

Early Home Literacy Practices of the Prairie Band Potawatomi People

By

Kelley Nelson-Strouts

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Speech-Language-Hearing: Sciences and Disorders
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts.

Chairperson, Matthew Gillispie, PhD

Nancy Brady, PhD

Betty Bunce, PhD

Date Defended: April 29, 2016

The Thesis Committee for Kelley Nelson-Strouts
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

Early Home Literacy Practices of the Prairie Band Potawatomi People

Chairperson, Matthew Gillispie, PhD

Date approved: May 6, 2016

Abstract

Home experiential differences theory suggest Native American (NA) students face unfamiliar customs when attempting to navigate U.S. public schools, which places them at a disadvantage for academic success compared to their peers. Such disadvantages are evident through their overrepresentation in special education programs, their low performance on grade-level achievement tests, and their considerable high school drop out rates. The theory further suggest if the mismatch between school and home cultures could be alleviated, NA students might then be able to demonstrate their true academic abilities at school. To accomplish this, though, significantly more information needs to be collected on the specific home practices of NA students. As experiences with early literacy have been found to have positive effects on later academic outcomes, it was believed that a look into such practices would be most informative. The purpose of this study, then, was to investigate potential home environmental differences in the area of early literacy for a single tribe of NA students, the Prairie Band Potawatomi. A survey was developed and distributed to primary caretakers of the children that attend Prairie Band Potawatomi's early childhood center inquiring about the frequency they engage in certain early literacy practices and the cultural relevance of such practices for their families. As mainstream emphasis in early literacy often involves dialogic shared book reading and NA culture historically supports oral storytelling traditions, questions about the significance of these practices were especially emphasized. The results of the study suggest that not only did most respondents report participating in shared book reading and oral storytelling frequently with their children but also supported that characteristics of mainstream book reading were viewed as culturally appropriate. Clinical implications for educators working with this specific tribe are discussed, as well as general directions for future research in this area.

Acknowledgements

I first want to say a huge thank you to the teachers, administrators, children, and families of the PBPN who came together to help me complete this study. Working with you all through the CRELI grant over the past two years has been a true privilege. I am honored to have been invited to help serve your community through your amazing children. I also want to thank my mentor and advisor, Matt, for giving me some truly amazing opportunities through the CRELI grant and opening my eyes to the world of culturally responsive practices for NA students. My work with you and the other CRELI student scholars quickly became one of the most pivotal parts of my learning while at KU. I also would like to thank my committee members, Betty and Nancy, for the time and energy they selflessly put into helping me conduct this study. Your experience and insight were invaluable to me during this process. Last, a special thanks goes to my wonderfully supportive family and friends who kept me going and encouraged me every step of the way.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Theories of Native American Overrepresentation in Special Education.....	3
Mainstream Early Literacy Practices.....	7
Early Literacy Practices in Other Cultures.....	8
Cultural Considerations in Early Literacy for Native American Students.....	10
The Prairie Band Potawatomi People.....	13
Research Questions.....	15
METHODS.....	17
Participants.....	17
Materials.....	18
Procedures.....	19
RESULTS.....	21
Frequency of Home Literacy Experiences.....	22
Cultural Relevance of Oral Storytelling versus Shared Book Reading.....	23
Children’s Learning Objectives During Storytelling versus Shared Book Reading.....	25
Understanding Prairie Band Potawatomi Storytelling Practices.....	27
DISCUSSION.....	28

Implications for Clinical Practice.....	31
Limitations.....	34
Implications for Future Research.....	36
CONCLUSION.....	37
REFERENCES.....	39
APPENDIX A.....	45
APPENDIX B.....	47

Introduction

Native American (NA) children, while comprising less than 1% of all 3-21 year olds in the United States public school population, make up an alarming 12% of children who qualify for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). In fact, over the course of their educational careers, more than 14% of all NA students will receive special education services at some point compared to 11% of black, 8% of white, 8% of Hispanic, and 5% of Asian students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). This shows NA students as the group of children most likely to receive special education services as compared those of any other cultural or ethnic group under IDEA. Perhaps more importantly, this overrepresentation of NA students in special education heavily leans toward qualifying NA students under the diagnoses generally associated with lower levels of intellectual or linguistic abilities versus recognizing NA students for high-achieving exceptionalities. In fact, NA students are recommended to receive special education services for Specific Learning Disorder at one and a half times that of all other minority groups combined and receive services for general developmental delays at nearly three times that of other minority groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). In conjunction with this, NA students are greatly underrepresented in the sector of the special education population who qualify as intellectually gifted, with only 0.87% of all gifted students under IDEA being of NA descent (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2000).

The disparaging data stretches beyond simple representation within the special education programs. Specifically, NA students have been shown to perform poorly on numerous mainstream markers of academic progress. Specifically, a study by Buly (2005) reports that by fourth grade, many NA students do not meet “proficient” standards on national testing measures

and upon further testing, show slower reading rates, demonstrate low comprehension of written or spoken text, and exhibit poor written vocabulary skills. In fact, national data place NA student achievement at being more than two grade-levels behind their white peers in reading and math proficiency standards at both the fourth and eighth grade marks (National Caucus of Native American State Legislators, 2008). Of interest, though, is that Buly (2005) also revealed that while NA students performed well behind their classmates on measures of written comprehension, they were significantly more likely to rely on background knowledge and utilize personal experiences to answer questions of passage understanding, and that their oral vocabulary skills were on the high-normal side as compared to white peers.

Adolescent NA students also have among the highest high school drop out rates of any minority group (Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick 2009) and the out-of-school suspension rates for NA students is double that of white students attending the same schools. NA high school students are one-third as likely as white students to have met college readiness standards on measures such as the ACT exam and NA students make up less than 1% of all students enrolled in 4-year, U.S. Title IV Higher Education Institutions (Executive Office of the President, 2014). As written in a report from the National Caucus of Native American State Legislators, “for every 100 American Indian/Alaska Native kindergartners, only seven will earn a bachelor's degree, compared to 34 of every 100 white kindergartners” (2008, pg 16).

Despite findings such as these, NA students are rarely recognized by their school systems as bilingual or bicultural learners, which would result in a different general education plan for those individuals, and are often completely left out of discussions regarding minority learning and experiential differences. Therefore, the data presented is not to say NA students are failing in the schools; but instead, suggests that the school system may be failing its NA students. In fact, a

questionnaire distributed to members of the National Indian Education Association in 2010 found that a majority of respondents did not feel the current K-12 education system was adequately attempting to meet the needs of NA students (CHiXapkaid, Inglebret, Krebill-Prather, 2011).

NA students being disproportionately placed in special education can impact their later levels of general academic success. A student qualifying for special education classes or other remedial groups will likely have lower expectations placed on them by their teachers, experience less support from the peers simultaneously enrolled in special education alongside them, and be given less challenging tasks overall within the schools (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1996). The situation can then become cyclical, leading the students to feel lower confidence levels at school and have lower levels of motivation to participate in academics, which may confound to these children actually receiving less instruction overall compared to peers who are not labeled as needing special services (Stanovich, 1986).

Theories of Native American Overrepresentation in Special Education

In light of these startling facts regarding NA students within US schools, numerous scholars hypothesize that the proportion of NA students in special education is too high. As a result, some scholars have begun to examine possible explanations for the disproportion in an effort to better understand, and eventually reduce, this overrepresentation. It should be stated the achievement gap experienced by NA students would likely be heavily influenced by a multitude of factors that act in combination to impact NA school experiences and outcomes. However, the most frequently proposed theories include those that examine influences of NA students'

linguistic differences and those that examine potential early home experiential disparities between NA and mainstream students.

The first theory, which suggests NA outcome differences are largely fueled by linguistic discrepancies, is well-supported through data that shows the percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) receiving special education services for learning disabilities at more than double that of non-ELL students (Collier, 2012). In fact, it is fairly well accepted among educators that linguistic differences can—and routinely do—impact a student’s performance on assessments and progress measures that do not actively account for such differences. As many districts use these measures in their determination processes for special education qualification, the higher enrollment of ELL students in such services comes as little surprise. In fact, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) cites best practice for its members should include testing a student in their “most proficient” language or utilizing dynamic assessment to help combat over-referrals for special education services of bilingual students (n.d.).

In the current school system, perhaps the most-often explored bilingual relationship is that between Spanish and English, with numerous studies citing potential impacts the languages can have on one another during their time of acquisition. Specifically, a few of the more popular assessments used for the purposes of speech and language testing even have a Spanish correlate or provide sample answers a child could give that may be attributed to Spanish influences rather than a true disorder in language processes. However, just as the idea of a dual language influences holds true for these often-encountered language relationships such as Spanish and English, so it would be for the influence of NA languages with English, as well. In fact, if anything, the confounding issue of language differences may only be exasperated for NA students as there are hundreds of distinct NA languages and dialects from differing tribes across

the nation. As a result, the pool of speakers for each language is substantially smaller and educators are likely less aware of the distinct potential influences a particular tribal language or dialect may bring to the child's acquisition of English (Battle, 2012).

