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Increasing Family and Caregiver Engagement in Benton Harbor Area Schools

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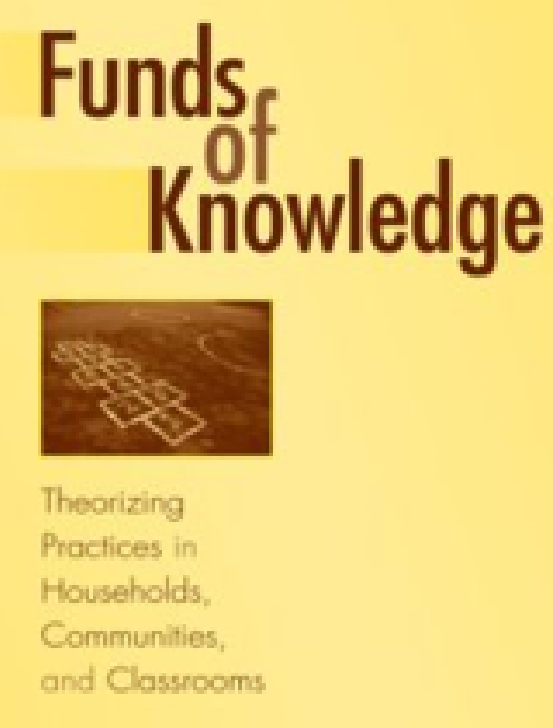*Michigan State University*, edwards6@msu.edu

Increasing Family and Caregiver Engagement in Benton Harbor Area Schools
ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 2018-2019

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In collaboration with Patricia A. Edwards, Ph.D., Distinguished Teacher Educator, Michigan State University

Family & Community Engagement Framework

Funds of Knowledge

Theorizing Practices in Households, Communities, and Classrooms

Research & Theory

- Children have an abundance of knowledge and experience from families and community.
- Students bring knowledge and experience that can be used to strengthen learning.
- Classroom practices often underestimate what children know and can do.
- Instruction should focus on meaning rather than skills and facts.
- Dialogue around diversity and inclusion should promote trust and build relationships.

