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A Family-School Literacy Program for Kindergarten Through Second Grade

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by

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Abstract

Title: <u>A Family-School Literacy Program for Kindergarten through Second Grade</u>

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This paper discusses the role of families both at school and in the home in the literacy development of their children and proposes a family-school literacy program for a small, progressive, urban school that uses a balanced literacy curriculum. The program was developed in response to conflict at the school surrounding literacy instruction and as an attempt to draw families into the school environment as participants in their children's literacy development. The paper begins with a review of literature on literacy, diversity and education, and family-school involvement. The literature review is followed by descriptions and analyses of interviews with staff members at the school, and family surveys, about literacy instruction and family-school involvement. The paper concludes with a plan for the family-school literacy program. The program is designed for implementation with Kindergarten through second grade families over the course of one academic year and includes descriptions of both in school and after school literacy events and accompanying materials.

Table of Contents

Rationale

Families want their children to achieve academic success. Teachers want their students to achieve academic success. Though they share this common goal, families and teachers, understandably, typically approach the academic development of children through very different lenses. In the best of circumstances, families understand what and how schools teach their children, why schools teach their children in the ways they do, know how to support and supplement the schools' curricula, and are confident that schools are doing what is best for their children. In the worst of circumstances, families and schools are disconnected, curricula are illusive, methods are esoteric, confusion abounds, and conflict presides.

The conflicts that arise from a lack of understanding between home and school take many forms and effect students, families, teachers, and administrators. There is the daily conflict that occurs between students and families when the directions to, value of, or rationale for the homework or schoolwork is misunderstood. This can easily translate into conflict between the families and teachers and between families and administrators. Conflict between families and schools can also arise from a lack of knowledge about what literacy activities are valued within the home. When conflict exists between families and schools, this can also lead to tension between teachers and students and between teachers and administrators. Each form of conflict undermines the abilities of families and schools to teach effectively.

Philosophies and methods of teaching vary drastically between schools and even classrooms, making the business of understanding what, how, and why a child is taught difficult for any family. Additionally, literacy activities, attitudes, and practices vary

drastically among families and cultures, and do not always correlate with what is taught in school. However, when understanding around these issues exists and collaboration occurs between home and school, families and schools can work together most effectively to ensure student success. Forging this relationship between schools and families is a long-term commitment for both parties, but the process must be initiated by the schools in a well-planned and systematic manner that values families' cultures, knowledge, and input.

As an educator, I believe that literacy development is the key to academic success. In this paper I present a family-school literacy program that consists of a series of workshops and events that attempt to bridge the gap between families and school in the area of early elementary literacy development at a small, progressive, inclusive school that serves an underprivileged urban community.

The goals of this program are to strengthen communication between home and the school with the hope of developing more trusting and respectful relationships; to empower families as valuable partners in their students' educations; to empower students as literacy learners; to develop more effective teaching that is informed by family and cultural knowledge and understanding; to encourage support for literacy instruction at home; and, ultimately, to promote greater academic success.

The school uses a combination of instructional methods to teach literacy, including reading and writing workshops, guided reading, interactive reading and writing, word study, and systematic, multi-sensory phonics instruction. This program includes a rationale for the use of these methods, explanation of and experience with each component of instruction, specific training in the strategies that students are taught,

explanation and family examination of what class work, homework, and assessments consist of, techniques for supporting early literacy development at home, and time for families to engage in literacy-centered activities together at school. The workshops and events will be designed to be sequential, but not dependent on one another. The program series begins with a family storytelling festival. This is aimed at helping teachers and families learn about each others' background knowledge and attitudes and so that families know that their experiences and thoughts are valued. There are opportunities for families and students to work together during the workshops to allow the literacy work to be a collaborative endeavor between the school, families, and students.

In preparation for the program, I researched literacy development and instruction, the connections between home and school and student success in literacy, and family outreach related to literacy development. I also interviewed teachers and administrators and surveyed families from the school about their experiences interacting with students, families, and schools around literacy development. The surveys and interviews provided information about different parties' perceptions of their roles in students' literacy development and possible roots of home/school conflict related to literacy. I used the insight that I gained from both the literature and the interviews and surveys to design an effective and enjoyable family-school literacy program.

Literature Review

Family-School Involvement

Schools promote family involvement in a number of ways. Dale (1996) (cited in Wearmouth, 2004) identified four models of models of family involvement based on different power relationships. The Expert Model places the majority of power and expertise in the hands of the professionals. In the Transplant Model the professionals maintain the expertise and decision-making power, while "transplanting" their knowledge to parents so they can help their children. The Consumer Model views parents as consumers who have the power to use their knowledge about their children to choose services for them. The Empowerment Model is based on a more equal sharing of power that views the family as knowledgeable and the professionals' responsibility as one of supporting families as they meet their own needs.

Epstein and Dauber (1991, citing Epstein, 1987) discuss five types of family involvement in school communities. First, there is the level of basic family obligations, by which families provide safe, healthy environments for children that prepare them for school and support them during school. Schools support families at this level through providing information about child development and parenting skills. Second is the obligation of schools to communicate with families in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways about school programs and student progress through written correspondence, conversations, and conferences. Third is family involvement at the school by which families volunteer both inside and outside classrooms and attend school

functions to support their children. Fourth is family involvement in learning activities outside the school such as homework assistance, reading with children, and other developmentally appropriate activities. Schools assist at this level by providing information on developmentally appropriate activities and specific methods of assistance to which the students are accustomed. Finally, there is family involvement in decision making. At this level, schools support families by training representatives in decision making and communication skills and providing relevant information to assist in the decision making process. Henderson (1986) views categories of family involvement similarly to Epstein and Dauber, but defines them as roles of parents in education. She labels these five roles as partners, collaborators and problem solvers, audience members, supporters, and advisors and/or co-decision makers.

Family involvement has the power to effect change in the greater community. Epstein and Dauber (1991) found that teachers reported greater perceived personal differences between themselves and parents in schools with weaker parental involvement programs, while teachers in schools with greater parental involvement programs reported greater perceived personal similarities between themselves and parents. This is demonstrative of purposeful and positive family-school interaction leading to greater social awareness. Effective partnerships have the potential to lessen "us" and "them" perceptions that exist, particularly in schools in which the staff does not live in the surrounding community or share cultural background with the students and families, and lead toward more inclusive learning communities.

Epstein and Dauber (1991) have identified five steps to maximize success when beginning a family-school partnership. They suggest starting by assessing a school's

starting point by analyzing its strengths and weaknesses in the area of parent

involvement. This is essential so that schools can build on their strengths and address

their weaker points. The next step is identifying long-term "hopes, dreams, and goals" of

all those involved (students, families, teachers, administrators) (p. 302). Each community

has different priorities, so this process can help to ensure that people are invested in the

partnership. Next comes dividing responsibility for reaching each goal. Distributing

responsibility increases the likelihood that tasks will be accomplished and goals will be

met. Additionally, it keeps a larger number of parties involved throughout the process of

program implementation. Next comes evaluating the programs and the results. A built-

in reflection and evaluation stage provides time to look at what worked well, what did

not, what goals were met, and what new goals might be necessary. Finally, the last step

is continuing to support successful program development.

Henderson (1986) also recommends seven principles of effective family school

partnerships:

1. Every aspect of the school climate is open, helpful, and friendly.

2. Communications with parents (whether about school policies and programs or
   about their own children) are frequent, clear, and two-way.

3. Parents are treated as collaborators in the educational process, with a strong
   complementary role to play in their children's school learning and behavior.

4. Parents are encouraged, both formally and informally, to comment on school
   policies and (on some issues) to share in the decision making.

5. The school recognizes its responsibility to forge a partnership with all families in
   the school, not simply those most easily available. This includes parents who

work outside the home, divorced parents without custody, and families of minority race and language.

6. The principal and other school administrators actively express and promote the philosophy of partnership with all families.

7. The school encourages volunteer participation from parents and the community-at-large (p. 27-31).

In summary, a successful family school partnership has three essential elements: empowerment, a broad range of family involvement, and explicit planning. Families' knowledge must be acknowledged, valued, and utilized, and power must be shared between families and the school. Family involvement should be developed in many roles, and this, ideally, is the shared responsibility of both the families and school. Finally, an action plan that includes planning time, division of responsibility, and reflection is essential for the development and continuation of an effective partnership.

