



COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

A Pilot of a Behavioral Assessment Scale in Early Learning Literacy in Youth in United Way Suncoast ReadingPals Program

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Acknowledgements

- Project, presentation and learning experience made possible through a collaboration between the University of South Florida Institute for Translational Research in Adolescent Behavioral Health and United Way Suncoast ReadingPals Program.

Stakeholders

- University of South Florida
 - Melody Chavez, Principal Investigator, USF Scholar
 - Dr. Oliver Massey, PhD, University of South Florida
 - Dr. Bruce Levin, DrPH, University of South Florida
- Community Agency
 - United Way Suncoast ReadingPals Program
- Community Agency Staff
 - Dr. Ellen Zinzeleta, Director of Research and Evaluation
 - Nicole Brown, Program Manager ReadingPals
- Study Location
 - Boys and Girls Clubs in the Greater Tampa Bay area

Objectives

1. Describe the importance of early learning literacy
2. Discuss United Way Suncoast ReadingPals Program
3. Discuss purpose and methodology of an observational study
4. Summarize findings of qualitative research
5. Recommendations for program improvement
6. Investigate implications for adolescent behavioral health



Children from families that value literacy have had an estimate of **6000 books** read to them prior to school beginning.

Children from lower SES and don't view literacy as important may have **NEVER had a book** read to them prior to school.

Background and Significance

- Literacy begins long before a child enters kindergarten
 - Phonological awareness, letter knowledge, print awareness and oral language
 - Book handling skills
- Impacts of deficits of reading skills
 - Two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade end up in jail or welfare
 - Over 70% of America's inmates cannot read above a 4th grade level
 - Students who don't read proficiently by the 3rd grade are 4 times likely to drop out of school
- Risk factors
 - Low birth rate, nutrition, housing quality, access to health care
- Financial burden
 - Additional school resources

Background and Significance

- *A Nation at Risk* focused on adult volunteers
 - The No Child Left Behind Act
 - Implemented with no solid evidence
 - Objective measurements lacking
- Mentoring Programs
 - Assumed beneficial even if not meeting program goals
 - Difficult to show objective measurements in growth or change in children
 - Positive behaviors evaluated
 - Tools to assess such behaviors
 - Observations, likert scales, interviews

United Ways Suncoast: ReadingPals Program

- Academic mentoring focused on K-3rd grade
 - Funded through a 1 million dollar grant
 - 15 community partners received \$42,500
 - Boys and Girls Club primary site
- Identification of children at risk
 - Schools with the highest percentage of reduced or free lunches
 - Lowest academic performance
 - Children of migrant workers
 - Lack of book handling skills



ReadingPals Program continued...

- Community mentors
 - Background screening
 - Attend 3 hour training at the beginning of school year
 - Matched with children for once week for 60 minutes
- Mentor curriculum
 - Specification of donor
 - Structured curriculum
 - 20 minutes mentor reading to child
 - 20 minutes mentor listens to child read
 - 20 minutes to play activity
- 2013-2014 school year
 - 240 children and 150 volunteers

Study Design and Objectives

- Study Summary:
 - United Way's ReadingPals Program is an academic mentoring program for high-risk students
 - No evaluation to assess changes in the child's interest in literacy
- Study Design:
 - A pilot evaluation that is a descriptive study of the behavior and interactions of mentors and children in a reading program.

Research Questions

- Primary Objective
 - Is a pilot evaluation through a mentor questionnaire and an observation study validate positive behaviors around reading such as enthusiasm in children participating in ReadingPals?
- Secondary Objective
 - What are the core characteristics of an observational study needed to assist children to develop literacy skills?

Qualitative Research

- Observational Studies
 - A systematic data collection approach to use all senses to examine people in naturally occurring situations
 - Lower cost, greater timeliness

Why observation method?

- May be used in conjunction with other quantitative data collection techniques
- Assist researchers evaluating the fidelity of an intervention across settings

Non-Participant Observation

- Limited interaction with the people observes
 - Examine details of how individuals behave together
- Observational tools
 - Field notes
 - Observational coding sheets
 - Theories and concepts can be driven by templates and result in focused data collection
- Benefits
 - Foster in-depth understanding of situation and behaviors of the participants
 - Provide foundation for theory and hypothesis development
 - Key to assisting program move toward an evidence based program.

Methodology

- Utilization of observation method
 - Difficulty in interviewing children
 - Provide insight into mentor/child interaction related to positive reading behaviors
- Informed Consent Documentation
 - **Informed consent:** Parents of children in ReadingPals enrolled to observe
 - **Verbal Informed Consent:** Parents pre-survey to be used as secondary data analysis
 - **Waiver of Signed Assent:** ReadingPal mentors

Methodology continued...