However, while again, it is most likely that aspects of multiple factors contribute to the gaps in NA education outcomes, the present study suggests that the primary cause of outcome disparities goes beyond NA students simply being ELL. That is to say, even monolingual, English speaking NA students will still experience discrepancies in their enrollment in special education services as compared to their peers. This present work, then, relies heavily on theories suggesting it is the early home experiential differences between NA and mainstream children that largely fuel special education overrepresentation and poor academic achievement reports.

In its simplest terms, the theory proposes that some children experience a significant mismatch between their home culture and the culture of the public schools they attend; and it is such a mismatch that causes the academic difficulties. As the majority of learning before the school-aged years occurs within the child's home, if what these students are acculturated to in their own lives looks dramatically different from what a mainstream child growing up at the same time experiences, it will profoundly effect the world-view, actions, and learning styles they bring with them as they begin public school. It is then a difference in these children's early learning experiences from those of their mainstream peers that is making them less prepared to succeed in the classroom and perpetuating their overrepresentation in special education, not a true and inherent disorder in their learning capacities (Ingelbret, Jones, & Pavel, 2008; Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Robinson-Zanartu, 1996). In effect, to operate and succeed in both their school and home communities, the student will need to effectively become a bicultural learner. Subscribers to early home experiential differences theories then believe is a fundamental

responsibility of educators to bridge the discrepancies between the students' home and school cultures to alleviate the sole burden of navigating the two systems from the student.

For NA students in particular, the mismatch could be that of adult expectations, group customs, social interaction models, teaching styles, guiding values, or any combination thereof that then causes NA students difficulty navigating the U.S. public schools, which overwhelmingly adopt the cultural expectations of mainstream, European American society. This hinders the abilities of NA students to portray their full academic potential (August, Goldenberg, and Rueda, 2006). Moreover, it is necessary to mention, too, that for some NAs, encountering a mismatch between their home and school cultures might serve to reinforce historical traumas many tribes faced at the hands of US government education systems. Over centuries, missionary schools and eventually federally-run boarding schools worked to achieve annihilation of many NA customs, religious practices, and languages. Therefore, a deep mistrust of the government is not uncommon in elderly NA individuals and may even be held by larger NA communities as a whole (Trujillo & Alston, 2005). The potential for the perception that schools are merely being used as a tool in forced assimilation only makes the need for a bridge between home and school cultures that much more imperative in the work with NA students.

However, even though it is relatively easy to hypothesize that NA students may have profoundly different early home-life experiences from those of their mainstream peers which lead them to exhibit unique academic characteristics later in school, literature documenting what these differences actually are and the frequency under which they occur is dreadfully scarce. The aim of the present study, then, is to help report on some of these early experiential differences for one tribe in northeastern Kansas.

Mainstream Early Literacy Practices

While many areas could be considered for review in looking to help bridge the home and school cultural gaps for NA students, understanding the home literacy practices experienced by students before the school-aged years is believed to be most critical. It is well-documented that early experiences with literacy strongly affect a child's later reading and academic outcomes (Piasta, Justice, McGinty, & Kaderavek, 2012). This is largely due to the notion that early literacy skills (i.e., knowledge of letter/sound correspondence, print referencing skills, vocabulary development, phonological awareness abilities, etc.) help to foster reading abilities in later grades (Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000; Scarborough, Neuman, & Dickinson, 2009; Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager, 1991). Moreover, once access to the curriculum becomes more text-dependent in the later elementary years (often around third or fourth grade), a student's overall abilities in reading matter greatly to their success across all academic areas.

In mainstream, European American culture shared storybook reading is considered one of the most salient and frequently utilized early literacy experiences. Shared storybook reading, in short, describes a time during which an adult and a child are engaged around a physical book together. These experiences, while seemingly simple or perhaps even commonplace to a mainstream child, have strongly supported and powerful effects on young children's learning. Shared storybook reading provides opportunities for adults to address numerous early literacy skills through talking about sounds and orienting children to print (Justice & Ezell, 2002), teaching vocabulary (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015), introducing new concepts, feelings, or ideas, displaying the legitimacy of print in one's life, and modeling de-contextualized language (Beck & McKeown, 2001). In fact, the bedrock of why shared storybook reading is seen by the mainstream as how to best facilitate the development of many child language skills is that the

type and variety of words, themes, and sentence structures presented in stories are generally far more complex than those children are exposed to during everyday, conversational speech (Duursma, Augustyn, & Zuckerman, 2008).

Within mainstream families (and the public school systems that reflect those same mainstream cultural preferences), shared storybook reading is often carried out through dialogic reading. This is when adults ask open-ended questions or otherwise prompt the child to talk about the book around which they are centered (Van Kleeck, Stahl, & Bauer, 2008). In successful dialogic reading, the adult is tasked with appropriately responding to the child's answers, commenting about the story or pictures, and questioning the child over the story's content or their own background experiences in a way that is both on-topic and cognitively stimulating (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015). However, in having schools uphold this model as a gold-standard technique for early literacy, they fail to consider whether shared storybook reading is even practiced by the various students' cultures; and, if it is utilized, what unique variations those different cultures may place on shared storybook reading.

Early Literacy Practices in Other Cultures

In fact, when comparing dialogic reading to the limited body of literature regarding early literacy practices in minority families, it is clear that such a model is neither fully accurate nor appropriate in describing how such families promote early literacy with their children. Most influential, a study by Hammer, Rodriguez, Lawrence, and Miccio (2007), examined the beliefs and practices of 81 Puerto Rican mothers whose children were enrolled in a Head Start program. The mothers were then divided into two groups—those that spoke at least some English as well as Spanish at home and so whose children were considered home English communicators (HEC)

and those that spoke exclusively Spanish at home and so whose children were considered school English communicators (SEC). No difference in either levels of schooling achieved nor employment was found between the groups of mothers. However, it was more likely for mothers in the SEC group to be the first generation in their families to reside in the U.S. compared to the HEC group. The study utilized questionnaire answers, collected twice over the course of an academic year, from the mothers that targeted items such as background demographics, home literacy activities, and general levels of 'modernity' of the mothers' interactions with their children. The 'modernity' scales further divided the mothers as being either 'progressive' or 'traditional,' with 'progressive' mothers as those who felt children should learn actively and be treated as unique individuals with their own opinions and ideas about the world and the 'traditional' mothers as those who believed in authoritarian-style discipline and more complete obedience from their children.

From their analysis, the researchers found that mothers of HEC were often more likely to engage in explicit early literacy practices (teaching the alphabet, talking about sounds) than SEC mothers. However, mothers seemed equally likely to be 'progressive' or 'traditional,' as both levels of 'modernity' were well-represented in both the HEC and SEC groupings. Moreover, these beliefs did not seem to impact how the mothers practiced early literacy in the home, as both groups were found to be most likely to exhibit a hybrid approach that combined elements of the Puerto Rican and European American practices. As stated, "families held to some beliefs and practices that were consistent with their cultural background, and at the same time, integrated beliefs and practices into their cultural model that were common to schools in the United States" (Hammer et al., 2007, pg. 222).

African American mothers, too, have been documented to employ a cultural mash-up of early literacy practices with their young children. In their book *Literacy in African American Communities*, Harris, Kahmi, and Pollock (2000) remark that while some form of dialogic reading does seem to occur, these mothers are less inclined to ask questions of the child during the readings, are more likely to speak in directives (i.e. “look at the dog”), and tend to employ different narrative structures than are typically found in mainstream stories. Therefore, it is easy to see that differing cultural groups do choose to interact with their children over books and about literacy in their own unique ways.

Cultural Considerations in Early Literacy for Native American Students

It would be unfair to say that no attempts have been made at helping close the cultural gap in the realm of early education. Indeed, some work has been undertaken to discover how to best alleviate the home-school cultural mismatch even within the context of shared book reading. Both Ingelbret et al. (2008) and Loeb and Redbird (2008), for instance, advocate for selecting books that depict traditional NA stories. Another study by Loeb and Redbird (2011), went further and investigated incorporating culturally relevant texts in a Response to Intervention (RTI) program for nine NA kindergarten students. The students represented six tribes and were all monolingual English speakers. Two culturally relevant tribal stories were used in the program, both of which were selected for their culturally appropriate themes and their abilities to support tribal values. Upon completion of the RTI program, six children ultimately showed significant improvements in the area of reading comprehension skills, five showed significant gains in letter identification and both phoneme and syllable blending abilities significantly improved. While vocabulary and narrative structure skills were not found to make significant gains between pre

and post test scores, this program is one of the few that showcases some potential benefits of incorporating culturally sensitive teaching in conjunction with mainstream practices.

However, culturally relevant materials provide only one small piece in completing the puzzle of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010). This is because the presence of a physical book still leads to the potential for test-question, adult-led, type of talk that is inherent to mainstream, dialogic reading. Utilizing a culturally appropriate text does not also necessitate that the stories be told with oral NA traditions in mind. Therefore, even when early educators use culturally-relevant books, it is possible they may still be interacting with their students in ways that are in opposition to how NA children were first exposed to stories within their home environments (Pewewardy & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Robinson-Zanartu, 1996; Wang, Bernas, & Eberhard, 2002; White-Kaulaity, 2007).