Specific Family Literacy Programs

Educators have approached family literacy initiatives from various angles and with varying resources. The following selection of family literacy programs contains a sample of successful programs that differ in specific goals and execution, but share the belief that literacy is a socio-cultural experience that is developed most effectively when schools and families collaborate to serve the students.

Parents as Mentors

One successful program was the Parents as Mentors program described by Cook-Cottone (2004). The program set out to support literacy development within students' socio-cultural experiences through training parents to be mentors in literacy techniques to other families so that students could develop literacy skills within the family context. This program began with a survey of all parents of elementary students in the school and assessment of all participating students. Parent mentors were recruited and trained in literacy techniques, and then participating families met with mentors weekly for ten weeks. The program concluded with a celebration, student assessments, and interviews with participating parents. This literacy program consisted of an organized curriculum, highly trained professionals, and an emphasis on family literacy culture (Cook-Cottone, 2004).

According to the author's analysis of the pre-program surveys and the post-program interviews, parents were very satisfied with the program and learned from their participation. Prior to the program, many parents reported engaging in literacy activities with their children, but infrequently and with a willingness and desire to do more if they knew what else they could do. After the program, parents reported an improvement in their own literacy skills, in their ability to help their children, and an increase in time spend on literacy activities. They reported learning valuable strategies such as decoding skills, syllabication, structural analysis skills, utilization of context clues, and dictionary skills. They also reported that they activities they engaged in during the program (read alouds, games, library tip, bookmaking) and the supplies (erasable white boards) they received were helpful (Cook-Cottone, 2004).

Project ROAR (Reach Out And Read)

Project ROAR was a partnership between a university, families, and a school with the goal of providing in-home activities to Kindergarten parents that would support emergent literacy and school success (Gilliam, Gerla, Wright, 2004). The program began with a parent survey of home literacy activities and was followed by ten once-a-month sessions. The researchers primarily led these sessions and introduced a different topic or literacy technique each time. University students provided childcare during which time the children (the kindergarten children and their siblings) were engaged in literacy activities such as read alouds and shared reading and writing. Families received $10 at each session as an incentive to attend. Additionally, they received an extra $25 at the end of the program if they attended all sessions.

The researchers interviewed the parent participants to assess the effectiveness of the program. Parents reported increased time spent reading and engaging in literacy-related activities for both their children and themselves and a more positive attitude toward reading. They also responded that their feelings about themselves as parents improved and that they spent more time bonding with their children.

FAB:ulous! Family Literacy Nights

FAB:ulous! (Families And Books: Using Literacy Opportunities to Unleash Success!) was another university, family, and school partnership. Researchers at a university developed and funded the program, and teachers at the school planned and hosted the events with the support of the researchers. The goal of the program was to

build on families' knowledge and interests and teach ways to help children with literacy development (McIntyre, Longwell-Grice, & Kyle, 2002). The program consisted of seven to eight literacy focused evening events each year for two years. Each event had a topic and a focus activity.

The first session was reserved primarily for information gathering in a group interview format- a time for the teachers and researchers to learn about the families, their interests, their funds of knowledge, their concerns about helping their children, and their literacy habits. Subsequent session topics ranged from "animals" to "Dr. Seuss" to "Poetry," and focus activities included "Ten Ways to Increase Reading in Your Home," "Helping Your Child with Writing," and "How to Select a Book for Your Child" (McIntyre, Longwell-Grice & Kyle, 2002).

Initially, parents and children were separated each evening after a light meal, with the children in childcare and the parents learning strategies to support their children's learning. However, the program incorporated evaluation forms at the conclusion of each session, and through analysis of the feedback, the researchers learned that the families wanted to be able to work with their children during the sessions to spend more time with them, to engage in literacy activities with them, and to practice the strategies they were learning right then and there. The program designers were responsive to the families' desires, and, while maintaining the topic and activity schedule, modified the session format to be more workshop-like and keep families together. At each session families received handouts that summarized and supported the work that had been done (i.e. a bookmark with prompts family members could use to help children read unknown words) and books to keep that matched the topic of the evening.

Overall response from families and teachers was positive. Due to the periodic assessment, the researchers in the program were able to be reflective and responsive to family desires and needs. Their original plan was conscious of family needs and time (serving dinner, providing childcare, beginning with interviews and getting to know parents), yet they realized quickly that they needed to make further changes for the program to be truly successful:

> ...While our schedule was packed full of worthwhile literacy activities, how we initially organized it needed to be re-thought. We might have started more with the workshop and interview, and later implemented the "stand and deliver" messages about techniques. The latter only work when real trust is built anyway, and these kinds of "stand and deliver" workshop lessons can emerge from the needs and desire of the families (p. 12).

First Grade Family Literacy

This family literacy program differs from those previously described, as this one is focused on bringing families into the classroom to participate in literacy activities with their children to "combine the strengths of home literacy with school" (Nistler & Maiers, 2000, pp. 670-671). Nistler and Maiers, a university professor and a first grade teacher partnered to design and implement this program in Maiers' classroom over a two-year period. The goals of the program were to model behaviors that would support literacy at home and to help families understand that children's literacy development can be fostered, that it should be valued in all homes, and that it should be viewed as a shared responsibility between home and school (Nistler & Maiers, 2000).

The program served two groups of students and families over two years. Families were invited into the classroom on designated Fridays (13 the first year and 15 the second year) to participate in morning literacy routines, poetry work, literacy-infused cooking

activities, and literacy centers. Maiers also incorporated individual conversations with adults into the sessions (the second year) and meetings after the sessions (the first year). Interviews with families at the beginning, middle, and end of each year provided feedback on the program's effectiveness.

Nistler and Maiers reported that according to both families and teachers, the program was a success. Attendance was high, which they attribute to a consistent emphasis of family involvement as essential in children's development and to Maiers' positive interaction with the families, which included simple gestures such as greeting every family member who entered the classroom. Families also gained understanding about what happens in the classroom:

> Through participation in the program, parents learned what was expected of their children at school, and they became more aware of what their children were capable of doing with support (p. 676).

These experiences promoted family literacy activities and student support in the home using techniques and activities learned during the Friday sessions.

Components of Family Literacy Programs

Focusing specifically on family involvement in literacy programs Neuman, Caerelli, and Kee (1998) reviewed 52 grants awarded by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy with the goal of learning about how participants viewed their involvement. They found that successful family literacy programs approached literacy and the family-school connection from a broad, holistic perspective. Successful family literacy programs:

1. Offered literacy instruction to families (not just parents).

2. Created recruitment plans.

3. Emphasized strong participant involvement in curriculum planning.

4. Ensured retention through creative scheduling and transportation.

5. Included experienced staff who were knowledgeable about diversity.

6. Included ongoing monitoring of program quality.

7. Created supportive environments.

8. Created social networks.

9. Were knowledgeable about the community and integrated community services into program.

They also reviewed quarterly reports and exit interviews from participants and found that there were certain common elements of the literacy programs that family members found particularly important. Family members reported appreciating when programs allowed for family participation in planning, incorporated family-based activities, included ongoing assessment that highlighted progress, created social networks that provided support and socialization, integrated other services such as food, transportation, and childcare, and provided "next steps for learning and career development" (Neuman, Carelelli, & Kee, p. 249).

After reviewing the four programs described in this paper, I have identified several elements, in addition to those discussed by Neuman, Carelli, and Kee (1998), that seem essential to the success of family-school literacy partnerships.

1. Respect for and attention to students' cultures. This can be accomplished through building on families' interests and knowledge and incorporating culturally relevant literature.

2. Events and activities that are of interest to families. Pre-program interest and home-literacy surveys can facilitate this development.

3. Organized curriculum. Though programs may take many different forms, the scope and sequence can be presented to families from the outset so they are aware of what they can expect.