- Proposed pilot measures of population groups
 - Mentor/Mentee Observation
 - Mentor Questionnaire
 - Parent Pre-survey
 - Secondary data analysis
- Positive behaviors and interaction focus
 - Attentive
 - Engaged
 - Excitement
 - Confident
 - Curiosity
 - Reward driven

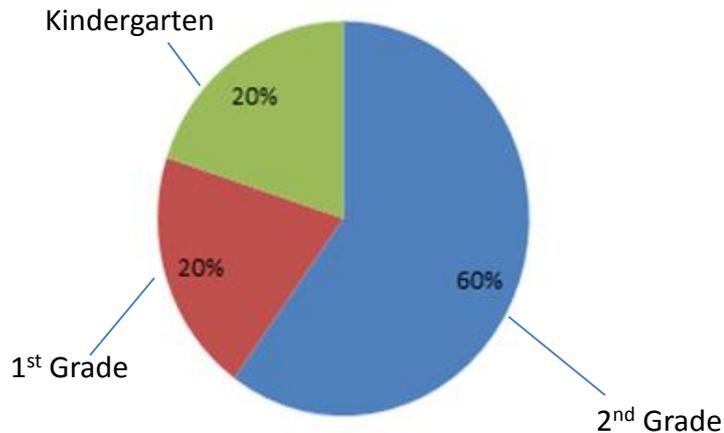
Data Analysis

- Pilot Study
 - Small sample size
- Population descriptions
- Analysis of data
 - Correlation coefficient
 - Limited sample for significance
- Observation analysis
 - Themes