Perhaps the most salient cultural consideration in working with NA students in the area of early literacy is that, generally speaking, most NA tribes subscribe to an oral culture. That is, they are more inclined to transfer information via oral language than via written words (Battle, 2012; Ingelbret, Jones, & Pavel, 2008; Robinson-Zanartu, 1996; White-Kaulaity, 2007). As White-Kaulaity (2007) states: “[NA American parents] send their children to school with the oral literacy practices of home, which must connect with the print literacy practices of modern education” (pg. 561). In fact, some NA languages do not even carry a written form.

Moreover, the oral tradition in NA communities utilizes an idea known as multiliteracies (Battle, 2012). That is, it uses aspects such as added visual imageries, audio inputs, and gestural communication modes to convey meanings above and beyond what is said by the words themselves. Storytelling is an embodiment of this multiliteracy approach and offers rich

connections to cultural traditions and shared values. As it is practiced in many NA communities, storytelling serves numerous functions such as informing present generations of past events, outlining cultural expectations, redirecting undesirable behaviors to better align cultural norms, and enhancing spiritual connectedness (Webster & Yanez, 2007).

While a look into the impacts of storytelling versus shared book reading on child's later academic outcomes is well beyond the scope of this study, a distinction between the frequency of shared book reading versus storytelling in NA homes is an important one to discern nonetheless. Not only will such information influence potential teaching strategies for early childhood educators, there also exists some inherent differences between the two practices that may be found to have differential impacts. Specifically, the structural make up and thematic elements of stories told through NA tribal storytelling practices may diverge from those of mainstream shared book reading. For example, stories in mainstream culture require linear and episodic structures to move the reader along through the setting, initiating event, response, plan, attempts, and consequences before an end, or resolution, is reached. Stories in mainstream culture are usually explicit in their meanings and details given and they assume little shared knowledge of people or events between the author and the reader. NA stories, conversely, exemplify their high-context communication patterns and being-versus-doing worldviews and can appear "minimalist" with unexpected plot lines to a mainstream listener (Sharifian, Rochecouste, & Malcolm, 2004). It is the burden of the listener, rather than the storyteller, to fill in the gaps and derive the intended meaning and plot (Battle, 2012).

Another highly important cultural consideration in working with NA students in any capacity is the need to recognize specific, individual tribes rather than attempt to target NA students as a collective. This can represent a challenge for many educators as the majority of

national data and information in the educational literature continues to lump all tribes into a singular grouping. As there are hundreds of federally and state recognized tribes in the U.S. alone, certainly some tribes may share some cultural preferences customs, but likely there are more significant disparities between them that deserve explicit recognition and consideration. For instance, most tribes have their own language, types of dress, religious ceremonies, and other cultural patterns that constitute their unique cultural profile and necessitate their representation as distinct entities (Battle, 2012). As such, any investigation into the practices of NAs or work with NA students should elect to focus on single tribe to more accurately reflect their specific practices and preferences and ultimately, yield the most directly meaningful and sensitive outcomes. This study in specific focused on a single tribe in northeast Kansas, the Prairie Band Potawatomi.

The Prairie Band Potawatomi People

Originally a Great Lakes area tribe, since the 1860s, the Prairie Band Potawatomi people reside on and near their present-day reservation, a result of European colonization and forced relocation policies of the U.S. Government. Today, the PBPN are a sovereign Nation who are striving to uphold their traditional values in conjunction with their daily practices in the modern world. Education, equality, and respect for each of the different generations are integral tenets of their culture. Under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 all tribal sovereign Nations, including the Prairie Band tribe, are entitled under federal law to self-govern and maintain a nation-to-nation relationship with the U.S. government with only Congressional authority having the power to surpass tribal authority. Therefore, PBPN maintains a seven-member governing body of the Tribal Council, which is responsible for deciding on and maintaining the policies of the tribe as guided by their own Potawatomi Constitution.

The PBPN is comprised of nearly 5,000 enrolled members. However, recent years have shown a decline in tribal enrollment, largely due to a decision made by the tribe in May 2010 to restrict future enrollment to those having a quarter or more PBPN blood quantum (PBPN Government Center, 2016). The reservation represents a rural Nation in northeast Kansas. The surrounding areas are predominantly rural, agriculture-based communities. The closest township outside reservation boundaries is Mayetta, Kansas, with a population of 341 people (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Many tribal addresses list a Mayetta city location and shared zip code, but reservation boundaries do represent an important distinction between the township and that of the sovereign nation of the Prairie Band people under federal law. The reservation's closest city is Topeka, Kansas, the state's capital, which is located 23 miles south of the PBPN Government Center.

Tribal unemployment rates and median household income reports for tribal members are not publically reported by the PBPN. However, as part of their Vision for Renewal, the Potawatomi Tribal Council mandated that by 2026 16% of all gaming revenues will be put toward tribal economic development measures such as increasing tribal member employment rates and increasing the median income levels for tribal families. Currently, all enrolled PBPN tribal members receive Per Capita revenue payments funded by 48% of the total Prairie Band Casino and Resort revenue each quarter (PBPN Government Center, 2016). Amounts of each Per Capita payment vary in conjunction with quarterly revenues of the casino and resort as well as with total tribal enrollment numbers. Additional economic initiatives within the PBPN include the addition of Firekeeper Golf Course and the Prairie Band Bison Program.

As previously stated, the reservation contains an early childhood center which offers preschool and childcare services to families with approved tribal enrollment. After attending

preschool on the reservation most children are bused to the nearby Royal Valley School District, where they receive mainstream public school education. In addition to children from the PBPB reservation, the Royal Valley School District also serves children from the nearby rural communities of Mayetta and Hoyt, Kansas. PBPB children attending Ben-no-tteh Wigwam who qualify for special education services under IDEA receive such services via the Holton Special Education Cooperative on-site during their morning preschool time.

Another important factor in understanding the Prairie Band Potawatomi for the purposes of this study is that they, like many NA tribes, are a traditionally oral culture. In fact, the Potawatomi language does not have any prescribed printed form associated with it. Only in recent decades has the language been transcribed into written words in an effort to aid preservation. As such, the Potawatomi language does not have set rules for spelling and its users are encouraged simply to write the words with mainstream English graphemes as they would phonetically pronounce them in Potawatomi. Equally relevant is that the PBPB only has a single published traditional children's story that would be available to outsiders. PBPB does actively maintain a Language and Cultural Department to revitalize and restore the Potawatomi language from its current "critical state of being" (PBPB Government Center, 2016). As part of that work, the department is committed to acquiring and recording many traditional PBPB stories or ceremonies that can help preserve the Potawatomi culture.

Research Questions

In truth, without knowing more about the current home literacy experiences of NA children, in general, and PBPB children, in specific, (that is, are physical books or oral stories more prevalent, the frequency of early literacy tasks in the home, or what other literacy-related

activities do these families engage in) we cannot be sure of how to fully bridge the home-school cultural gap for these students. It could be that when schools solely employ an entirely mainstream model of dialogic reading around a physical book, as they often currently do, they may be standing in contradiction to these children's early learning experiences and deepening the cultural dichotomy between home and school. Therefore, while many researchers and educators readily accept the assumption that children from differing cultural backgrounds have different early education practices in their home communities that need to be better reflected within their early school systems (Hwa-Froelich & Vigil, 2004; Nord, Lennon, Liu, & Chandler, 2000), more research needs to be conducted to document the specifics of these differences for them to be incorporated as part of a truly culturally-responsive curriculum for NA students in U.S. schools.

The purpose of the present study is to add to the small body of literature and thus, begin to shed light on the current home literacy practices of a small group of NA families, specifically the families of the children who attend the Prairie Band Potawatomi Early Childhood Education Center in northeastern Kansas to inform educators on how to best implement culturally appropriate teachings for PBPB students. Therefore, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the types and frequency of home literacy practices employed by families of the children enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Center on the Prairie Band Potawatomi Reservation?
2. In knowing these practices, how might educators and clinicians best use them to inform their future classroom practices and targets?

Based on the oral and storytelling traditions of many NA tribes, it was hypothesized that more respondents would report practicing oral storytelling at higher frequencies than shared book reading and that the Prairie Band Potawatomi people would place a higher cultural value on the practice of oral storytelling than on shared book reading. Moreover, it was hypothesized that characteristics of mainstream, dialogic reading would not be culturally valued. After learning such necessary information as it pertained to the first research question, more appropriate practice guidelines for educators and other related service providers will be suggested to better address the second research question.

Methods

Participants

Participants were the primary caregivers for the children currently enrolled at House of the Child (Ben-no-tteh Wigwam), the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (PBPN) Early Childhood Education Center. At the time of the survey distribution, the age range of the children in attendance at Ben-no-tteh Wigwam was 6 weeks to 5 years old. The center houses three services that were of interest to the present study: Head Start, Early Head Start, and Childcare. Caregivers of children enrolled in any of these three programs were invited to participate in the study. At the time of survey distribution, a total of 62 children ages three to five years old and 32 children ages birth to three attended the center. As some families were caretakers to multiple children attending the center, a total of 67 participants (families) were invited to complete a survey inquiring about the frequency in which they engage in certain home literacy practices and the different benefits they perceive their children gain from such activities.