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. & Amanti, C. (2005). Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities and practices, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
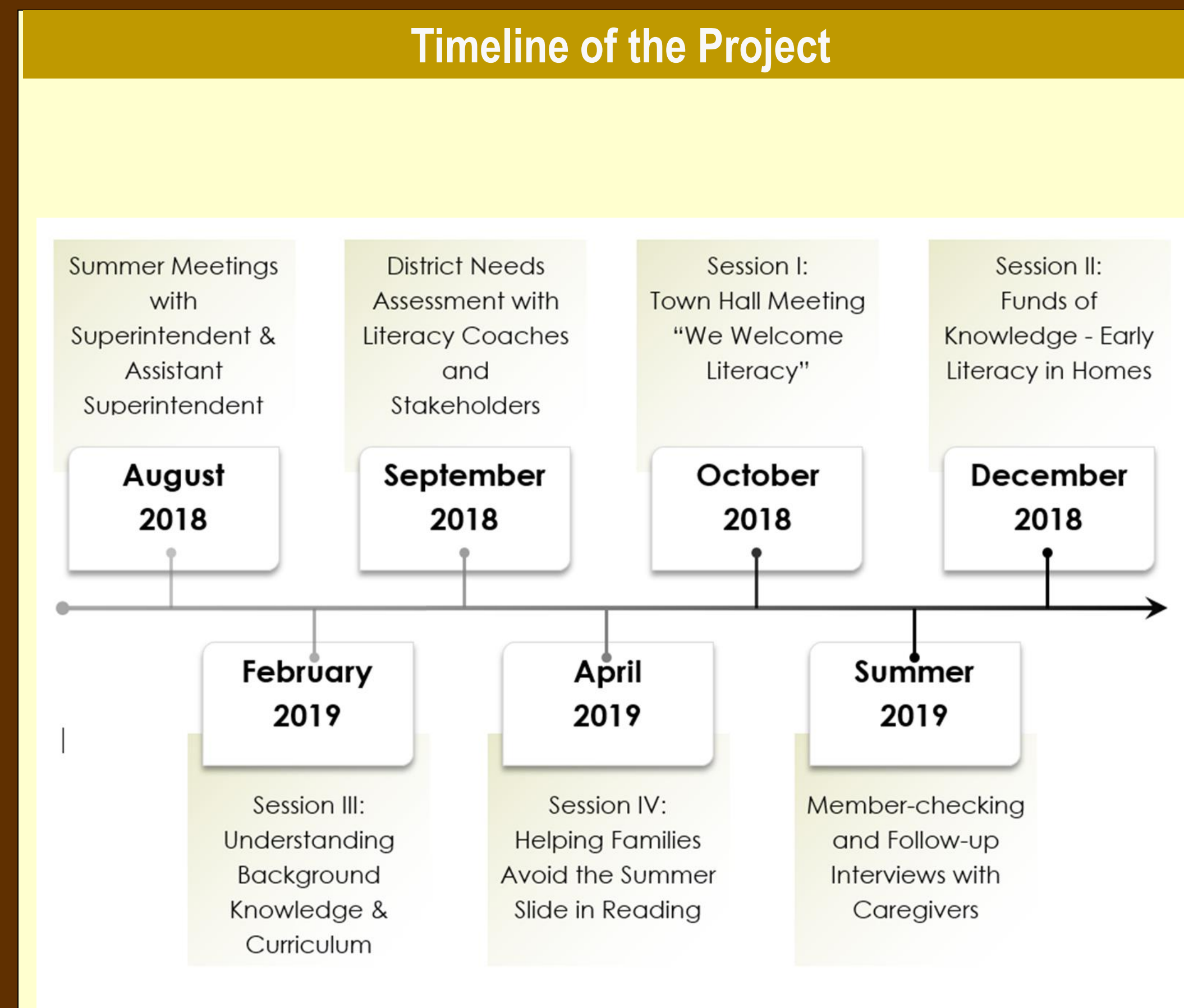
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Science	Literacy
Crop planning, animal care, hunting, gardening, soil and irrigation, mechanical repairs, cooking, etc.	Family stories, histories, letters, religious/spiritual studies, music, family recipes, travel, etc.
Social Studies/History	**Math**
Local/community maps, building codes, immigration/migration routes and stories, culture, traditions, etc.	Renting, selling, income, spending, shopping, budgeting, building, measurement, cooking, etc.
Arts	**Physical Ed/Health**
Music, woodworking, textile design, masonry, carpentry, painting, etc.	First aid procedures, exercise, games, childcare, herbal medicine, foods, etc.

Spreading the Word

Assistant Superintendent Robinson's interview with BHAS Alumnus Sinbad

Successful Outreach Strategies

- Announce activities/events at places of worship
- Send home notices to invite families/caregivers
- Translate information and personalize invitations
- Conduct home visits to achieve two-way communication with families/caregivers
- Create inclusive environments that are welcoming
- Generate conversation around child/student success to build trust
- Appreciate every caregiver's funds of knowledge

Timeline of the Project

- Summer Meetings with Superintendent & Assistant Superintendent — **August 2018**
- District Needs Assessment with Literacy Coaches and Stakeholders — **September 2018**
- Session I: Town Hall Meeting "We Welcome Literacy" — **October 2018**
- Session II: Funds of Knowledge - Early Literacy in Homes — **December 2018**
- **February 2019** — Session III: Understanding Background Knowledge & Curriculum
- **April 2019** — Session IV: Helping Families Avoid the Summer Slide in Reading
- **Summer 2019** — Member-checking and Follow-up Interviews with Caregivers

Session One

Town Hall Meeting "We Welcome Literacy"

OBJECTIVES

- Invite families, caregivers and community members to partner with educators and school leaders
- Design new partnerships with community organizations and local stakeholders to support early literacy
- Listen to caregivers' and community members' ideas related to K-3 early literacy success
- Share information about school curriculum and literacy practices with families and caregivers
- Engage in dialogue around family and community needs related to student success

Session Two

Early Learning Influences Long Term Success

Quality Early Learning REDUCES Crime Rates Teenage Pregnancy Welfare Dependency Job Training Costs Special Education Costs Grade Repetition

Quality Early Learning INCREASES Success in School Graduation Rates Workforce Readiness Job Productivity Community Engagement

Strategies

Many parents help their children learn to read, which helps children have a more Successful school experience. Resources shared in this session were provided by Michigan Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education.