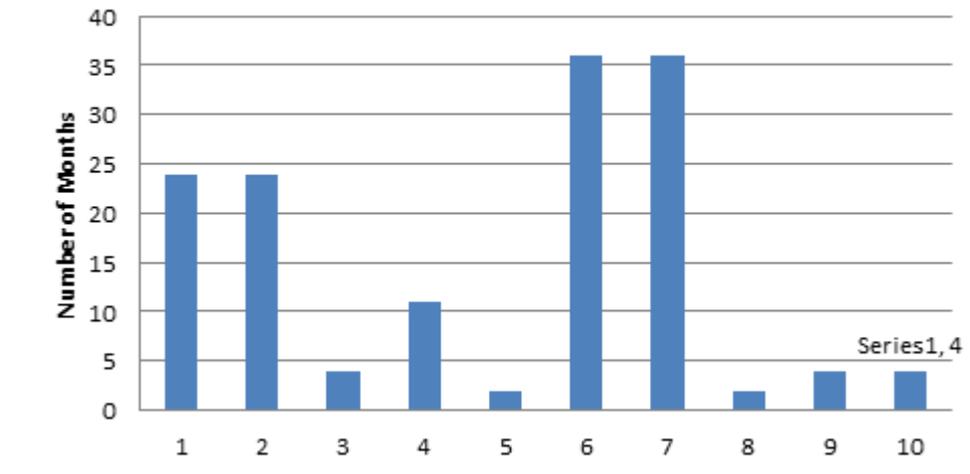
Results

- Population description

Percentage of Students K-3rd



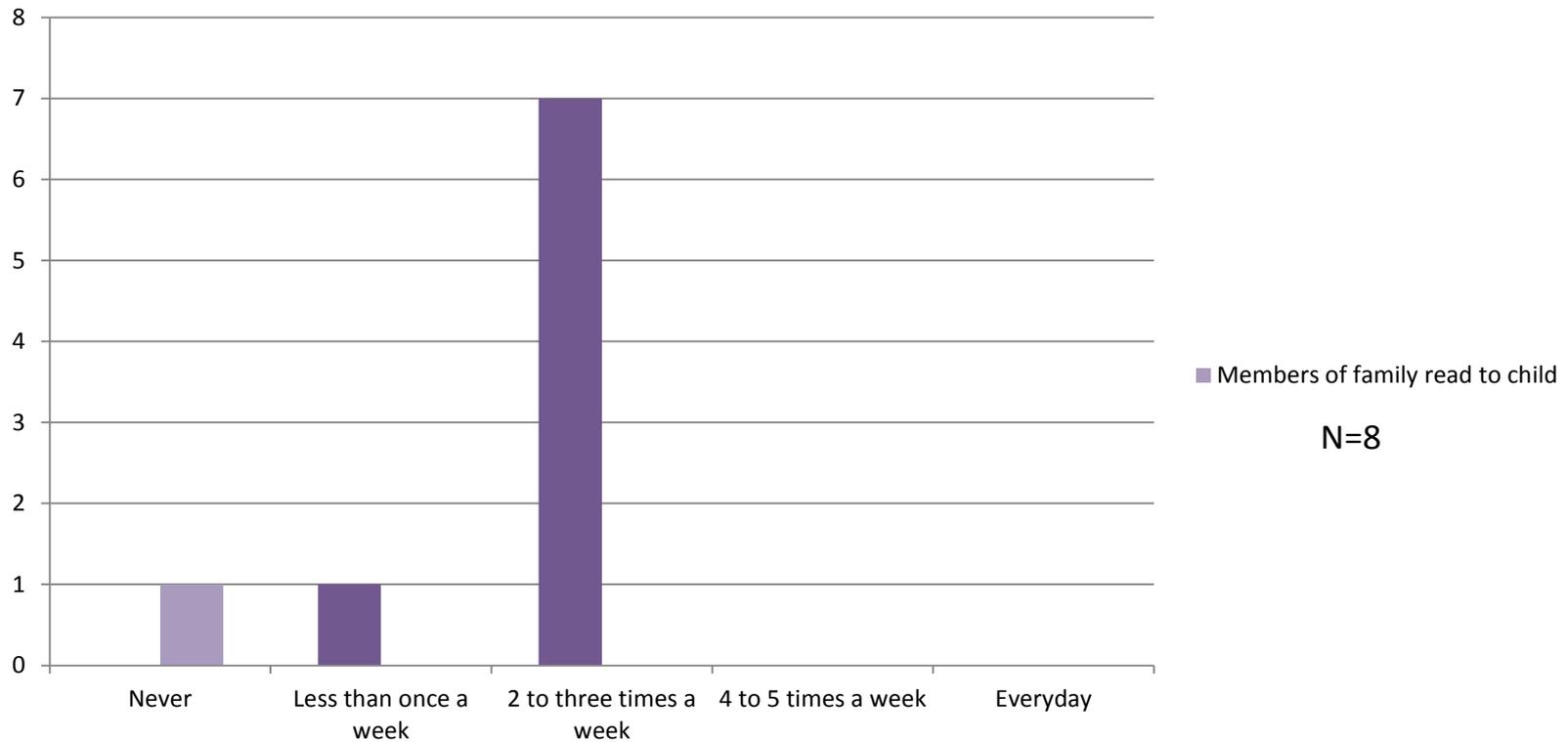
ReadingPal Mentoring Time



Results

- Population description

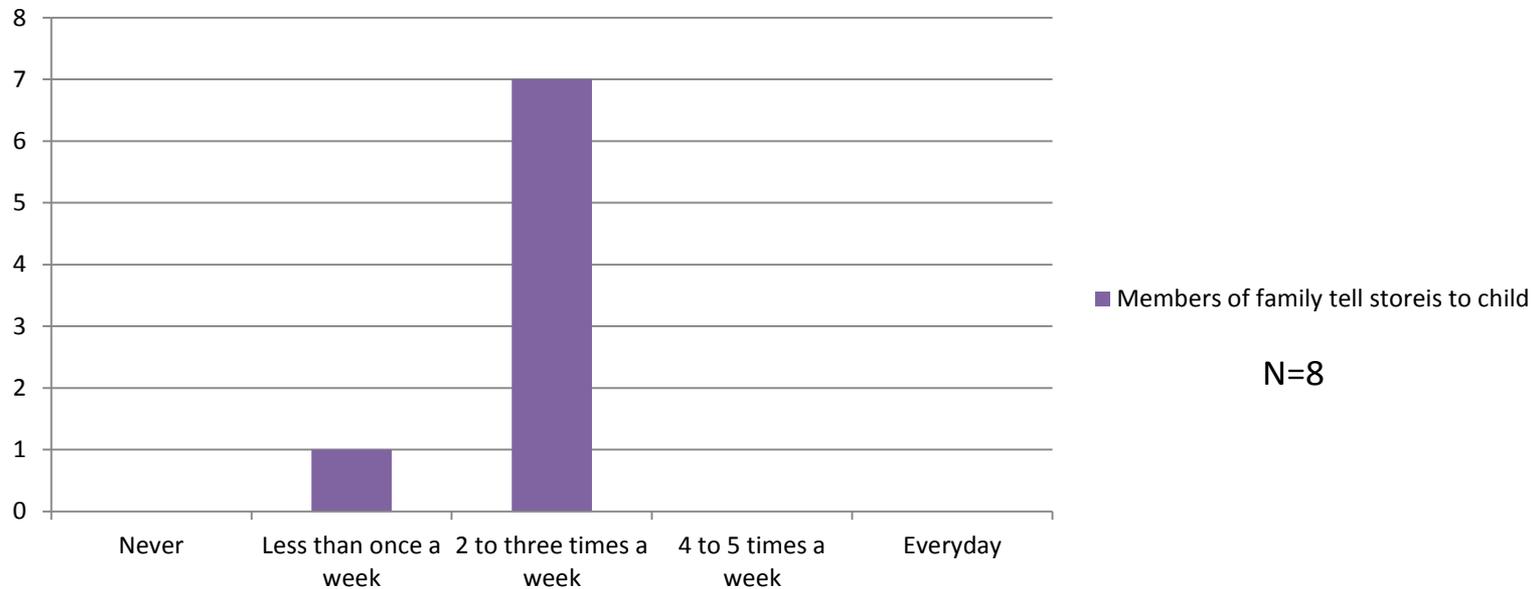
How Often Do Members of the Family Read to the Child?