Ben-no-tteh Wigwam's guiding philosophy states, "[t]he overall learning experiences of the child are considered with the entire family and community interlinked as partners in his/her progress. The child's language and culture are respected and reflected in the learning environment and interactions. Parents are recognized as the child's most important teachers and contributors to his/her growth and development" (PBPN Government Center, 2016). Therefore, in accordance with the PBPN culture, any adult who lives in the household and consistently interacts with the child was considered to be a primary caregiver for the purposes of the survey. For some children, their biological parents serve as primary caregivers; but for many others, extended family members or even close family friends fulfill this role.

Furthermore, only families of whom at least one member meets the tribal blood quantum qualifications for official PBPN enrollment are eligible to receive childcare at Ben-no-tteh Wigwam. It is important to note that it is not uncommon for NA children to hold enrollment in more than a single tribe; and, not all of children who attend Ben-no-tteh Wigwam are themselves federally enrolled members of PBPN. Other tribes with representation in the school include Kickapoo and Cherokee. Differing tribes will likely have unique cultural and traditional practices, including those that may influence the type of parent-child interaction patterns such as those that are being surveyed in this study. However, as these children necessarily live on or near the PBPN reservation, and have at least one family member or caretaker that meets the blood quantum requirements for enrollment in PBPN tribe, it was assumed the predominant tribal culture within the participating households was PBPN.

Materials

A 17-item survey was designed to obtain information regarding the home literacy practices of Ben-no-tteh Wigwam families. Specifically, the survey sampled the frequency of various home literacy practices (items 1-6), the caregiver's perception of the interactions that occur between themselves and their child when they are reading a book or a telling story (items 7-14), the caregiver's perception of what their child is learning during reading a book versus during hearing a story be told (items 15-16), and at what times or occasions do they find themselves telling a story to their child (item 17). The survey (see Appendix A) was adapted from multiple, established questionnaires that targeted early literacy practices and/or sampled minority families in the areas of early child-adult interactions (Boudreau, 2005; Lee & Kinkead, 2015; McMurray, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

A short introductory note that outlined the survey's purpose and basic instructions for completing and returning the survey was included along with the questionnaire (see Appendix B). Additionally, based on potential literacy levels for caregivers completing the survey, an option to phone-in survey responses to the center administration was included along with the ability to complete the survey in written form. In both options, anonymity was maintained as no names were requested on the written form and those ready to receive phoned-in results were explicitly instructed to not request any identifying information from the callers. Ultimately, all respondents chose to fill the survey out in written form and return it to the center.

Procedures

The Prairie Band Potawatomi were selected as the focus of this study primarily due to their involvement with the Culturally Responsive Early Literacy Instruction: American Indian/Alaskan Native (CRELI) project, a personnel preparation grant funded by the U.S.

Department of Special Education in conjunction with the University of Kansas Department of Speech-Language-Hearing: Sciences and Disorders. As part of this grant, graduate student scholars (including the author of this study) traveled weekly to the PBPB reservation since September 2015 to help provide culturally responsive early literacy instruction to the pre-Kindergarten childcare classroom and home-based early literacy and consultative services to participating families. The grant, then, provided a platform on which specific members of the tribe were able to evaluate the intentions of the student scholars and ultimately develop a feeling of trust in a gradual and natural manner. As the author of this study is a non-native and not a member of the PBPB, such trust was crucial to be allowed to embark upon the study.

Therefore, after having served in the community for a little over a year, the author approached the staff of Ben-no-tteh Wigwam to see if they would be comfortable having a survey distributed to their families. The intentions of the research were explicitly outlined and the study itself was intentionally designed with the benefit of the PBPB children and educators in mind. Furthermore, the staff at Ben-no-tteh Wigwam helped edit and refine the survey study to be more applicable for their specific needs. After this, the staff also helped submit the proposed study to the PBPB Tribal Council for approval. Only after such steps were completed did survey distribution begin.

The procedures taken in this study intentionally included key tribal members throughout the research process. Such a model is based off of Fischer and Ball's Tribal Participatory Research (2003), which advocates for strong inclusion of the tribe through the research process and necessitates the ultimate goal of any tribal research to ultimately be for the betterment and empowerment of the tribal community itself. Included in this is an inherent rejection of traditional, Western-influenced research practices that give the researcher final and total control

over the process and instead includes the adoption of a more open and collaborative model (Fischer & Ball, 2003).

Sixty-seven surveys (one for each family enrolled at the center) were given to the Ben-no-tteh Wigwam director, who distributed them appropriately to the teachers with instructions to send the surveys home in the backpacks of the children. The surveys were then returned with the children to either the front desk at the center or directly to the classroom teachers. The graduate clinician then collected them in-person each week until two weeks had passed where no additional surveys were returned.

Once the surveys were collected, the respondents for each Likert scale response were recorded and analyzed and a range of potential responses was provided to describe the data. In some instances, difference measures were included to best showcase the discrepancies between attitudes or feelings regarding shared book reading versus traditional storytelling practices. For example, graphs and tables were constructed to best outline the percent of respondents who selected each potential learning outcome such as “history of our ancestors” that the child could be gaining from either book reading or listening to oral stories. In addition, the open-ended question (#17) was analyzed for commonalities, themes, or trends and % of responses submitting to that trend/theme were calculated. Finally, an analysis and reflection of how both Ben-no-tteh Wigwam staff and service personnel serving the center, such as future CRELI student scholars, can best use this information was assessed for clinical implications.

Results

In total, 22 surveys were returned, yielding a 33% response rate. One individual completing the survey self-identified as non-Native; and, as the intent of the survey was to

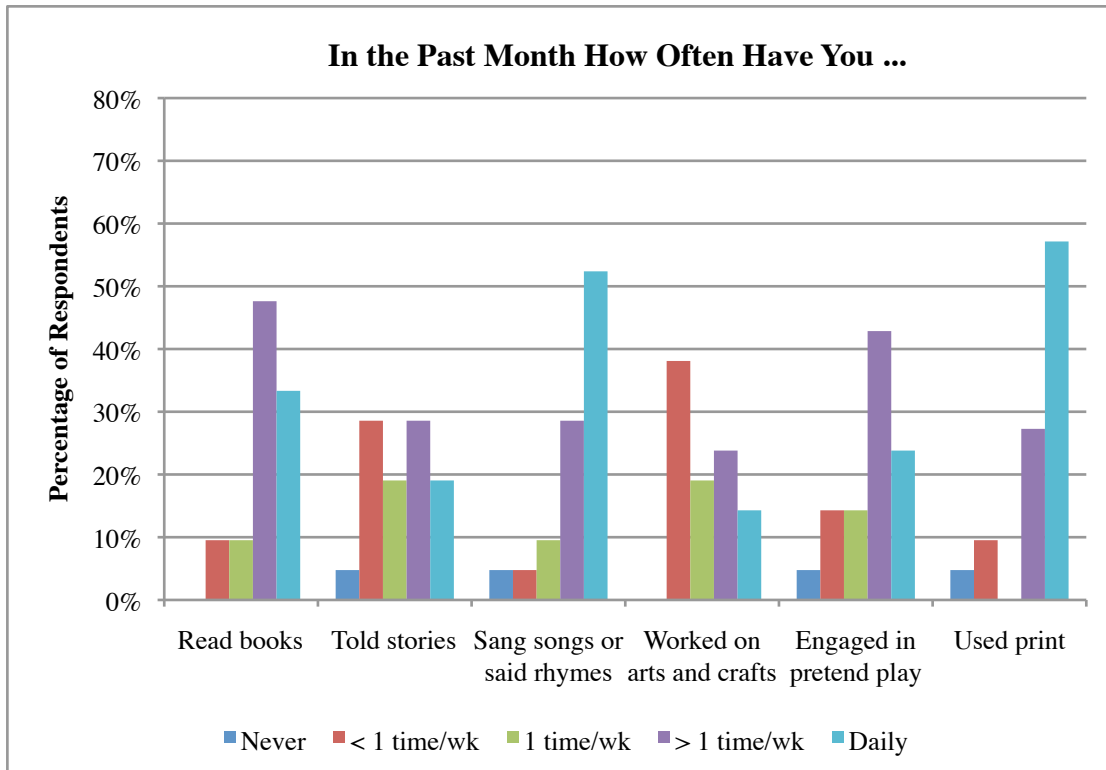
investigate the early home literacy practices of NA families, particularly those with PBPN influence or enrollment, the non-Native family was decidedly excluded from analysis. The remaining 21 surveys were analyzed to answer the two primary research questions posed for the study.