4. Opportunities for families to participate in classroom activities. The bulk of students' literacy instruction occurs in the confines of the classroom; families' participation in the classroom has the potential to provide them with the clearest view of what and how their children are taught, gives teachers an opportunity to model behaviors and activities that support literacy at home, and makes the connection between home and school very explicit for students, teachers, and families.

5. Family feedback. Families can provide feedback about program events that can be used to modify or create future plans.

Sociocultural Context

"Being in 2-Blue was special because every day we got to read something new and write something new and learn something new." -2nd grader

On a typical day, a visitor might encounter the following scene upon entering the school. The African beats of djembes from the music room and the splashes of color from the artwork adorning the walls are a welcome contrast to the roar of tractor trailers down the street and the bland monotony of warehouses on the surrounding blocks. Kindergarten students are "walking like elephants," arms swinging like trunks and legs lifted in high, exaggerated steps singing Raffi's "We're Going to the Zoo" on their way to morning recess. The first graders are sitting on the rug reading along as one of their classmates writes a sentence on a sequence chart they are creating to tell other children about their field trip earlier in the week. Next door, the second graders' noses are buried in their books; the room is silent and there is a sense of urgency in the air because there is so much to read before lunch!

The school, despite its many successes, is not without conflict. It has a staff that is pioneering constructivist, arts-based education in one of the poorest urban communities in the country. More than half of the population of the community receives public assistance, and less than half of the population has graduated from high school. The air quality is poor due to truck traffic, industrial exhaust, and a lack of trees, and many students suffer from allergies and asthma. Unemployment, drugs, and prostitution plague the community, and housing is substandard. People in the community have historically been offered mediocre education. The school joins several grass-roots organizations that work to strengthen the community- to bring greenery to the streets, to provide artists with space to work and perform, and to provide children with safe and enriching activities. It

is a charter school, which means that families have to have some knowledge of the education system, and of their choices, to find it and register their children. Families want better opportunities for their children than they had, and they see enrollment in this school as one step in that direction. However, since it is so different from their own schooling experiences, families are often frustrated and worried that their children are not learning what they will need to succeed or are not being challenged.

The community is almost exclusively Black and Hispanic as well as largely poverty stricken, and the school, which has mainly white teachers, has many employees who recognize the conflicts that this disparity creates. Power is at the root of the conflicts; the white middle-class teachers and administrators have more power than the minority students they teach and their families. How they use this power, and how much they choose to acknowledge this power is a choice, both of individual teachers and of the school as a whole. The school has taken steps as an organization to address this issue. A consultant was hired to meet with the staff to discuss identity and diversity and their implications for education, and the school specifically. Pieces of the humanities curriculum were designed to honor and examine the students' cultures. High-quality multicultural literature is available and its use is encouraged. And dialogue among staff and between teachers and students around issues of race and class are common. None of this is a panacea, though, and conflicts persist.

The issue of literacy is particularly prominent because literacy is a powerful tool for progress. If children are to have more opportunities than their parents, they need to be highly literate. In terms of literacy instruction, which has long been a controversial issue among urban educators, there is certainly dialogue, and often conflict at the school.

There is the skill-banking argument- give students lots of skills and lots of practice until they become competent readers and writers- which has been criticized, in isolation, as paternalistic (Friere, 1998). There is also the constructivist argument- expose students to lots of literature and they will develop a love for reading and writing, internalize the techniques they have been exposed to, and develop their own voice- which, as Lisa Delpit argues, is insufficient, in isolation, for non-white, non-middle class students (Delpit, 1995). The school has rejected both methods as independently sufficient, but has embraced both as necessary pieces in effective literacy education. Balanced literacy - incorporating immersion in literature and skill-building – is the result and the chosen path of the school.

The missing piece is families. Learning is a sociocultural process, so to teach students outside of that context is less effective, less efficient, and, ultimately, disrespectful. Paulo Friere (1998) writes:

> As a practical-theoretical context, the school cannot ignore knowledge about what happens in the concrete contexts of its students and their families. How can we understand students' difficulties during the process of becoming literate without knowing what happens in their experiences at home or how much contact they have with written words in their sociocultural context? (p. 82)

If the school is going to develop highly literate students, it is essential to know what happens at home. The small pieces of information I have gathered over the years have been very telling. During a non-fiction unit in reading workshop, one teacher I worked with sent home a non-fiction reading interview. For homework, the students had to interview family members about their non-fiction reading habits. Responses to "What was the last piece of non-fiction you read?" varied from the TV guide, to the *Bible*, to

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Friere, 1970). These small glimpses into the homes of students were valuable tools for us as teachers of our students and communicators with their families.

Trevor Cairney writes that "schools have done better at acknowledging than responding to difference" (2000). This family literacy program is one attempt to respond. I want families to be welcomed into the school as partners in literacy development; to participate in the school curriculum and to bring their own cultural contributions through sharing experiences and reading and writing with their children. "...Family-based literacy programs allow for the construction of literacy knowledge within a context consistent with the child's ongoing socio-cultural experience" (Cook-Cottone, 2004, p. 209).

Analysis of Interviews

Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of interviewing teachers, administrators, and families was to determine how literacy is taught at the school, why it is taught in the ways it is, how different parties view the roles of the school and families in literacy development, what kinds of experiences teachers and students have had with families around literacy, and what could be done to encourage greater family involvement.

I interviewed two kindergarten teachers, three first grade teachers, two administrators, and one parent for this section. I teach 2nd grade at the school, and I also used my experiences and insights in conjunction with the interviews to support this section. The interviews took between 30 and 90 minutes, and were conducted in person. I had intended to interview at least 6 families. However, very few families responded on the surveys that they would be willing to be interviewed, and only 1 parent who responded that she was willing to be interviewed responded to phone calls. I attribute the difficulty in contacting and interviewing parents to the business at the end of the school year. Had I begun approaching families earlier in the spring, I think that I would have gotten a better response.

The first part of this section is divided into themes that emerged from the interviews with teachers and administrators.

What does literacy instruction look like?

The school uses a balanced literacy curriculum that includes reading workshop, writing workshop, and word study. Within those blocks, there is a combination of

strategy and skill instruction through read alouds, shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing, conferring with individual students, and explicit lessons. Most reading and writing workshops consist of a mini-lesson that teaches a skill or strategy needed by most of the students in the class, guided practice of the skill or strategy, independent practice, and a share.

Word study is more varied between classes and grades. Teachers use a combination of *Month By Month Phonics* (Hall & Cunningham, 1998), *Words Their Way* (Bear, et al., 2000), and *PAF (Preventing Academic Failure)* (Bertin & Perlman, 1998) to address class and individual needs. Kindergarten teachers and learning specialists talked about doing letter and sound instruction, using multisensory techniques, and explicitly teaching spelling patterns. First and second grade teachers focused more on helping students explore words, discover patterns and rules, and learn strategies to assist in spelling.

How are reading, writing, and word study integrated? How is literacy integrated with other areas of the curriculum?

Teachers try to link reading and writing instruction through connected units of study; for example, a class might be reading non-fiction books in reading workshop and learning how to use the features of non-fiction to do research while in writing workshop they may be writing their own non-fiction books. Teachers talked about integrating word study into reading and writing through morning messages, poetry, songs, and guided reading and writing. In addition to linking reading, writing, and word study, there is a lot of cross-disciplinary work involving literacy, the arts, humanities, and even math. In

these cases, sometimes the literacy is at the core with an interdisciplinary component, and sometimes, for example, the arts are at the core with a literacy component.

How is assessment used in the literacy curriculum?

Almost every person interviewed talked about how they use assessment to inform their literacy instruction. Assessments take many forms, from spelling inventories that determine where a student will begin word study instruction, to individual conferences during reading workshop that let teachers know how comprehension strategies have been internalized and what needs work, to taking running records and doing miscue analysis to inform individualized word work. Teachers use the results of many kinds of assessments to group students for specific strategy lessons, to inform lesson and unit planning, to determine effectiveness of instruction, and to assess progress and determine next instructional steps.

Why is literacy taught the way it is?

There were a variety of responses to why literacy is taught the way it is at this school. Not all teachers had this kind of teaching experience prior to teaching here, and many teachers reported becoming increasingly competent and comfortable the more time they spent teaching this way.