Results

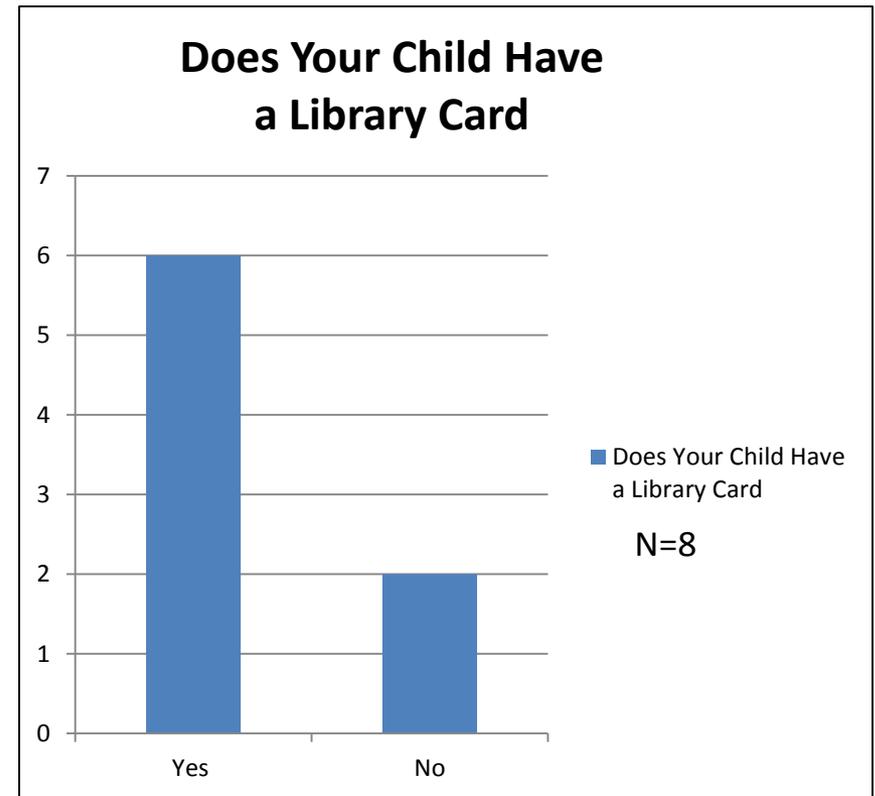
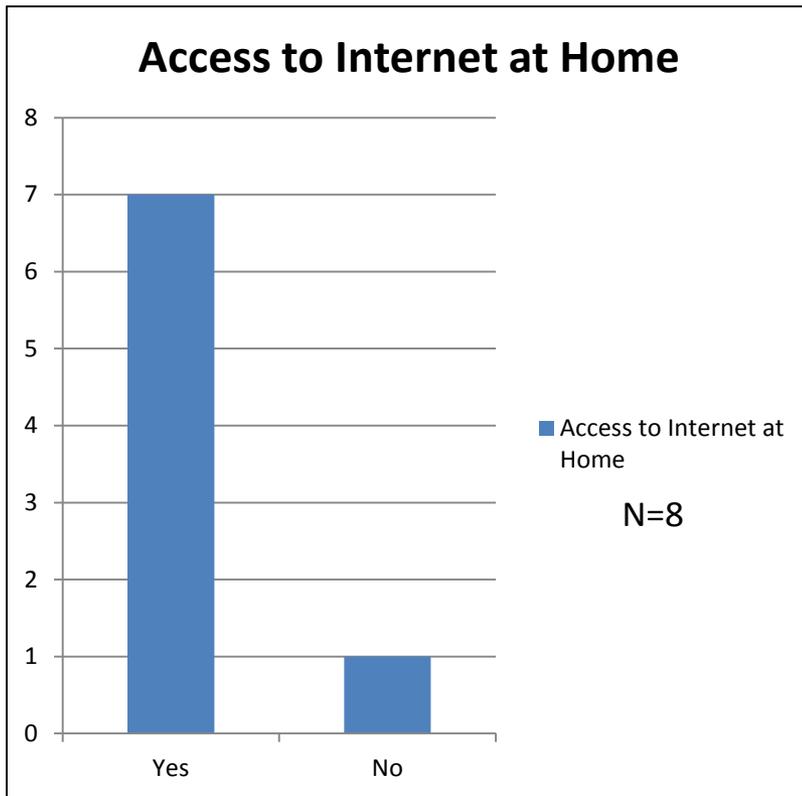
- Population description