Frequency of Home Literacy Experiences

To address the initial research question, first, the 21 responses were examined based on the reported frequency of the six surveyed early literacy practices: book reading, story telling, telling rhymes and singing songs, doing arts and crafts, playing make-believe, and using print in everyday contexts. The number of respondents for each of the surveyed frequency levels were gathered. Seventeen respondents (81%) noted they read books to their children either daily or greater than once per week, while 4 respondents (19%) read books to their children a single time per week or less. Ten respondents (48%) reported telling oral stories to their children either daily or greater than once per week, while 11 respondents (52%) reported telling oral stories to their children a single time per week or less. Seventeen respondents (81%) said they sang songs or told rhymes with their children either daily or greater than one time per week, while 4 respondents (19%) reported doing these things a single time each week or less. Nine respondents (43%) reported they worked on arts and crafts with their children either daily or greater than once per week, while 12 (57%) reported working on arts and crafts a single time per week or less. Fourteen respondents (67%) said they engaged in pretend play or played make-believe games with their children daily or greater than once per week, while 7 respondents (33%) said they do this a single time per week or less. Eighteen respondents (86%) reported using print in the presence of their children daily or greater than once per week, while 3 respondents (14%) reported doing this a single time per week or less. The frequencies of each early literacy

experience are displayed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Frequency of Occurrence of Early Literacy Activities

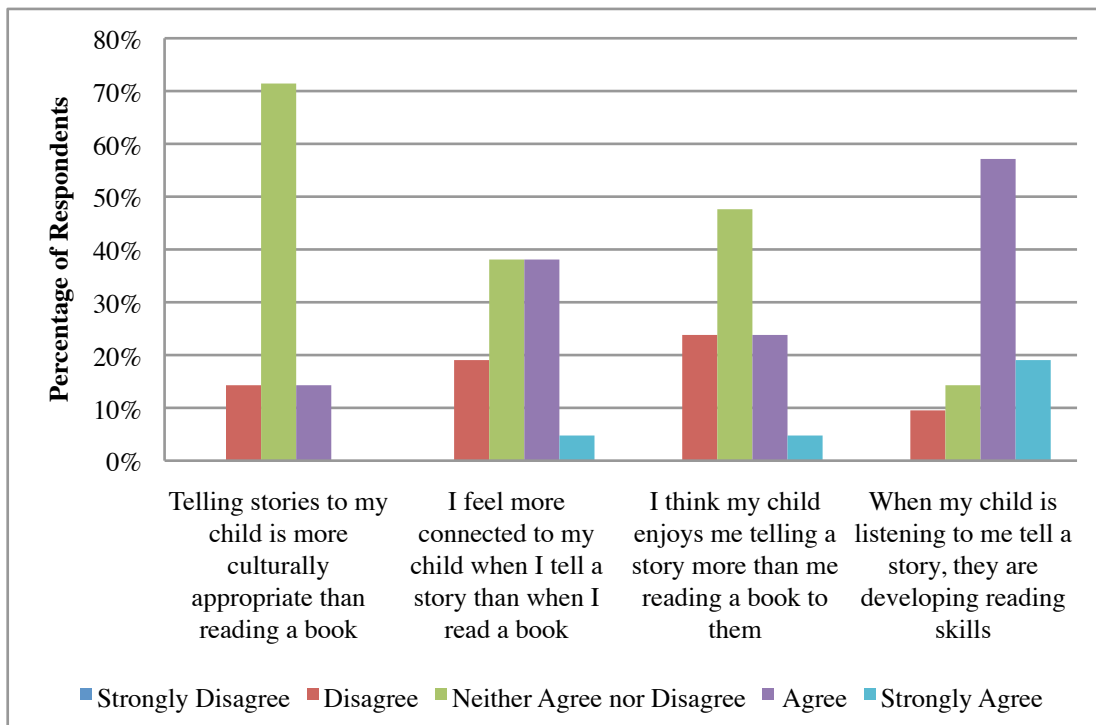


Cultural Relevance of Oral Storytelling versus Shared Book Reading

The next set of questions were developed to continue the investigation into the cultural significance of differing early literacy practices. These asked respondents to reflect upon whether they felt there were social-emotional benefits to traditional oral storytelling such as child’s enjoyment level, cultural appropriateness, and parent-child connectedness. Finally, whether families felt oral storytelling could be a mechanism through which their child learned reading skills was also considered. The results showed 15 respondents (71%) neither agreed nor disagreed that storytelling was more culturally appropriate than shared book reading with zero respondents saying they either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. Nine

respondents (43%) said they either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more connected to their child during story reading with eight respondents (38%) reporting they neither agreed nor disagreed and four respondents (19%) reporting they disagreed. Six respondents (28%) either agreed or strongly agreed their children enjoyed them telling stories more than them reading books as compared to 10 respondents (48%) who neither agreed nor disagreed and five respondents (24%) who disagreed. Sixteen respondents (76%) reported that they either agreed or strongly agreed that their children could be learning early reading skills during times of oral storytelling, with 3 respondents (14%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 2 respondents (10%) disagreeing. Further breakdowns of respondent percentages are reported in the Figure 2 below.

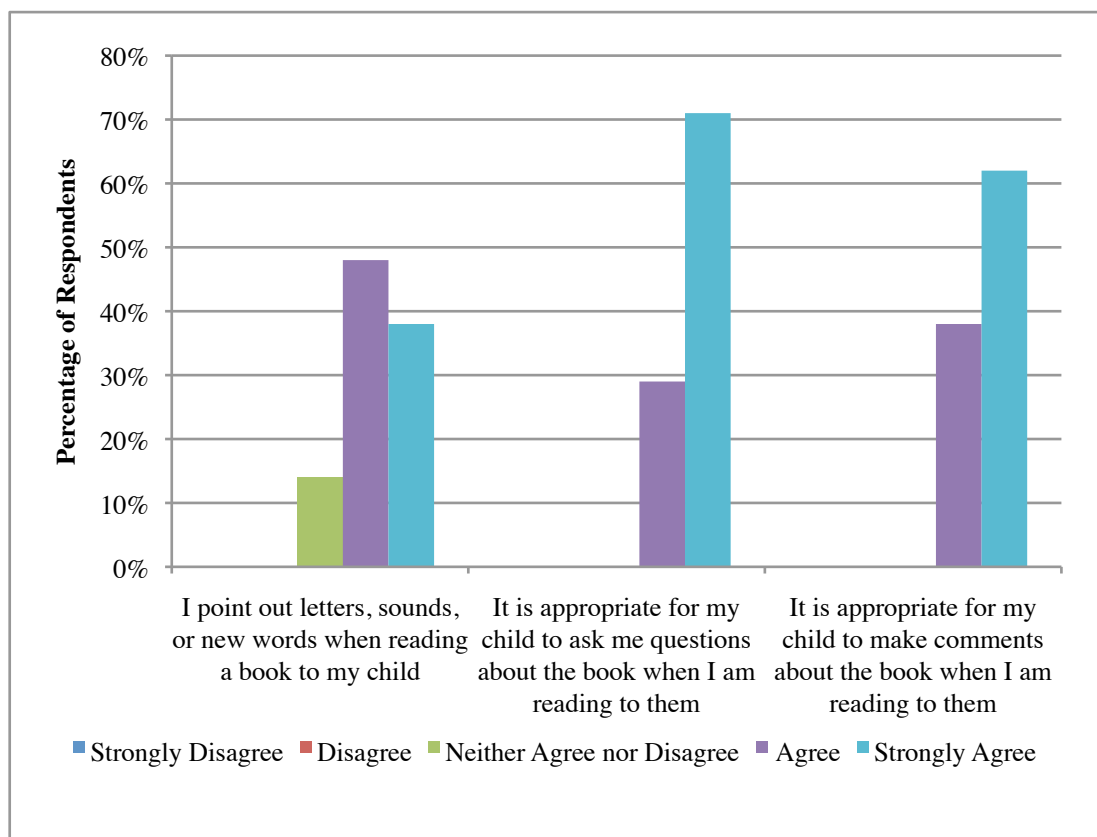
Figure 2: Perceived Benefits of Storytelling



The next data set examined the cultural relevancy of differing early literacy practices that are consistent with dialogic reading such as “it is okay for my child to ask questions when I am

reading.” In this, 18 respondents (86%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they point out letters, sounds, or words when reading to their child, three respondents (14%) said they neither agreed nor disagreed with that statement and zero respondents (0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. All 21 respondents (100%) either strongly agreed or agreed that it was appropriate for the child to ask them questions or tell them comments during book readings. Moreover, it was found that 19 respondents (90%) said that their answers to those same questions would not change if they were telling their child a story versus reading them a physical book. The results of these questions are shown in Figure 3, below.