The staff expressed belief in balanced literacy and the workshop models. Some referred to the body of research about how children best learn to read and write, and mentioned that balanced literacy is based on that research. They also expressed belief

that children learn best by being emerged in language and print and by having the experience of reading and writing every day.

The school encourages and facilitates this kind of teaching by making clear the expectation that reading and writing are taught in a workshop model. The materials and professional resources that are available also support the kind of literacy instruction that the school promotes. There are guided reading books, lots of post-it notes for jotting down thoughts while reading, and professional resources by Fountas and Pinnell and Teachers College. For learning specialists there are also PAF guides (Bertin & Perlman, 1998), Wilson Magnetic Journals (Wilson Language Training, 2006), and decodable texts. There are no class sets of basal readers or workbooks; it would be difficult for a teacher to decide to go against the workshop model.

Finally, what came across in all interviews is that the teachers teach this way because it is based on what is best for the students. The instruction is determined by their strengths and weaknesses, so it can most effectively and efficiently meet them where they are, as individual readers, writers, and spellers, and push them to the next level.

What are some struggles with the literacy curriculum?

Lack of a consistent, sequential curriculum is problematic for teachers and students. Teachers expressed gratitude that they could teach in a way that was natural or comfortable, but frustration that they didn't always know what had already been taught. Gaps are left in students' skill and strategy development. Teachers and administrators expressed a need for teachers to know where students have been and where they are going.

The practice of using trade books was favored among staff, but they recognized the struggle to ensure that the books students were reading always lend themselves to practicing skills and strategies that were taught.

Communication between families and the school was another area of concern for many people. I will address this struggle later.

What do families know about how literacy is taught and why it is taught that way?

There was general agreement among teachers that families know very little about what is taught, how it is taught, and why it is taught that way. Some teachers responded that they think families know nothing about how and why they teach literacy the way they do. Others responded that families probably know more about how their children are taught, based on homework and discussions at conferences and curriculum nights, than why they are taught in those ways. For example, families are aware that the school does not use textbooks, because they never see their children come home with textbooks, but they are not aware of the reasoning behind this decision on the school's part.

The school teaches literacy very differently than most parents, and teachers, for that matter, were taught. This can be alienating for families who do not know what their children are doing in school or what the value of the work is. Staff members did accept responsibility for this, though, responding that families know as much as the teachers tell them.

What does the school want families to know about how literacy is taught and why it is taught that way?

There is widespread desire from staff members for families to know that the way the school teaches is not simply a personal decision on the part of the teachers, but that the decision to approach literacy the way the school does is based on legitimate and scholarly research and debate. Teachers seemed to want a sense of trust from families that this will work for their children.

Teachers and administrators also want families to know about the different components of literacy. They think families should know that literacy means reading (composed of decoding, comprehension, and fluency), writing (both spelling and the writing process), and word study (understanding word families, spelling patterns, and meaning), and that these components are all linked.

In addition to what literacy means is what it looks like at the school. Teachers want families to know what a literacy block looks like, what their children are expected to do during a given day, and what the expectations are for the age or grade, and what it might look like if those expectations are met. Teachers also want families to know that literacy work is often repetitive, and that this is deliberate, to ensure mastery. Similarly, many families have expressed concern about their children reading books that are "too easy." Teachers want families to understand that "just right" books might not look as challenging as the want for their children, but that when a book poses only a few challenges for a student, that is what will help the student grow the most and the most quickly, whereas a book that has too many challenges may frustrate a student rather than helping him or her become a better reader.

Finally, and most important to many people I interviewed, teachers and administrators want families to learn how to support their children at home. Families

should know that their children need time, space, and encouragement to read at home everyday, and that the more they read and write, the stronger readers and writers they will become.

What leads to positive experiences between families, students, and teachers around literacy?

The positive experiences that teachers and administrators reported had a common element of families recognizing and appreciating their children's success. One teacher reported a family being excited that a strategy the teacher had taught the parent was helping the student become a stronger reader at home. Another teacher reported great success at publishing parties when families saw their children's work and became aware of what they were capable of doing. Another reported a parent being very happy that her daughter had finally developed a love of reading after being exposed to so many high quality books during her two years at the school.

Students let teachers know, often with a great deal of pride, when they do schoolwork at home; when family members work with them, it seems to make the experience even more special. Teachers reported students saying, "I know that! I did it at home!" and sharing that their parents took them to the library or gave them money to buy books.

One teacher also reported families being appreciative of being able to see copious amounts of assessment records. Seeing evidence that their children were assessed so regularly gave them faith that their teachers knew their children and what they needed to grow as readers and writers.

What leads to conflicts between families and teachers around literacy?

Responses to questions about conflict can be categorized as having to do with lack of support from families at home, lack of communication, or philosophical disagreements or misunderstandings about teaching methods.

Teachers expressed a lot of frustration around families not giving students the support they needed. This took many forms, such as families not providing time or space for homework or not instilling a sense of responsibility about homework, not reading with their children, not studying sight words, or not following action plans created to prevent students from being held over. Poor attendance and chronic lateness were also very disturbing to teachers, since many of the students with attendance and lateness problems were also those who needed the most academic support.

Communication between families and parents was another concern. Teachers felt like communication was hindered by lack of time at conferences, difficulty interpreting report cards, and language barriers. Conferences are 20 minutes long, and since there is so much to discuss in that time, even for a child who is performing well, it is not sufficient when there is a problem that needs to be addressed. Connected to conferences were report cards, which are documents that are several pages of wordy standards, written with educational lingo that is confusing even to the teachers who complete them. Families do not always understand what the report cards mean for their children and how they can use the information to help them. In addition to educational lingo being a barrier, the sole use of English was also noted as a point of conflict. While the school does translate some documents, it does not translate all, and workshops and discussions

are given in English. There are only a few families at the school who have very limited English skills, but for those families, it is difficult to maintain meaningful communication.

One administrator reported a series of discussions with a parent who had experience as a teaching aid in another school and who had clear ideas about what she wanted for her child's literacy instruction, mainly, textbooks and workbooks. The discussions were non-confrontational, but resulted in the school saying that if a family felt like the school was not the right place for their child, it was best for that family to look for a place that better suited their needs. This particular example dealt with a disagreement, but misunderstandings about teaching methods and student expectations came up, too. Teachers talked about families being pleased with where their children were as readers and thinking that they did not need to continue working because they already knew how to read. One teacher spoke of a child who struggled in school, but the child's family said that he performed much higher at home and did not believe that he was struggling or that he needed help.

What would family support of the school's literacy program look like?

Teachers and administrators expressed concern that there was very little family involvement in the school's literacy program. They had many thoughts on what effective involvement and support would look like. They want families to:

- Do prescribed activities, such as homework, or extra work discussed in promotion-in-doubt meetings or conferences.

- Participate in larger, hands-on projects so students can do more meaningful homework.

- Visit classes to see literacy blocks.

- Attend workshops and/or trainings.

- Understand their roles and responsibilities, such as providing time and space for homework, signing reading logs, and helping their children stretch out words.

- Know the language used in the classroom, such as "just right books" or "stretching words out."

- Work with their children on literacy development during the summer.

- Communicate with teachers.

- Attend conferences in person or on the phone.

- Bring their children to school on time every day.

- Be able to understand communication from school in their home language.

What would make it easier or more enticing for families to attend literacy events at the school?

While teachers and administrators had a long list of things they wanted from families, they acknowledged that the school has the primary responsibility to create an environment and a community in which those things are possible. The school has the responsibility to create a level of support and excitement for and about literacy and family involvement before they can expect families to also be supportive and excited. As part of a school-wide effort to encourage family involvement in literacy, staff members had many concrete suggestions for what the school could do to encourage attendance at

literacy events. These suggestions encompass three categories: timing, incentives, and outreach.

Timing

- Offer the same events more than once.

- Schedule events on the same nights as family conferences or in the mornings when students are dropped off to alleviate transportation demands.

- Schedule events during the summer or on Saturdays.

- Schedule events in the evenings.

- Schedule events right after report cards go home so that families can seek support right away in the areas that their children are struggling.

- Schedule events prior to the school year as part of orientation to the school.