How often do you or another member of the family tell stories to your child?



Results

- Population description

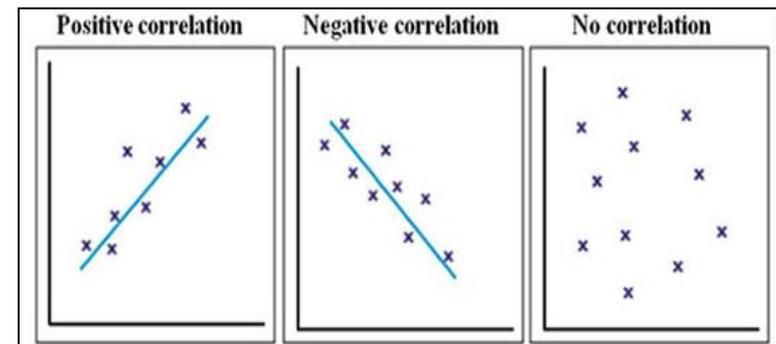
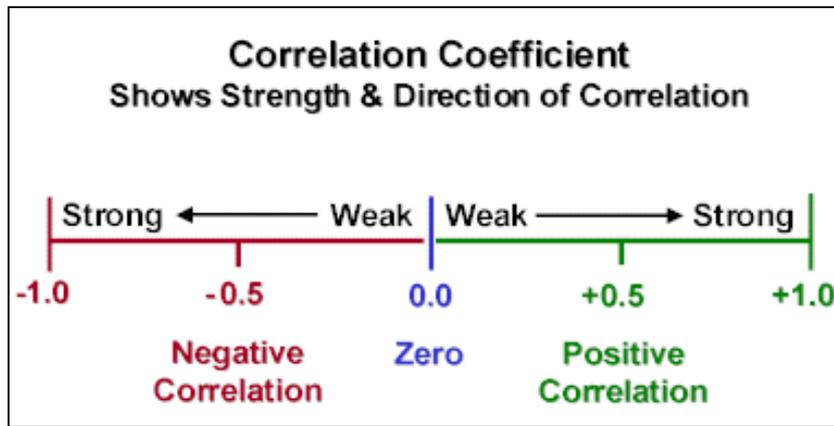


Analysis of Observation/Questionnaire

1. Child expressed excitement with mentor.
2. Child attentive and engaged when reading with ReadingPal.
3. Child expressed or talked about reading books in a positive manner.
4. Child expresses excitement with books from ReadingPals.
5. Child shows excitement when able to solve words independently.
6. Child shows an expressive expression when reading out loud.
7. Child seemed confident that s/he had the ability to read a book or a passage in the book.
8. Child demonstrated curiosity while reading.
9. Child requested rewards and/or praise for reading.
10. Child demonstrated more motivation and confidence in reading since starting mentoring in the program.