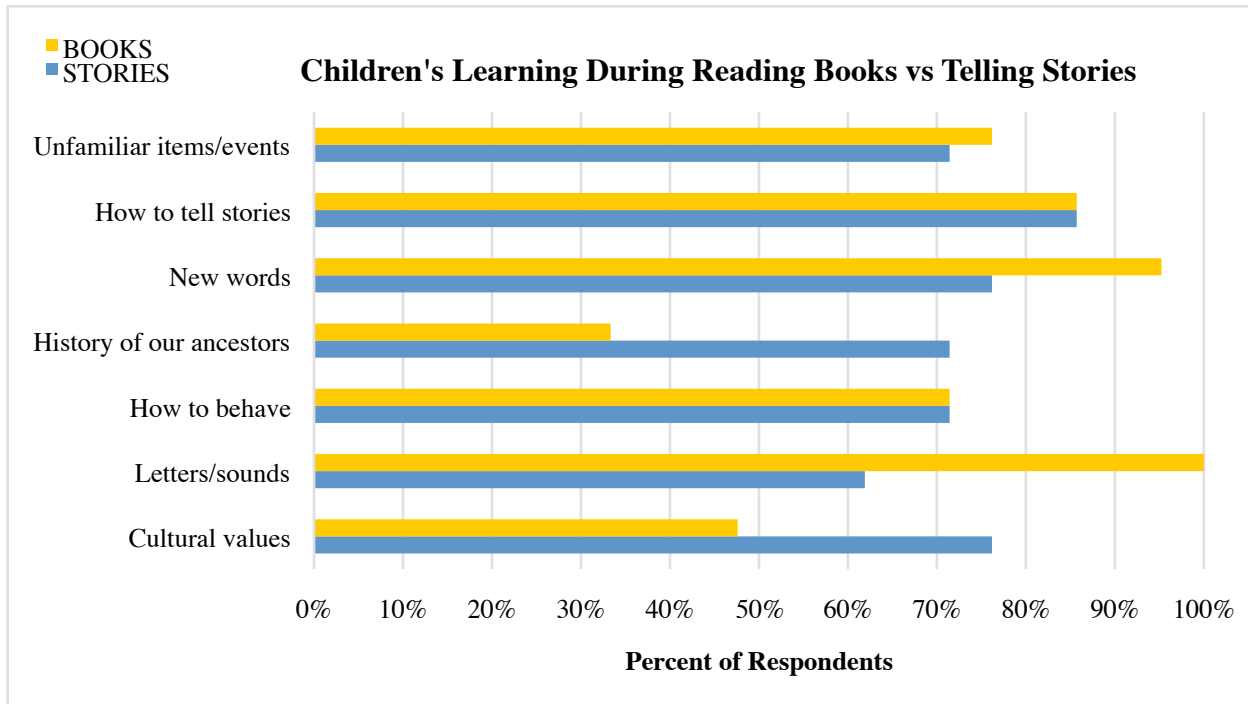
Figure 3: Appropriateness of Dialogic Reading Components During Book Reading



Children’s Learning Objectives During Storytelling versus Shared Book Reading

In the final section of the survey, participants were asked to select any objective they felt their children might be learning about during times of reading a physical book and then for times of listening to an oral story. There was not a limit on the number of options a respondent could select for each one as the investigation was interested in all the different benefits the caregivers felt each early literacy practice could provide for their children. The percentages of respondents selecting each item for the different activities are summarized in Figure 4 below. As illustrated, 76% of respondents felt reading books to their child provided them ways to talk about unfamiliar items or events, 86% felt reading books could help their child learn how to tell a story, 95% felt reading books helped teach their child new words, 33% felt reading books could help their child learn about the history of their ancestors, 71% felt reading books could help their child learn how to behave, 100% of the respondents felt that reading books helped them learn letters and sounds, and 48% felt that reading books taught cultural values to their child. Conversely, 71% of respondents felt telling stories to their child provided them ways to talk about unfamiliar items or events, 86% felt telling stories could help their child learn how to tell a story, 76% felt telling stories helped teach their child new words, 71% felt telling stories could help their child learn about the history of their ancestors, 71% felt telling stories could help their child learn how to behave, 62% of the respondents felt that telling stories helped them learn letters and sounds, and 76% felt that telling stories taught cultural values to their child.

Figure 4: Objectives Learned from Books versus Stories



Understanding Prairie Band Potawatomi Storytelling Practices

The final question on the survey asked the participants to describe why, when, and where they engage in story telling with their children when a book is not present. To answer the question of why storytelling occurs, 9% of participants said they tell stories because it is convenient (i.e. “we are in the car”), 19% said because it is fun and/or promotes a personal connection with their child (i.e. “to entertain and be interactive”), 29% said because it helps their child better understand something (i.e. “it gives the children a chance to learn imagination as well as the history of our family” or “to explain undocumented cultural beliefs”), and 43% of participants chose not to respond by leaving the question blank. To answer the question of when storytelling occurs, 14% of participants gave a singular, specific time (i.e. “bedtime” or “when I am driving”), 9% said when a specific situation or need arose (i.e. “when teaching culture” or “to correct bad behavior”), 33% either listed multiple times (i.e. “during driving, at bedtime, and

when doing chores”) or explicitly stated that storytelling could occur during different situations (i.e. “anytime”), and 43% of respondents chose not to respond by leaving the question blank. To answer the question of where the storytelling occurs, 14% of participants gave a singular, explicit location (i.e. “at home” or “in the car”), 38% of participants listed multiple locations (i.e. “zoo, car, home”) or otherwise explicitly noted that stories could be told in multiple locations (i.e. “everywhere we go”), and 48% of respondents chose not to respond by leaving the question blank.

Discussion

In beginning the study, it was hypothesized that the PBPN would value the practice of oral storytelling more than the practice of shared book reading and that they would engage in the practice of oral storytelling with their children more frequently than they engage in shared book reading. Also, that the more mainstream, dialogic shared book reading would not be culturally valued. However, the data did not seem to support these hypotheses. Instead, caregivers in the PBPN overwhelmingly reported that both oral storytelling and shared book reading are practices they culturally value and engage in frequently with their children.

When looking at the frequency of the different early home literacy activities sampled, 81% read books either daily or more than once per week, compared to only 48% of respondents who engaged in oral story telling with the same frequency. This suggests caregivers in PBPN are, if anything, more often inclined to read a book to their child than to tell them a story orally. Of note, zero respondents said they never read a book to their child within the past month and only a single respondent stated they had not told their child stories in the last month, suggesting that both practices are common in PBPN households. Additionally, for nearly all early literacy

activities sampled, the largest number of respondents for each early literacy activity sampled showed they engaged in the activity with their children at least more than one time per week and for some activities (such as singing songs and telling rhymes or using print in the presence of their children), the majority of respondents listed doing these activities daily. This suggests families of the PBPN are actively and consistently supporting the early literacy development of their children within their homes through many diverse activities and suggests that both print and oral literacy activities are valued.

Next, as 71% neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement that oral storytelling is more culturally appropriate for their families than shared book reading suggesting that both oral storytelling and shared book reading are considered culturally appropriate early literacy practices in which families can engage with their children. Furthermore, no glaring preference for oral storytelling emerged when considering parent-child connectedness as illustrated by 43% of respondents noting they either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more connected to their child during story reading as compared 57% reporting they either disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed with that statement. Similar to the parent-child connectedness, perceived child enjoyment levels were not overwhelmingly favorable toward oral storytelling either as would have been assumed, with only 28% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing their children enjoyed them telling stories more than them reading books as compared to 72% who either disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed. This shows, again, that while both practices can be a time for caregivers to emotionally bond with and entertain their children, oral storytelling is not a clear preference for PBPN families.

Additionally, when surveyed as to whether or not it was okay for the child and parent to employ characteristics of dialogic reading during times of reading a physical book, 86% of

respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they point out letters and sounds during oral storytelling and 100% of respondents said behaviors such as their children asking questions or making comments during oral storytelling are appropriate. This suggests both families who read books together fairly frequently (daily or greater than once per week) and families who read books together somewhat infrequently (either once per week or less than once per week) robustly support the appropriateness and use of dialogic practices during their times of book reading with their children. More importantly, a vast majority (90%) of respondents suggested that the use of these same types of dialogic practices would be just as appropriate during times of oral storytelling as during shared book reading, suggesting that some components of dialogic reading are culturally acceptable practices for caregivers and their children to use during either activity.

The idea that both oral storytelling and shared book reading having appropriate places in a PBPN child's early literacy experiences was further reflected in the section that required respondents to select what they felt their child could be learning from either activity. In this, the data show 71% of respondents felt oral storytelling could teach their children about history of their ancestors and 76% felt oral storytelling could teach their children cultural values compared to 33% and 48% of respondents who said the shared book reading could teach the same skills, respectively. All respondents (100%) felt shared book reading could teach their children about letters and sounds as compared to 62% who marked oral storytelling as being able to teach letters and sounds. Families also appeared to feel book reading could introduce new vocabulary more than oral storytelling, as illustrated by 95% of respondents selecting this as a component taught through book reading and only 76% selecting this for oral storytelling. However, importantly, even for items where more PBPN families seemed to feel book reading could teach these skills, there were always at least some respondents who felt oral storytelling was a viable mechanism

for teachings these skills, as well. Last, as judged by an equal percentage of respondents selecting how to behave and how to tell a story for book reading and storytelling, it seems PBPB families feel both practices are well-equipped to help their children learn such concepts. Similarly, how to introduce unfamiliar items or events to their children had very similar percentages of respondents, with 76% reporting that book reading could teach this skill and 71% reporting oral storytelling could teach this skill. Collectively, this provides support to the idea that PBPB households view both book reading and oral storytelling as serving important roles in a PBPB child's learning.

Therefore, it seems oral storytelling does not necessarily have greater value or faculty in the PBPB's early literacy interactions with their children when compared to book reading. Instead, early literacy practices and beliefs of PBPB families seem to be closely in line with the Puerto Rican families sampled in Buly's (2005) study that seemed to blend both their traditional cultural teachings with the mainstream dialogic customs to create a hybrid approach that constitutes the best early literacy practice for their children.

Implications for Clinical Practice

It is in considering clinical implications that the answer of the second research question on how educators might use the surveyed information to guide their future practices is revealed. As the study supports the home experiential differences theories of NA overrepresentation in special education, the very knowledge of what home practices the Prairie Band Potawatomi children are experiencing certainly moves educators and other service providers closer to identifying if any potential school-home gap exists for these students.