Session Three

Understanding the Importance of Background Knowledge with the Question-Answer-Response Strategy (QAR)

What kind of question is it?

Find the answer RIGHT THERE in the text.
Answer is RIGHT THERE! How many...? Who is...? Where are the...?
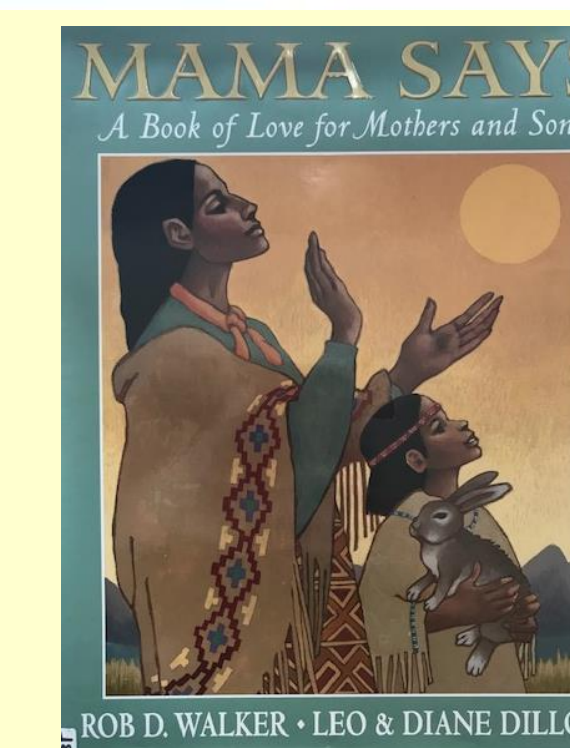
THINK AND SEARCH for the answer.
The answer is in the text! You need to look around to find the answer.

AUTHOR AND ME – Figure out the answer with text clues.
Use your background knowledge and text clues to get the answer – it's called "making an inference." Background Knowledge + Text Clues = Inference

ON MY OWN – the answer is not in the text!
Use only your background knowledge to form an opinion or make connections.

MAMA SAYS
A Book of Love for Mothers and Sons
ROB D. WALKER • LEO & DIANE DILLON

Session Four

100% of students experience summer learning loss if they don't engage in literacy activities over summer.

Avoid the SUMMER Slide

25% of academic learning is lost by children during summer vacation.

4 – 6 weeks is the time it takes teachers to re-teach material that students have forgotten over the summer.

2.6 Months is the average learning loss per student in match and 2 months is the average in spelling.

Outcomes of the Project

- Families/caregivers that attended sessions learned that their contributions are valued and are a critical part of the school community.
- Families/caregivers understand that "it takes a village" to support positive learning outcomes of all BHAS children, not just their own.
- Families/caregivers celebrated their own and others' funds of knowledge and participated in a community of learners across the four sessions.
- Books, games and resources were gifted by foundations and BHAS to families for at-home literacy engagement.
- Educators and families/caregivers developed increased trust and communication practices.
- Educators learned from families/caregivers and increased their awareness around funds of knowledge and the unique needs of their students.

Key Academic Leadership Principles Employed

- Proactively engage with community/ stakeholders to learn about authentic needs
- Value the insider views and experiences – customize work for each unique challenge
- Understand that diversity is a strength to build on for academic success
- Celebrate the success of individuals and the community – do not dwell on challenges
- Connect people and resources to advocate for community and families

Contact information

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