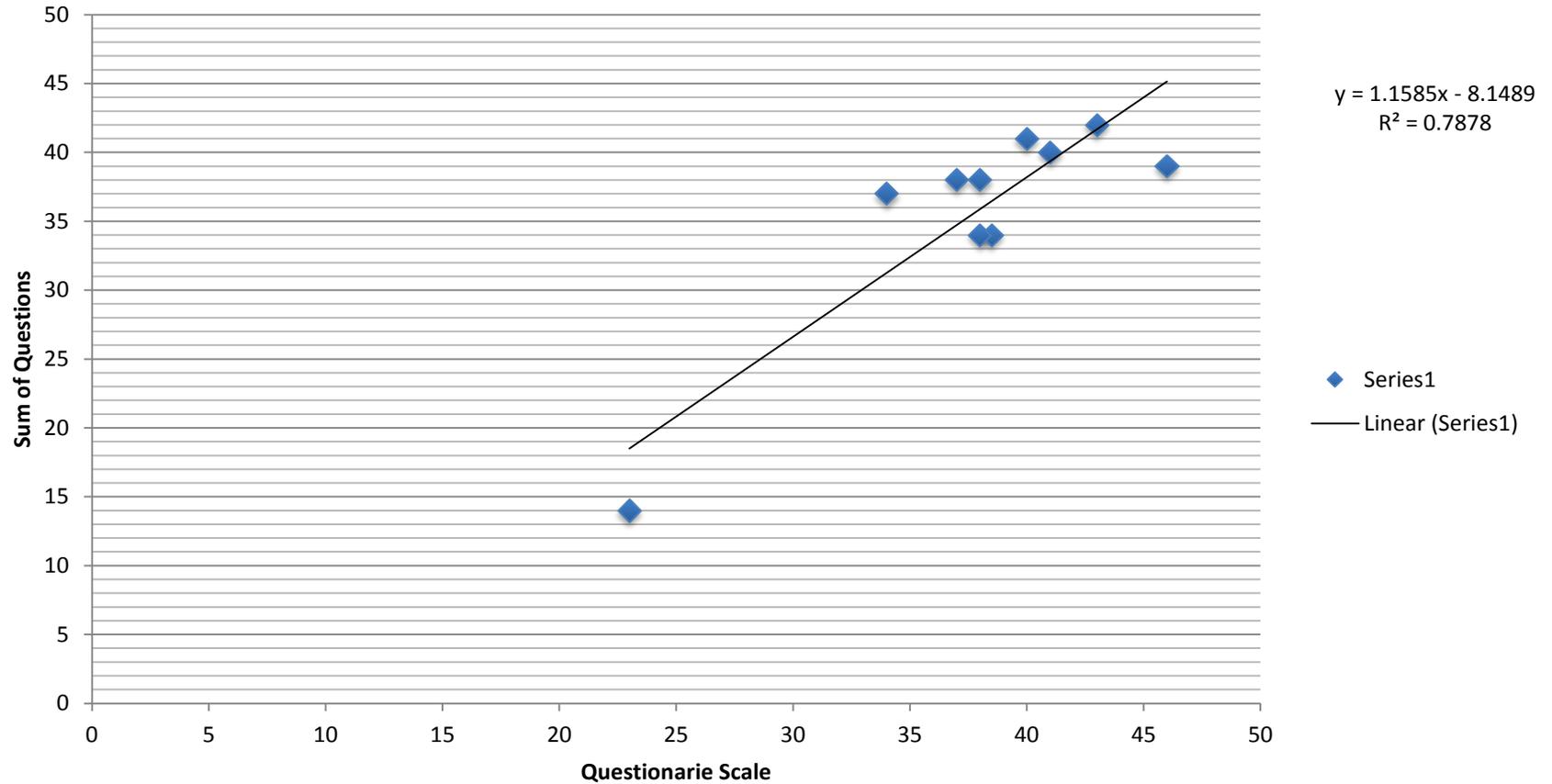
Correlation Coefficient

- Quantitative measure of some type of correlation and dependence
 - Statistical relationship between two or more random variables or observed data values