Moreover, looking at responses to the survey question that asked respondents to reflect on why, where, and when they engage in traditional oral storytelling furthers the understanding of how educators might use the information gathered about home practices to directly inform their classroom instruction. Specifically, when thinking about why PBPN families engage in oral storytelling, the greatest percentage of respondents that elected to complete the question noted that oral storytelling provides them with a way to increase their child's understanding of specific concepts. Educators, then, may wish to consider oral stories as a way to help children learn new information such as how to follow classroom procedures as they are being introduced at the beginning of the year or even to help children grasp more complex academic concepts in core content areas. Additionally, responses to when and where oral storytelling occurs in PBPN families, the majority of those who elected to respond to the question showed oral stories as being able to occur anytime and in any location. This gives educators and service providers a better peace of mind that employing oral storytelling in the classroom and varying times of the day and year will still be familiar and appropriate for the children.

Responses also seem to support educator's continued use dialogic reading strategies such as pointing out letters and sounds or encouraging child comments and questions during both times of shared book reading and oral storytelling. Such adult-child interactions are more inherent to mainstream school systems and may allow educators to more comfortably incorporate oral storytelling into their existing curriculums. Furthermore, this suggests that Prairie Band Potawatomi children will likely be comfortable with these types of interactions in times of shared book reading and oral storytelling in the classroom setting.

Another key area educators or other service providers may wish to address is that only a small portion of respondents (that is, 33%) noted they felt books provided a way to teach their

children about the history of their ancestors and less than half of respondents (that is, 48%) noted they felt books provided a way to teach their children about their cultural values. These percentages are not unexpected but do represent the significant gap in the available culturally relevant literacy materials for PBPN children. In fact, there is only a scarce collection of children's books that tell accurate and appropriate cultural stories, even less that are written by NA authors from all tribes, and only a single known Potawatomi children's story published by a Prairie Band Potawatomi author. If educators are looking to help bridge even a minute school-home gap, as it seems to be the scenario for PBPN children, then a key component would be to make sure culturally relevant and tribe-specific stories are available in print form. For the PBPN, this might involve working closely with the Language and Culture Department to help locate and transcribe traditional stories or it might involve approaching select tribal elders to share their own stories that might be available to modify into printed children's materials, if these stories were allowed to be transcribed.

Even though the frequency of respondents that seemed to practice shared book reading, oral storytelling, and other the early literacy experiences sampled on a consistent basis was high, it is likely that some families still feel unsure of how to engage in early literacy experiences with their children, or even that what they are already doing is valuable and contributing to their children's literacy skills. For example, some parents may find dialogic reading components uncomfortable and be unclear on how to utilize them in times of shared book reading or oral storytelling. Others still, may not know how to select appropriate books for their children and thus, need additional information on how to approach this process. Even more, it is likely that some parents may be unaware of how what they do in their typical interactions with their children is still helping facilitate the children's early language and literacy skills. Thus, a key

clinical consideration and important next step in the process should include regular times for open dialogue to occur between the caregivers and the educators or service providers. Platforms like a family night at the Ben-no-tteh Wigwam could allow for this dialogue. From this then, educators can begin to further identify areas PBPN families might like additional information on and include such in parent training sessions, back-to-school nights, or with materials sent home.

Finally, just as important, is that educators recognize the education process is not a one-way street in which they have the final authority. That is, educators and service providers should not view the results of this survey as merely support to only employ mainstream practices like dialogic reading but instead, to help understand that families may have many practices that could be equally as supportive to their child's early literacy development. If there are practices in which families engage in frequently with their children that they believe help support the child's early development of language, literacy, and other academic skills, educators should strive to incorporate these into their school curriculums and teaching strategies, even if they are unorthodox to the mainstream public school systems or initially unfamiliar for the educator. This not only will help the caregivers feel like the educator is listening to them and valuing their opinions as individuals who are also invested in the child's academic success, but a fundamental necessity if educators are to help bridge the school-home cultural gap.

Limitations

The use of a survey to sample the single population of families whose children attend Ben-no-tteh Wigwam was particularly appealing in this research as it was of the utmost importance to the author to describe the literacy practices of the PBP people, and not compare them to another cultural group. Specifically, juxtaposing the results of this survey with those of

another early childcare center could have implied that one group's practices were more preferable than the other's. Moreover, as much of the current literature supports mainstream early literacy practices and egregiously omits the potential early literacy practices of differing cultural groups, it was a strong concern that the intentions of a comparison survey would be falsely interpreted as examining how the PBPN's practices compare to the perceived "gold-standard" of the mainstream in research literature. In order to avoid such inaccurate parallels, the study was kept strictly descriptive. In doing so, this also allowed the PBPN families to complete the survey without fear their responses would be viewed through a mainstream lens, which was believed to encourage more truly representative responses.

Thus, a seemingly clear limitation in the study is its very narrow use. However, as mentioned, too often the literature regarding NAs regards all NA tribes as representations of a singular entity rather than acknowledging that "Native American" is simply an umbrella term for a collective of distinct and highly diverse communities. Even though the present study certainly furthers the literature on NA practices and beliefs, the results are not intended to be extrapolated to represent the practices and beliefs of all tribes. As such, it is the ultimate intention of this study to provide specific information directly to current PBPN early childhood center staff and future educators for their work with the Prairie Band Potawatomi people.

An additional limitation is the small sample size utilized by the study. A starting sample of only 67 families limited the research in the amount of information it could acquire. Even with a decent response rate of 33% of surveys returned, the resulting sample size was necessarily still quite small. Such small sample sizes give greater effect to each participant's responses and yields less reliable results overall. To help alleviate this, the study could have also included families with young children who at least one family member meets the PBPN tribal blood quantum

requirement but do not send their child to Ben-no-tteh Wigwam. This would have reached a greater number of PBPN families and helped the study be more representative of the entire tribe.

Implications for Future Research

Future studies may wish to use the present study as a platform from which to explore the early home literacy experiences of children of other cultural groups and tribal affiliations. In fact, there is a strong potential for successful and culturally respectful comparisons, specifically between different tribes. For example, a look into the home literacy experiences neighboring tribes like PBPN and Kickapoo Nation, also in northeastern Kansas, might inform educators and service providers of the distinct traits they may wish to consider if working with children from both communities. Conversely, a comparison between tribes of highly variable regions or historical backgrounds could also provide useful insight such as a look into the practices PBPN, who was uprooted from their homelands and fragmented at the hands of non-NAs, could be juxtaposed with a tribe such as the Navajo who still remain fairly intact on their ancestral grounds. For instance, it is possible that those with stronger ties to their spiritual lands may be more inclined to maintain traditional practices such as oral storytelling—a hypothesis only further studies can investigate.

Other studies still may consider expanding upon the present work with the PBPN to go beyond parental report through surveyed questionnaires. For example, in knowing the primary caretakers of the PBPN do seem to accept components of dialogic reading, future researchers may wish to begin documenting and analyzing these specific practices via in-home observations. Such information could allow the research to check validity of the parts of dialogic reading the PBPN reported to value or practice regularly. Such research could also lead to investigations into

the effectiveness of dialogic reading training programs or the use of dialogic practices in the schools.

As the achievement data for NA students continues to show disparaging results, more investigation into additional ways for educators to bridge the school-home cultural gap should also be considered. Additionally, a paramount future step would further investigate the impact of early home literacy practices of PBPB primary caregivers on the success of PBPB children and adolescents as they progress through their schooling.

Conclusions

All educators should actively pursue ways to alleviate cultural barriers that may be hindering the achievement of their NA students in order to help stop their gross overrepresentation in special education programs, their low performance on grade-level tests, and their high drop out rates. In reality, this will only be accomplished once the school-home cultural gaps are addressed for specific tribes within the U.S. public school system. While that task seems daunting, educators should find locally represented tribes and attempt to make school a more familiar and welcoming place in which those students will succeed. For educators and service providers working with students from the PBPB in particular, it seems that employing tenets of multiple early literacy activities simultaneously may be a beneficial means to do this. From a clinical standpoint, this suggests that components of both dialogic book reading as well as oral storytelling should have a place in early literacy classroom instruction. Educators working with the PBPB should help facilitate the development of more culturally appropriate materials and be open to employing the practices of the PBPB families in their own classrooms. Only then

will they have helped transform school from an unfamiliar environment into one that provides authentic opportunities for Prairie Band Potawatomi children to succeed.