- Survey families to find out what times are good for them.

Incentives

- Have drawings for items such as gift certificates at family events.

- Give away books.

- Provide food.

- Make each event exciting and fun, not simply informative.

- At each event, have an opportunity for families to see their children sharing their work. The work can be a springboard for discussion.

- Make events grade specific so families feel like they are participating in something that will be directly beneficial to their children.

- Make events arts-based.

Outreach

- Translate notes that advertise events and dialogue during events.

- Do phone or in-person recruitment instead of only sending notes home.

- Make notes more inviting. Print them on colored paper.

- Invest students in the events so they encourage their parents to attend.

- Strongly advise families to attend rather than just making the events available.

- Make home visits.

- Provide childcare during literacy events.

What kinds of literacy events could the school offer to support families supporting their children?

Teachers and administrators expressed desires for events to span a wide range of topics and to take on a variety of formats to attract as many families as possible.

Events

- Pajama party- A day when students come to school in their pajamas and the day is devoted to reading. Family members would be invited to read to and with their children's classes.

- Family book clubs

- Bookmaking workshops

- Make-and-take workshops for literacy games

- Classroom observation days

- Model reading/writing workshops for families

- Demonstration sessions

Topics to Address

- What is balanced literacy? Why do we teach it?

- What are decoding and encoding? What are strategies to support these processes?

- What is comprehension? What are strategies to support understanding?

- What do students need to be prepared for standardized tests?

- Reading to children- How can you improve the quality of read alouds?

- "Just Right Books"- What are they? How do you choose them?

- What are the expectations in literacy for 1st grade? 2nd grade? Etc.

Family Perspectives

Since I was only able to interview one parent, it was not possible to synthesize information or draw conclusions from a body of data as I did for the teacher and administrator interviews. However, I have spoken with the families of my students for the past two years about their children's literacy experiences at the school and about their thoughts and feelings about the kind of instruction their children are receiving. My conversations with them have been powerful and informative. Their emotions surrounding their children's literacy development have been deep and have ranged from gratefulness to confusion to anger. They have made me think more carefully about why I teach the way I do and about how I explain my rationale to families who are curious and

concerned about their children's education. The following section expresses some of the thoughts, questions, and concerns families have voiced to me in the past two years during conferences and individual conversations.

Families are Grateful

Most families I have interacted with were displeased with their child's old school, and the literacy instruction that they received there, for various reasons. Though they have been confused about the instruction they have seen at this school, they have been pleased with the emphasis on real literature. Many parents have mentioned being drilled or made to perform writing exercises ad nauseum when they were in school. They like seeing their children excited about books and happy to be reading and writing, and they appreciate the fact that teachers know their children as people as well as readers and writers. Families also respond very well to being shown assessments their children have taken, work that they have recently completed juxtapositioned with work from earlier in the year, and hearing anecdotes about their children's reading or writing development. They enjoy seeing progress and knowing that their children are happy and well known as learners at school.

Families are Confused

The balanced literacy curriculum at the school is, without a doubt, very different than the instruction that most families received in school. This leads, in many cases, to a feeling of alienation between the family and the child or the family and the school because there is a misunderstanding about what is happening at school and why it is

happening. Families are confused by the lack of textbooks. Textbooks and workbooks make learning appear to be straight-forward and give families an easy part to play. They can help their children understand the pages they were supposed to read and answer the questions at the end. When students go home with trade books and "reading response sheets," the role of the family is less clear, and families may not be able to provide the level of support that their children need.

Families have also complained about the lack of spelling tests; they have argued that they want to help their children study and questioned how we know how their children are progressing if they do not take spelling tests. They are confused by the word study assessments we give, and sometimes complain that the words their children are studying in word study are "too easy." This is a similar situation to displeasure with no textbooks. Spelling tests make it clear what needs to be done to help students- study the words. Word study is more elusive; it is harder to help a student internalize rules about spelling patterns and apply those rules to new words than to help a student memorize the spellings of set number of words.

However, when given the chance to sit down and discuss reasons for using trade books and a developmental approach to word study, families have, for the most part, been very receptive to hearing reasoning behind the instructional choices they have questioned. They are also usually in agreement about wanting their children to become deeper thinkers who understand what they read, the way their language works, and the process behind writing.

Families are Angry

Families' confusion has not, of course, always resolved in understanding or agreement. There are families who have been very angry about their children's lack of progress. In my experience, this kind of anger generally surfaces only when it becomes evident that a child either needs to be held over or evaluated for special education services. In these cases, the families often express anger at the school for not providing their children with the support they needed. Some families have complained that the school is "using" their children to experiment with teaching methods. Another point of tension has been that some families feel unaware of what the school's expectations of them and their children are; they do not know what their children need to be able to do or what the need to know, and they do not know what they are supposed to do to help their children reach their goals.

I have assumed over these two years that these feelings of anger stem mainly from a lack of communication that leads families to feeling helpless. Knowing that a child needs help and not being able to provide it is extremely frustrating. When that is compounded by feeling uninformed about what is happening at school, worried about the future of the child, and pressure to provide the support that they do not know how to provide, the frustration quickly turns to anger.

Discussion of Family-School Surveys

Purpose of Surveys

In order to make this project meet the needs of the people involved, I needed to gain perspective from staff, administrators, and families. To most efficiently gather a large quantity of data from families, I designed a Family-School Literacy Survey (Appendix A) that I sent home with all Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade students. The purpose of the surveys was to gather information from families about their level of satisfaction with the literacy instruction their children receive at school, how they would like to be involved in their children's literacy development though the school and how the school could facilitate that involvement, and to what extent they engage in literacy-related activities at home.

Description of Respondents

I sent Family-School Literacy Surveys home with all 120 students in Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grades. The surveys went out twice; 4 students returned them after the first distribution, and 33 students returned them after the second distribution. Altogether, 37 students returned completed surveys: 4 Kindergarteners, 12 1st graders, 15 2nd graders, and 6 whose surveys did not specify a grade.

Description of Surveys

The survey was divided into three categories: questions about family satisfaction with literacy instruction at school, questions about family interests for family involvement with literacy at school, and questions about home literacy. In the first

category, families rated their satisfaction with the way their children were taught each of

reading, writing, and spelling, and with their children's reading homework and word

study homework. In the second category, families ranked topics they were interested in

learning more about. The topics included comprehension, decoding strategies, writing

personal stories, writing non-fiction, writing poetry, sight words, spelling, reading aloud,

and "just right" books. Next, they indicated whether they would prefer to attend literacy

events with their children or on their own. They then ranked literacy events in the order

that they would be interested in attending, including bookmaking, poetry writing, literacy

games, storytelling, and publishing celebrations. Finally they indicated which of the

following actions on the school's part would make it easier or more enjoyable for them to

attend literacy events: provide childcare, provide food, offer weekend events, offer

evening events, or offer events on family-teacher conference days. In the third category,

families indicated how often they read for pleasure, how often they read to their children,

how much time they spend doing homework with their children each night, whether or

not they go to the library with their children and how often, and how many books they

had in their home both for themselves and their children.

Description of Responses

Literacy at School

Overall, families reported satisfaction with their children's literacy instruction.

However, they were happier with reading instruction than with writing or spelling

instruction. 97% of families reported begin "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the way

their children were being taught reading, 92% were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with

the way their children were being taught writing, and 89% were satisfied with the way their children were being taught spelling. The fewest families responded "very satisfied" in the writing category, only 46%, as opposed to 65% for reading and 60% for spelling. Families also reported being mostly satisfied with their children's reading and word study homework; 95% of families responded "very satisfied" or "satisfied" for both categories.

One family included the comment, "Next year include the reading program my daughter needed." This particular family reported being "very unsatisfied" with the way their child was taught reading and "unsatisfied" with the way their child was being taught spelling and writing.

Family Involvement at School

In the first set of questions in this category, families were asked to rank topics they were interested in learning more about. I intended for them to rank the choices in order, from 1 (most interested) to 8 (least interested). Many families interpreted this to mean that anything they were very interested in got a ranking of 1, so they ranked several topics as "1." Learning about decoding strategies and spelling were most popular, followed (in order of popularity) by comprehension and writing personal stories, choosing "just right" books, writing non-fiction, sight words, reading aloud to children, and writing poetry.