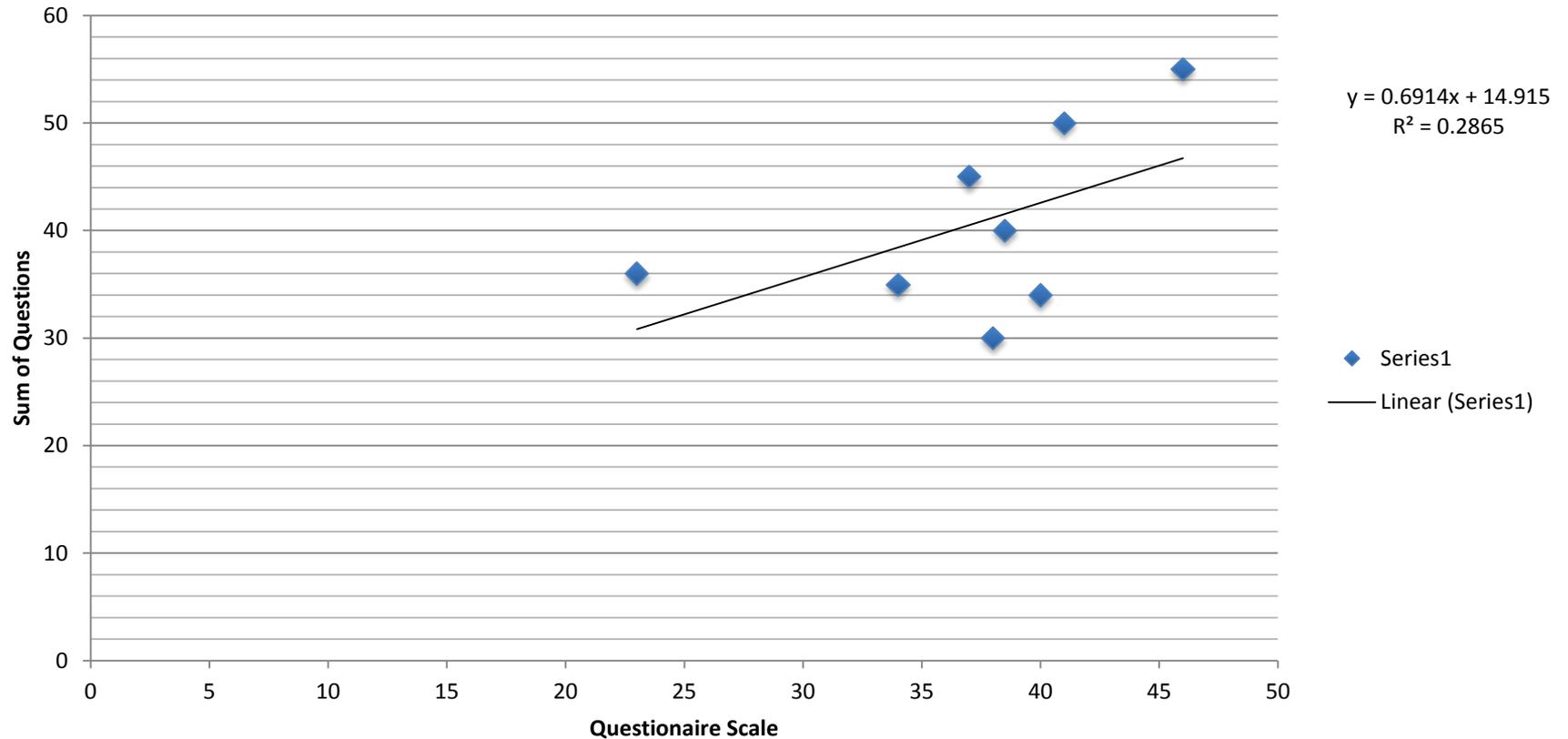
Results

Mentor versus Observer Correlation



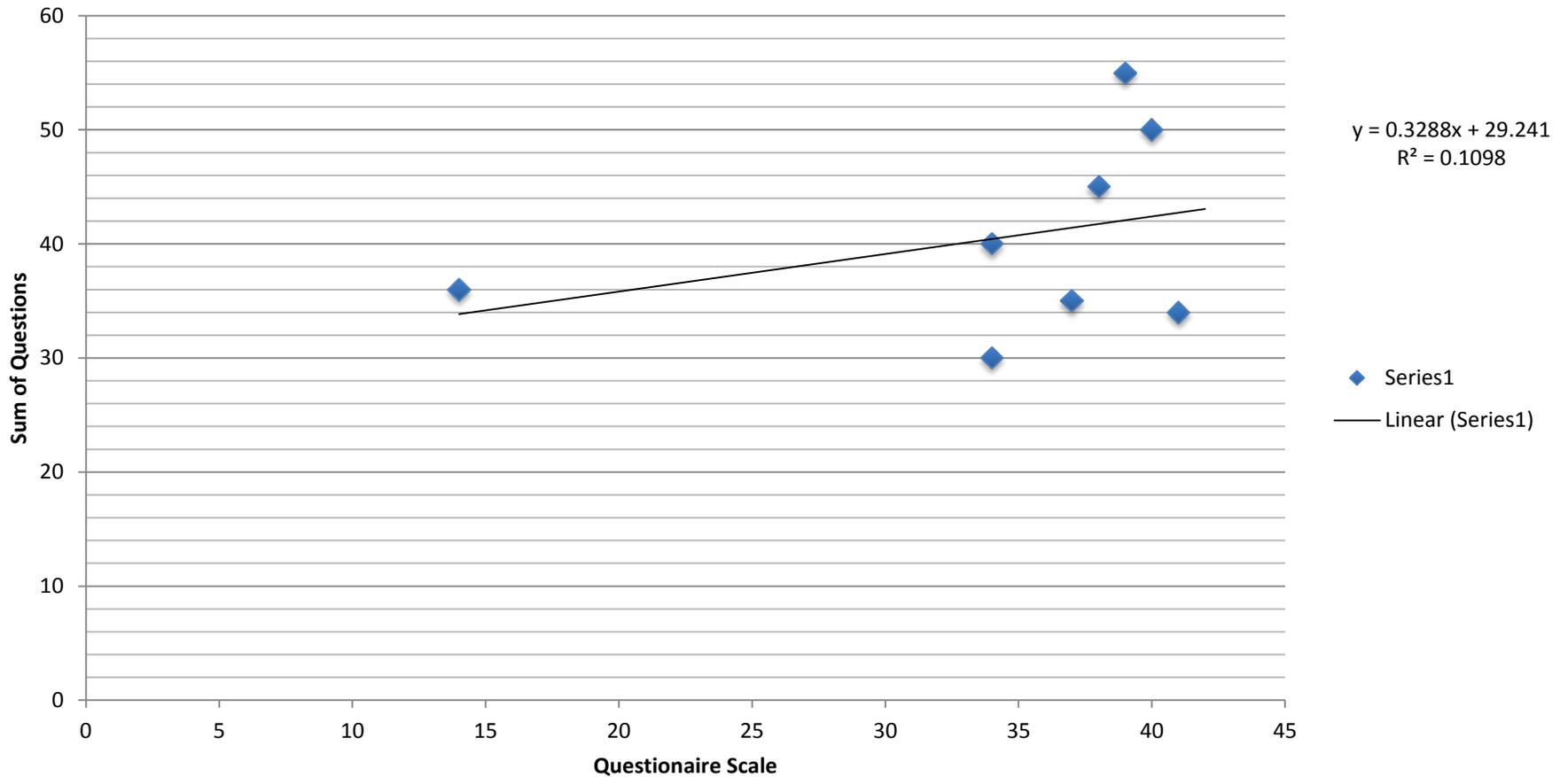
Results

Mentor versus Parent Correlation



Results

Observer versus Parent Correlation



Analysis of Observational Themes

EXCITEMENT

Child expresses excitement with mentor

Child is attentive and engaged when reading with ReadingPals

Child expresses excitement with books from ReadingPals

Analysis of Observational Themes

ENGAGEMENT

Child is attentive and engaged when reading with ReadingPal

Child expressed or talked about reading books in a positive manner

Child shows an expressive expression when reading out loud

Child demonstrates curiosity while reading

Child requests rewards and/or praise for reading

Analysis of Observational Themes

SKILL DEVELOPMENT	DESIRED OUTCOME
Child shows excitement when able to solve words independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alphabet letter knowledge/letter recognition• Phonological awareness• Concepts about print and books• Oral comprehension and vocabulary
Child seemed confident that s/he had the ability to read a book or a passage in the book	
Child demonstrated more motivation and confidence in reading since starting mentoring in the program	

Core Concepts of Early Learning Elements

- Core concepts for mentor programs
 - Excitement
 - Engagement
 - Markers of Skill Development
 - Foundation of literacy development skills
 - Alphabet letter knowledge/letter recognition
 - Phonological (including phonemic) awareness
 - Letter-sound correspondence (phonics)
 - Concepts about print and books
 - Oral comprehension and vocabulary (listening and speaking, receptive and expressive language)
 - Consistency
 - Reciprocal connection

Recommendations for Program Improvement

- Fidelity of program
 - Challenges of fidelity of program
 - Structured curriculum
 - Structured environment
 - Mentor training
- Outcomes
 - Mentor questionnaire data
 - Observations
 - Other assessment tools
- Feedback to mentors

Implications for Adolescent Behavioral Health

- Understand type of program being designed and implemented for literacy
 - Mentor skills should focus on excitement and engagement with continues feedback
- Monitor effectiveness of program through qualitative and quantitative data
 - Mentor questionnaire and observations aligned
- Observational studies require combination of skills from public health providers

Conclusion

- Observational studies often under utilized tool
 - Allow researchers/public health providers to be immersed in the setting
 - Observational questionnaire corresponded with observations
 - Parent survey did not possibly due to different environment
 - Strongest to use for children
- Great Experience!!

