.66	0.67	0.85	0.93	0.53	0.68	0.70
Complex – Letters (25)	0.19	.14*	.17*	0.28	0.91	0.74	0.69	0.59	0.60	0.85	0.67	0.58
Complex – Sounds (26)	0.28	0.24	0.29	0.35	0.80	0.91	0.81	0.65	0.69	0.73	0.85	0.71
Complex – Read Words (27)	0.30	0.24	0.30	0.33	0.71	0.79	0.90	0.62	0.71	0.67	0.80	0.85
Complex – Quality Time (28)	0.35	0.38	0.38	0.29	0.61	0.62	0.59	0.94	0.85	0.54	0.58	0.60
Complex – Love of Reading (29)	0.35	0.34	0.37	0.28	0.62	0.65	0.66	0.84	0.92	0.57	0.67	0.70

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Simple – Letters (30)	0.25	.16*	0.21	0.31	0.85	0.72	0.66	0.58	0.60	0.90	0.74	0.65
Simple – Sounds (31)	0.34	0.27	0.34	0.37	0.65	0.86	0.76	0.59	0.66	0.68	0.91	0.79
Simple – Read Words (32)	0.33	0.25	0.31	0.35	0.62	0.76	0.87	0.60	0.70	0.65	0.80	0.89
Simple – Quality Time (33)	0.43	0.44	0.43	0.36	0.54	0.61	0.58	0.88	0.81	0.56	0.65	0.66
Simple – Love of Reading (34)	0.42	0.39	0.41	0.33	0.51	0.64	0.65	0.77	0.85	0.55	0.71	0.72

Note: All correlations not indicated by a * are significant at $p < .01$

*Significant at $p < .05$

Correlations of Goals and Mean Ratings of Page Types – 12 through 24

	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Little Text – Read Words (12)	1.00												
Little Text – Quality Time (13)	0.71	1.00											
Little Text – Love of Reading (14)	0.77	0.89	1.00										
Violation – Letters (15)	0.63	0.53	0.51	1.00									
Violation – Sounds (16)	0.76	0.59	0.64	0.74	1.00								
Violation – Read Words (17)	0.90	0.63	0.69	0.73	0.86	1.00							
Violation – Quality Time (18)	0.66	0.96	0.83	0.60	0.62	0.66	1.00						
Violation – Love of Reading (19)	0.76	0.87	0.94	0.61	0.70	0.76	0.88	1.00					
Consistent – Letters (20)	0.59	0.56	0.52	0.75	0.56	0.60	0.58	0.56	1.00				
Consistent – Sounds (21)	0.69	0.60	0.61	0.65	0.65	0.67	0.61	0.63	0.86	1.00			
Consistent – Read Words (22)	0.85	0.65	0.70	0.60	0.71	0.82	0.64	0.71	0.75	0.83	1.00		
Consistent – Quality Time (23)	0.62	0.91	0.80	0.48	0.54	0.57	0.89	0.80	0.64	0.68	0.70	1.00	
Consistent – Love of Reading (24)	0.70	0.85	0.89	0.49	0.59	0.65	0.83	0.88	0.64	0.72	0.77	0.90	1.00
Complex – Letters (25)	0.58	0.51	0.48	0.90	0.64	0.66	0.59	0.57	0.85	0.73	0.65	0.53	0.53

	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Complex – Sounds (26)	0.71	0.59	0.60	0.79	0.87	0.80	0.65	0.68	0.74	0.83	0.77	0.61	0.64
Complex – Read Words (27)	0.85	0.62	0.66	0.70	0.78	0.91	0.65	0.72	0.68	0.75	0.90	0.61	0.68
Complex – Quality Time (28)	0.60	0.88	0.74	0.55	0.55	0.59	0.93	0.80	0.62	0.63	0.64	0.92	0.82
Complex – Love of Reading (29)	0.70	0.82	0.85	0.57	0.61	0.68	0.85	0.91	0.62	0.67	0.73	0.83	0.91
Simple – Letters (30)	0.65	0.57	0.54	0.87	0.67	0.67	0.59	0.60	0.88	0.75	0.68	0.57	0.58
Simple – Sounds (31)	0.79	0.63	0.69	0.65	0.88	0.80	0.62	0.70	0.67	0.82	0.79	0.62	0.69
Simple – Read Words (32)	0.89	0.64	0.71	0.63	0.77	0.91	0.63	73.00	0.64	0.72	0.90	0.63	0.71
Simple – Quality Time (33)	0.66	0.95	0.86	0.52	0.59	0.61	0.93	0.85	0.58	0.63	0.66	0.94	0.87
Simple – Love of Reading (34)	0.72	0.85	0.94	0.50	0.65	0.69	0.82	0.92	0.56	0.65	0.72	0.83	0.92

Note: All correlations not indicated by a * are significant at $p < .01$

*Significant at $p < .05$

Portions of table only indicating upper right diagonal have not be shown.

Correlations of Goals and Mean Ratings of Page Types – 25 through 34

	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
Complex – Letters (25)	1.00									
Complex – Sounds (26)	0.84	1.00								
Complex – Read Words (27)	0.75	0.86	1.00							
Complex – Quality Time (28)	0.63	0.67	0.66	1.00						
Complex – Love of Reading (29)	0.64	0.72	0.76	0.89	1.00					
Simple – Letters (30)	0.74	0.68	0.62	0.52	0.54	1.00				
Simple – Sounds (31)	0.56	0.75	0.72	0.53	0.60	0.77	1.00			
Simple – Read Words (32)	0.55	0.69	0.79	0.55	0.63	0.71	0.85	1.00		
Simple – Quality Time (33)	0.48	0.56	0.58	0.82	0.77	0.61	0.68	0.68	1.00	
Simple – Love of Reading (34)	0.46	0.58	0.62	0.71	0.79	0.60	0.75	0.77	0.90	1.00

Note: All correlations not indicated by a * are significant at $p < .01$

*Significant at $p < .05$

Portions of table only indicating upper right diagonal have not be shown.