The same ranking misinterpretation occurred when families ranked what kinds of literacy events they would like to participate in. Literacy games ("learning and playing literacy games with your child" ranked first, and storytelling ("families sharing stories") ranked second. Less popular were publishing celebrations ("helping students celebrate

their writing"), which ranked third, and bookmaking (making blank books with your child"), which ranked fourth. Poetry writing ("writing poetry with your child") ranked a distant fifth.

68% of families reported that they would prefer to attend literacy events with their children, while 19% reported that they would rather attend on their own. When responding to what the school could do to make it easier or more enjoyable for them to attend literacy events, most families indicated that the timing of events was critical. 62% of families reported that offering weekend events would be helpful, 46% reported offering events on family-teacher conference days would be helpful, and 35% reported that offering evening events would be helpful. 31% of families also indicated that providing childcare would make attending literacy events easier or more enticing, while only 14% indicated that proving food would be an incentive.

In the comments section, one family wrote that children need to urge their parents to attend school events and that attendance is much better when students are informed and invested in getting their families to go to school. Another family indicated that the school should offer events where parents and children can learn something new together, such as sign language. Another family wrote that things should be translated. (The survey was not translated, which caused this particular family anxiety because they though there was a problem with their child. The assistant in that child's classroom sat down with the mother, clarified the purpose, translated, and completed the survey with her).

Home Literacy

A majority of families reported engaging in literacy activities on a regular basis both alone and with their children. Most families reported reading independently for pleasure and to their children on a daily basis. When asked if they (the adult completing the survey) read for pleasure daily, weekly, or monthly, 65% of respondents selected daily and 24% selected weekly. 76% reported reading to their children daily, and 19% reported doing so weekly.

Most families (76%) also reported going to the library with their children, while 22% reported not going to the library with their children. Of the families that did report going to the library, 8% went once a week, 24% went once every two weeks, 11% went once a month, and 14% selected "other". One family that selected "other" clarified with the note, "not often."

In response to how much time they spend doing homework with their children, 92% of families reported spending more than 15 minutes each night. 5% reported spending 15 minutes or less, 43% reported spending 15-30 minutes, and 49% reported spending more than 30 minutes. (It is important to note that many children attend after-school programs during which they complete their homework prior to going home.)

The last set of questions asked families to report on how many books they had in their homes for adults and for children. The choices for each category were "20 or fewer," "20-50," or "more than 50." Families reported having more children's books than adult books. 19% of families reported having 20 or fewer adult books, 46% reported 20-50, and 30% reported more than 50. When referring to children's books, 16% reported having 20 or fewer, 38% reported 20-50, and 43% reported more than 50.

Analysis of Responses

In studying the responses from the first two sections of the survey, one theme that stood out was that of saliency. Families were most aware of, concerned about, and interested in being involved with those aspects of school that are most salient, most easily observed. This seems logical. It is difficult to be concerned about something that is not evident. It is also easier to try to address an issue that is prominent than one that is hidden. And, in terms of family involvement, it is easier and more gratifying to participate in an activity for which one has a clearly defined and vital role than to be unsure of one's responsibilities or utility.

School Literacy

Families reported being more satisfied with their children's reading instruction than with their writing instruction. This is not surprising. There is an emphasis on reading instruction at the school, and students, beginning in Kindergarten, are read to and read independently on a daily basis. They are exposed to high-quality literature and are guided by teachers who love to read. They take home self-selected books every night as part of their homework, and their families see them reading, sign their reading logs, and watch the books they bring home increase in difficulty as the year progresses. The salient pieces of reading- the difficulty of the book, the sound of developing fluency, the increasing stamina, the joy associated with reading- are things families are happy with and are what might come to mind when thinking about their children's reading instruction. The most easily observable elements of writing, however, such as spelling,

grammar, and mechanics, are not taught in a way that families understand or can easily track progress.

While students do write everyday in school, writing homework is not as standard as reading homework throughout the early grades. Families also might not be attuned to the nuances of writing development and while they see books getting more and more advanced, they may see longer pieces of writing with words still misspelled or punctuation still missing and not be aware of the development being made in the writing process and inventive spelling. Another factor influencing families' dissatisfaction with writing may be the fact that almost all writing instruction, including grammar and mechanics, is taught through the writing workshop. This means that families generally do not see mechanics and grammar worksheets going home as homework or completed class work. Worksheets make very clear what is being taught and how a child performed on the skill (in isolation), while constructing understanding of them through the writing process is less evident (though, the school believes, more meaningful and long-lasting).

Spelling poses a similar issue; while it is very apparent, what is apparent to families is often what is wrong, not what is developing. Families, I think, are unhappy with their children's spelling development for two reasons: they see misspelled words in their children's writing and they do not see clear evidence of intensive spelling instruction (spelling tests with lots of difficult words). What families might not understand is that the school has a method of teaching spelling that encourages inventive spelling. Students study spelling patterns, word families, and sight words, and through this work, they construct an understanding of how words are spelled; they make generalizations so that they can spell words that they have not studied based on their

knowledge of other words. This kind of spelling development takes longer than memorizing words, and the progress might not be as apparent to families. This idea of saliency that influences what families are satisfied or concerned about also determines how families want to be involved with literacy through the school.

Family Involvement

Families are less satisfied with spelling than with reading in general. They are more interested in learning about how to support their children with spelling and decoding than with comprehension, the writing process, finding "just right" books, or writing poetry. This does not mean that students are stronger in comprehension, story development, choosing appropriate books, or poetry and therefore families do not think they need to work with their children around these subjects. Rather, I think it is because it is easier to see when a student needs support with spelling or decoding, and families might think there is a more clear-cut way to support their children in these areas. Comprehension is harder to assess and address. It is also harder to impart the significance of strong comprehension skills than strong decoding skills. The idea of "just right" books is completely new to most families, and while they know from experience the value of being a good speller or reader, they might not realize the value of knowing how to choose an appropriate book. Writing poetry is not regarded as a necessary skill, whereas knowing *how* to write is crucial. This leads to the question: How can the school help families develop an understanding of the importance of the development of skills and strategies that are less evident or less familiar?

Families also seem to want to participate in activities in which they see both value and a clearly defined adult role. Literacy games and storytelling were much more popular event options than publishing celebrations, bookmaking, and poetry writing. Literacy games provide concrete ways to help children master specific skills and they have built-in roles for the adult as both opponent and tutor. Storytelling has cultural significance as well as a special role for adults as experts in their families' histories. Bookmaking, publishing celebrations, and poetry writing, are all similar in that role of the families would be more secondary and supportive; these activities could occur without family members present, whereas literacy games and storytelling necessitate the family presence.

Another important, but unrelated, observation is about what families said would make it easier or more enjoyable for them to attend literacy events. The primary concern of families was the timing of events. Fitting extra commitments into busy schedules is difficult, and families want to be able to attend events at the school when they are there already (such as on conference days) or in the evenings or on the weekends when they are not working. Interestingly, though almost every staff member interviewed said that they thought providing food would draw families to events, the families reported that food was the least important incentive.

Home literacy

Analysis of the home literacy section of the survey did not rouse issues of saliency, but the results were surprising and brought up a lot of questions. I was surprised at the high level of literacy activities reported at home. Conversations with my

students and their families over the past two years prepared me to expect fewer literacy-based activities to be occurring in homes than were reported. Do families really read and engage in literacy related activities as much as they reported? Do families know they should engage in literacy activities to support their children, and respond based on what they wish they did or wish they could do? Are the 37 responding families (out of 120 families that received the survey) those families in the school who do participate in literacy activities to this extent and is that why they are the ones who sent the survey back? Is there a correlation between families' abilities to complete the survey and the amount of time they spend on literacy related activities? Only 31% of the surveys were returned; does that mean that only 31% of families feel comfortable enough with their own literacy skills or habits to complete the survey? Are these the 31% of families who would attend literacy events? And, finally, how could the school attract families who have less access to or familiarity with literacy to participate more in their children's literacy development?