References

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (n.d.). *Bilingual Service Delivery* (Practice Portal). Retrieved from: http://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589935225§ion=Key_Issues
- August, D., Goldenberg, C., & Rueda, R. (2006). NA American children and youth: Culture, language, and literacy. *Journal of American Indian Educaiton*, 45(3), 24-37.
- Battle, D. (2012). NA American and Worldwide Indigenous Cultures. (4th ed.) *Communication disorders in multicultural and international populations* (pp. 76-96). Saint Louis, MO: Elsevier Mosby.
- Beck, I.L. & McKeown, M.G. (2001). Text talk: Capturing the benefits of read-aloud experiences for young children. *The Reading Teacher*, 55(1), 10-20.
- Boudreau, D. (2005). Use of a parent questionnaire in emergent and early literacy assessment of preschool children. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 36(1), 33-47.
- Buly, M.R. (2005). Leaving no American Indian/Alaskan NA behind: Identifying reading strengths and needs. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 44(1), 29-53.
- Collier, C. (2012). Special education for indigenous students. *NABE Perspectives*, 9-10.
- CHiXapkaid, Inglebret, E. & Krebill-Prather, R. (2011). Views and perspectives of Native educational success: A national survey of American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and others associated with Indian education. Washington D.C.: National Indian Education Association.
- Duursma, E., Augustyn, M., & Zuckerman. B. (2008). Reading aloud to children: The evidence. *BMJ Archives of Disease in Children*, 93, 554-557.

Executive Office of the President (2014). *Native Youth Report*. Washington DC: U.S. White House.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2th ed). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gambrell, L. & Morrow, L.M. (2015). *Best practices in literacy instruction* (5th ed). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Hammer, C., Miccio, A., Wagstaff, D. (2002). Home literacy experiences and their relationship to bilingual preschoolers' developing English literacy abilities: An initial investigation. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 34*, 20-30.

Hammer, C., Rodriguez, B., Lawrence, F., Miccio, A. (2007). Puerto Rican mothers' beliefs and home literacy practices. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 38*(3), 216-224.

Harris, J. L., Kamhi, A. G., & Pollock, K. E. (2000). *Literacy in African American Communities*. Mahwah, N.J.: Routledge.

Hwa-Froelich, D.A. & Vigil D.C. (2004). Three aspects of cultural influence on communication: A literature review. *Communication Disorders Quarterly, 25*(3), 107-118.

Inglebret, E., Jones, C., & Pavel, D.M. (2008). Integrating American Indian/Alaska NA culture into shared storybook intervention. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 39*, 521-527.

- Justice, L. M. & Ezell, H.K. (2002). Use of storybook reading to increase print awareness in at-risk children. *American Journal of Speech Language Pathology*, 11, 17-29.
- Lee, E. & Kinkead, A. (2015). *Literacy survey*. (Unpublished undergraduate research). University of Kansas: Lawrence, KS.
- Loeb, D. F. & Redbird, K. (2008). Fostering the literacy of indigenous elementary school-aged children. *SIG 14 Perspectives on Communication Disorders and Sciences in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations*, 5-11.
- Loeb, D. F., Redbird, K., & McConnell, G. E. (2011). A language and literacy program for Indigenous kindergarteners: Preliminary findings. *SIG 14 Perspectives on / Communication Disorders and Sciences in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations*, 18(2), 42-47.
- Lonigan, C. J., Burgess, S. R., & Anthony, J. L. (2000). Development of emergent literacy and early reading skills in preschool children: evidence from a latent-variable longitudinal study. *Developmental psychology*, 36(5), 596.
- McMurray, J. R. (2012). *Relation between family literacy practices and children's literacy development: Exploring the link between home and school*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Minnesota: Minneapolis, MN.
- National Caucus of Native American State Legislators. (2008). *Striving to achieve: Helping Native American students succeed*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.ncsl.org/print/statetribe/strivingtoachieve.pdf>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *The national household education survey*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2005). *Status and trends in the education of American Indians and Alaska NAs*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Piasta, S. B., Justice, L. M., McGinty, A. S., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2012). Increasing Young Children's Contact With Print During Shared Reading: Longitudinal Effects on Literacy Achievement. *Child Development*, 83(3), 810-820.

Pewewardy, C. & Fitzpatrick, M. (2009). Working with American Indian students and families: Disabilities, Issues, and Interventions. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 45(2), 91-98.

Roberts, J., Jergens, J., & Burchinal, M. (2005). The role of home literacy practices in preschool children's language and emergent literacy skills. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 48(2), 345-359. doi: 10.1044/1092-4388(2005/024).

Robinson-Zanartu, C. (1996). Serving NA American children and families: Considering cultural variables. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in the Schools*, 27, 373-384.

Rouse, H.L. & Fantuzzo, J.W. (2008). Multiple risks and educational well being: A population-based investigation of threats to early school success. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 24, 1-14.

- Scarborough, H. S., Neuman, S., & Dickinson, D. (2009). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. *Approaching difficulties in literacy development: Assessment, pedagogy, and programmes*, 23-39.
- Scarborough, H. S., Dobrich, W., & Hager, M. (1991). Preschool literacy experience and later reading achievement. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 24(8), 508-511.
- Sharifan, F., Rochecouste, J., & Malcom, I.G. (2004). 'But it was all a bit confusing...': Comprehending Aboriginal English texts. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, 17, 203-226.
- Spear-Swerling, L. & Sterberg, R.J. (1996). *Off track: When poor readers become "learning disabled."* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Stanovich, K.E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 86, 360-406.
- Trujillo, O. V., & Alston, D. A. (2005). *A report on the status of American Indians and Alaska Natives in education: Historical legacy to cultural empowerment*. NEA, National Education Association.
- Van Kleeck, A., Stahl, S., & Bauer, E. (Eds.). (2008). *On reading books to children: Parents and Teachers*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Wang, X., Bernas, R. & Eberhard, P. (2002). Variations of maternal support to children's early literacy development in Chinese and American Indian families: Implications for early childhood educators. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 34, 9-23.

Webster, J. P. & Yanez, E. (2007). One must arrive with a story to tell: Traditional Alaska NA Yup'ik Eskimo stories in a culturally based math curriculum. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 46(3), 116-127.

White-Kaulaity, M. (2007). Reflections on NA American reading: A seed, a tool, and a weapon. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 50(7), 560-569.

APPENDIX A

Early Literacy Practices Survey

*When completing this survey, please consider the children that attend PBPN Early Childhood Center.
Please circle only one item per question.*

In the last month, approximately how often have you:

1. Read books with your child(ren)?

Daily More than once a week Once a week Less than once a week Never

2. Told stories to your child(ren) (without a book)?

Daily More than once a week Once a week Less than once a week Never

3. Sang songs or said rhymes with your child(ren)?

Daily More than once a week Once a week Less than once a week Never

4. Worked on arts and crafts with your child(ren)?

Daily More than once a week Once a week Less than once a week Never

5. Played make-believe games or engaged in pretend play with your child(ren)?

Daily More than once a week Once a week Less than once a week Never

6. Used print around your child(ren) (examples: read a recipe, wrote a list, read a magazine)?

Daily More than once a week Once a week Less than once a week Never

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

7. **Telling stories** to my child(ren) is more culturally appropriate than **reading a book** to them.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree or Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

8. I feel more connected to my child when I **tell them a story** than when I **read them a book**.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree or Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

9. I think my child(ren) enjoys me **telling a story** more than me **reading a book** to them.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree or Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

10. When my child(ren) are listening to me **tell a story**, they are developing reading skills.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree or Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
11. I point out letters, sounds, or new words when **reading a book** to my child.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree or Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
12. It is appropriate for my child to ask me questions about the **book** while I am reading to them.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree or Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
13. It is appropriate for my child to make comments about the **book** while I am reading to them.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree or Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
14. For the above statements (11-13), would your answers change if you were **telling a story** versus **reading a book**.

Yes No
If yes, please explain how and/or why in the space below:

15. When I **read a book** to my child, I think they are learning about (circle all that apply):

Cultural values Letters/sounds How to behave History of our ancestors
New words How to tell stories Unfamiliar items/events Other

16. When I **tell a story** to my child, I think they are learning about (circle all that apply):

Cultural values Letters/sounds How to behave History of our ancestors
New words How to tell stories Unfamiliar items/events Other

17. As much as you feel comfortable, please describe why, when, and where you engage in story telling (without a book):

Why?

When?

Where?

Appendix B

Dear Families,

I am a speech-language-pathology graduate student at the University of Kansas and one of the Culturally Responsive Early Literacy Instruction (CRELI) scholars that partners with Benno-tteh Wigwam. I have been honored to be part of the afternoon childcare program here for the past year and a half and have greatly enjoyed getting to know your children. A main part of my work at the center involves helping teach your children different skills they will need to be successful readers in a way that is appropriate with your tribe's cultural values and traditions. Currently, there is a lot of information about different cultural groups that can be used to bring appropriate services to those communities. However, since starting my work with CRELI, I have found that very little information of this kind is available about the Prairie Band Potawatomi people specifically.

As such, I hope to get information from you as the family members and primary caretakers of the children who come to school here each day. To do this, I am inviting you to participate in a short survey. There are many different things parents do to help foster their child's reading skills, some of which you might do without realizing they are helpful to your child's learning. All possibilities are equally valued and no practice is necessarily better or more beneficial for you child than another. I am simply hoping to document your current use and opinions of these different early literacy interactions.

You may complete the attached survey in written form and return it to the center or you may call XXX-XXX-XXXX to complete the survey over the phone with either XXXX or XXXX. You do not need to put your name on the survey nor give your name for the phone call. It is my hope that the information you help provide would be used by educators to help better bridge the gap between home and school experiences for Prairie Band Potawatomi children.

Thank you for helping me collect this valuable information.

Sincerely,

Kelley Nelson-Strouts

Graduate Student