Considerations for the Family-School Literacy Program

The literature about family-school literacy programs, the interviews with staff members, and the surveys of families provided a great deal of valuable information about what research suggests and what the community wants regarding family involvement and home-school literacy initiatives. Based on the literature and the responses of the community, the following section summarizes the ideas that have seemed most important and have guided the development of this family-school literacy program. The two main areas of consideration are organization and event formats and topics.

I had originally intended for the family-literacy program to consist of a series of workshops offered over the course of a year. However, it is evident now that the program needs to be broader. Workshops will be a piece of the program, but the family events will vary, including workshops, information sessions, storytelling sessions, and classroom visits. This variation will attract a wider range of families and will provide an element of novelty to maintain interest. Across these sessions it will be important to make the majority of the events interactive so that family members have clear, valuable roles and the opportunity to work with their children. In addition to varying the types of events, it will also be imperative to offer the events at times that are convenient for families. This will mean offering some events more than once, scheduling weekend and evening events, and inviting families to attend events during the school day or during times family conference days. A final organizational consideration is to provide on-site childcare.

The combined interests of families and staff members resulted in a wide range of topics that need to be addressed. Families primarily want to learn about encoding and

decoding, to learn literacy games, and to participate in storytelling. Staff members want families to have an understanding of what balanced literacy looks like at the school and why it is taught the way it is, to know the components of literacy and how to support their children in each area, and to know what the expectations for each grade level are so they know what their children are working toward. They also want to be sure that these topics are addressed in interesting and engaging ways so that families and children will want to attend.

Encompassing all thought that went into the planning of this program was the consideration of respect. Respect for families' cultures, educational experiences, socio-economic status, and time was prevalent in my mind throughout the process. It is imperative that this respect be carried over into the implementation of the program. This will be embodied in several ways, including having translators at each event and providing translated notices and materials, explicitly acknowledging the importance of cultural awareness in educational settings, using literature that is culturally relevant and making it available to families, providing childcare and multiple session times, and, most importantly, taking time to get to know families.

My hope is that the following program can be implemented to support the development of the school's literacy program, family-school relations, and, ultimately, student achievement and success.

Family-School Literacy Program: Description of Workshops and Events

Family-School Literacy Program Events Kindergarten-2nd Grade

- Family Storytelling Festival: Who has shaped us?
    - Welcome back to school: community building event
- Balanced Literacy: What is it? Why do we use it?
    - Information session- part of curriculum night
- What should I expect in ____ grade?
    - Information sessions during the summer
- Strategy sessions
    - Decoding
    - Comprehension
    - Encoding
- Just Right Books: What are they? How do we find them?
- Open Classroom Days
    - 3 days throughout the year when the literacy block is open to families coming to observe and participate
- Read-Ins
    - 4 days during the year dedicated to reading
- Make and Take: Word Study Games
- Writing Our Stories
    - Introduction to writing process
    - Families plan and write a story to share with the community
- Poetry Night
    - Culminating activity for poetry unit
    - Families come to watch children perform their poetry
- Bookmaking
    - To scrapbook students' favorite work from the year

Family Storytelling Festival:
Who has shaped us?

Time:

An evening during the first two weeks of school

Description of Event:

This evening at the beginning of the school year is dedicated to the importance of forming a community. To work well together, we must know one another. During the storytelling festival, staff members and families will share stories about someone who helped make them who they are today. The evening will being in a large room with everyone in attendance listening to one staff member's story and one family member's story, and getting food. To create an intimate environment, support classroom community building, and allow sufficient time for each family to share, the rest of the storytelling will occur in classrooms with families from the same class. If attendance is low, both classes from a grade might consolidate and work in one location.

Space:

Cafeteria: to begin with the whole community

Classrooms: to continue with smaller groups

Materials:

- Light snacks (fruit, cheese and crackers, cookies, juice, etc.)
- Still cameras for documentation

Preparation:

- Invitations and preparation sheets with story prompts sent home by mail 4 weeks prior to event
- Invitations sent home with students 1 week prior to event and day before event
- Staff member and family member selected for introduction

Balanced Literacy:
What is it? Why do we use it?

Time:

Curriculum Night (held on an evening during the first two weeks of school)

Description of Event:

Curriculum Night is an evening event during which teachers introduce families of each grade to the curriculum that their children will be working with that year. It begins with a whole-group welcome, and then grade level teams meet families of students in that grade to discuss the coming year. The Balanced Literacy information session is to be a whole group session, since it involves every grade level. It will be a 30-minute session, prior to families meeting with teachers in classrooms, led by the instructional leadership team. They will give a brief summary of balanced literacy, with photographs modeling what each piece might look like in a classroom. They will also give the school's rationale for using this approach and provide digestible research, from the National Reading Panel, supporting the teaching of the different elements of literacy. This information, provided by the school's leaders, will provide context for the curriculum overviews in the classrooms and will serve as a springboard for later conversations with families around literacy.

Space:

Cafeteria: to begin with the whole community

Classrooms: to continue with grade-level groups

Materials:

- Projector and balanced literacy slideshow
- Balanced Literacy summary hand-out (Appendix B)

Preparation:

- Invitations sent home by mail 4 weeks prior to event

- Invitations sent home with students 1 week prior to event and day before event
- Leadership team planning for execution of presentation
- Slideshow created and coordinated with presentation

What should I expect in ___ grade?

Time:

During the summer (offered once in early July and once in late August)

Description of Event:

Families want to know what their children are going to be expected to do by the end of a grade level. This information session, offered twice during the summer, gives families an opportunity to talk with their children's teachers for the coming school year, see exemplary writing and reading response work for that grade level, become familiar with the books and guided reading levels that their children will progress through, see and talk about the word study expectations, and see sample literacy assessments. There will also be a time for families and teachers to look over the report card for the specific grade level and discuss any standards that are confusing.

Space:

Classrooms: with grade-level groups

Materials:

- Exemplary writing samples (entire process from brainstorming web to published book), reading responses, and word study notebooks
- Sample assessments (teacher made, DRA, Words Their Way spelling inventories, etc.)
- Blank report cards
- Leveled books
- Leveled book chart with grade level correlations (Appendix C)

Preparation:

- Invitations sent home with students during last week of school
- Invitations sent home by mail 1 week prior to events

Strategy Sessions:
Decoding, Comprehension, Encoding

Time:

Three evenings during the first four months of school.

Description of Event:

The Strategy Sessions will be offered in multi-grade level groups. There are three teachers on each K-2 grade level team, and they will split up to lead three separate sessions each consisting of a Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade teacher. The groups will be Decoding, Comprehension, and Encoding. During each Strategy Session, each group will be presenting a workshop during which families learn about that particular element of literacy, how it applies to their children, and strategies they can use to support their children's development in that area. The sessions will be offered three times so that families can prioritize, yet still have the opportunity to come back another time for another session.

Space:

Classrooms: 1 per strategy group

Materials:

Decoding

- Decoding strategy sheet and chart (Appendix D)
- Onset and rime cards
- Guess the Covered Word model

Comprehension

- Comprehension strategy sheet and chart (Appendix E)
- Reading response models
- Reading response sheets
- Sticky note sheet (Appendix F)

- Model read aloud with stickies

Encoding

- Encoding strategy sheet and chart (Appendix G)
- Elkonin blocks
- Wilson Magnetic Journals (Wilson Language Training, 2006)
- Making Words model (Cunningham & Hall, 1994)
- Sample word wall chart (Appendix H)

Preparation:

- Invitations with schedule sent home with students during first week of school
- Invitations sent home with students 1 week prior to and day before each session

Just Right Books:
What are they? How do we find them?

Time:

Twice during the first four months of school in conjunction with publishing parties or family conferences.

Description of Event:

Families will learn what teachers and students mean when they say "Just Right Books," how teachers guide students in choosing them, how students choose them on their own, and what book levels mean. They will learn the "five finger rule" and the importance previewing a book and of asking, "What has happened so far?" Families will watch a teacher help a student choose a Just Right Book, and then they will help their children choose Just Right Books. This is a short session that will only take about 30 minutes, so it will be offered in conjunction with events for which families will already be at school.

Space:

Cafeteria (if on a conference day)

Classrooms (if scheduled with publishing parties)

Materials:

- Just Right Book hand out and chart (Appendix I)
- Leveled books
- Leveled book chart with grade level correlations (Appendix C)

Preparation:

- Invitations sent home with students two weeks prior to and the day before each session

Open Classroom Days

Time:

Three times throughout the year during the literacy block (October, January, April)

Description of Event:

Open Classroom Days are opportunities for families to experience first hand what happens in their children's classrooms. Family members will be both participants and observers on these days; they will see what mini-lessons look like, how their children work in small groups and independently, and how they share their learning as well as get to work with their children on their reading, writing, and word study work. Teachers will organize the Open Classroom Days to support their current units of study and to include families in important routines and events special to individual classrooms.

Space:

Classrooms

Materials:

- Open Classroom Day agendas (charts and hand-outs) (Appendix J)

Preparation:

- Invitations sent home with students two weeks prior to and the day before each Open Classroom Day
- Carefully planned Open Classroom Day activities and agendas in each classroom

Read-Ins

Time:

Four full school days throughout the year

Description of Event:

Read-Ins are days dedicated to the love of reading. Read-Ins will be celebrated and much anticipated school-wide events during which the regular schedule is set aside to devote all day to reading and reading-related activities. Students will be allowed to bring in blankets and pillows, and they will spend the day reading, listening, and responding to stories. Families will be invited in the morning to read with their children, to read aloud favorite books to their children's classes, and to enjoy listening to stories read aloud with the children. The school will also invite a professional storyteller or author to come read or tell stories to and speak with the students in an assembly format.

Space:

Classrooms

Theatre: for school-wide assembly

Materials:

- Book for Interactive Read Aloud
- Snacks
- Reading Response activity choices
- Sample Read-In Schedule (Appendix K)

Preparation:

- Guest Author/Storyteller recruited and scheduled
- Students exposed to guest author's/storyteller's work prior to visit
- Invitations sent home with students two weeks prior to and day before each event
- Guest Reader schedule developed and shared with participating families
- Interactive Read Aloud planned to include families

Make and Take: Word Study Games

Time:

Once in October and once in February (a Saturday morning and a weekday evening)

Description of Event:

To address decoding and encoding concerns, families will have an opportunity to learn many of the word study games their children play throughout the school year. Teachers will explain the purpose of each game before modeling it with a student. Families will then go to centers for each game where materials will be available. They will make (cut out, create cards, etc.) the games, get baggies to store them, and practice playing them before rotating to another center.

Space:

Classrooms: with grade-level groups

Materials:

- Directions for each game (hand outs and charts) (Appendix L)
- Photocopied game materials (separate colors to keep games distinct) (Appendix M)
- Zip-Loc baggies (gallon size)
- Permanent markers
- Scissors
- Markers/pens/pencils

Preparation:

- Invitations sent home with students two weeks prior to and day before each event
- Game materials created, copied, and charted

Writing Our Stories

Time:

One Saturday morning and one weekday evening during the same week to coincide with the culmination of the Personal Narrative unit in writing workshop

Description of Event:

In conjunction with the students' Personal Narrative unit in writing workshop, families will be invited to school for a whole-school writing workshop. Teachers will welcome families and explain the project- collecting family stories that tell about the traditions of the community through creating story maps and using the maps to guide the writing of the story, just as the students do in writing workshop. A teacher will show a completed story map (on chart paper) and then a completed story (on chart paper) telling a story of a tradition from her family and talk about how she used the story map to write the whole story. Families will then move into other rooms with writing materials to write their own family stories. Families will share their stories in small groups at the end. The stories will be copied and bound to create a school copy, and families will keep the original copies. (Families may elect to leave the original copies at school to put into their books during the bookmaking workshop if they choose.)

Space:

Cafeteria (for welcome and introduction)

Cafeteria, theatre, dance studio (for families to spread out, but not be separated by classes or grades)

Materials:

- Model completed story map
- Model completed story from story map
- Chart paper story map for each family
- Writing paper

- Markers, pens, pencils

Preparation:

- Invitations sent home with students two weeks prior to and day before each event
- Game materials created, copied, and charted
- Supplies gathered

Poetry Night

Time:

An evening in the Spring, coinciding with the culmination of the Poetry unit in writing workshop

Description of Event:

After the students complete their poetry unit, they will have a collection of published poems. Poetry Night is a time for families to come see and hear their children's work. The event will be held in the cafeteria or other space large enough to hold a large group. Poets from the community will be invited to share their poetry, and each child in attendance will have the opportunity to share one published poem with the larger community. Afterwards, families will have time to read through the students' poetry collections.

Space:

Cafeteria (or other space large enough to fit whole group)

Materials:

- Light snacks
- Completed poetry collections
- Microphone

Preparation:

- Invitations with RSVP sent home with students two weeks prior to and day before event (to determine who is coming so space and rehearsing can be organized)
- Students' poetry chosen and rehearsed
- Guest poets contacted and confirmed
- Poetry reading schedule
- Microphone set up

Bookmaking Workshop: Scrapbooks

Time:

One Saturday morning and one evening during the last month of school

Description of Event:

Many teachers in the school have worked with a professional bookmaker to implement curriculum-related bookmaking projects in past years. These workshops will be led by the bookmaking teaching artist, if possible, and by teachers who have worked with him if not. Families, with students, will be guided through a step-by-step process to create covers and bindings for the books. They will then be guided through the process of inserting pages of the students' favorite work from the school year (which will be pre-selected by the students and teachers) to create scrapbooks documenting the year's work.

Space:

Cafeteria

Classrooms (if necessary for extra room)

Materials:

- Cardboard
- Nice paper for covers (wrapping paper, marbled paper, handmade paper, decorated newsprint, etc.)
- Glue
- Construction paper
- Templates
- Scissors
- Pencils
- Rubber bands

- Collected student work
- Completed model books

Preparation:

- Invitations with RSVP (to facilitate gathering of materials) sent home with students two weeks prior to and day before each event
- Teaching artist (bookmaker) scheduled
- Student work selected
- Model books created

Appendices

Family-School Literacy Program:
Workshop and Event Materials

Family-School Literacy Survey

What grade is your child in? (Circle one.)
Kindergarten   1st grade   2nd grade

Questions About Literacy at School

Key: **4** = very satisfied, **3** = satisfied, **2** = unsatisfied, **1** = very unsatisfied				
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**
How satisfied are you with the way your child is being taught **reading**?				
How satisfied are you with the way your child is being taught **writing**?				
How satisfied are you with the way your child is being taught **spelling**?				
How satisfied are you with your child's **reading homework**?				
How satisfied are you with your child's **word study homework**?				

Questions About Your Interests for Family Involvement

Which topics are you most interested in learning more about? *(Rank topics from 1 = most interested to 8 = least interested.)*	Rank (1-8)
Comprehension (helping children understand what they read)	
Decoding strategies (reading tricky words)	
Writing personal stories (planning, writing, revising, and editing stories)	
Writing non-fiction (writing reports and instructions)	
Writing poetry	
Sight words (strategies and games for learning to read and write sight words)	
Spelling (strategies for learning how to spell)	
Reading aloud to children	
Choosing **"Just Right Books"**	

(Circle one.)
I would prefer to attend literacy events...

with my child   on my own

What kinds of events would you like to participate in?
(Rank from 1 = most interested to 5 = least interested.)

_____Bookmaking (making blank books with your child)

_____Poetry Writing (writing poetry with your child)

_____Literacy Games (learning and playing literacy games with your child)

_____Storytelling (families sharing stories)

_____Publishing Celebrations (helping students celebrate their writing)

What could the school do to make it easier or more enjoyable for you to attend literacy events? (Check all that apply.)

_____Provide childcare

_____Provide food

_____Offer weekend events

_____Offer evening events

_____Offer events on family-teacher conference days

_____Other (Please explain!)

_____

_____

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?

Questions About Home Literacy

(Please circle your responses.)

How often do you read for pleasure (books/magazines/newspapers/etc.)?

daily   weekly   monthly

How often do you read to your child?

daily   weekly   monthly

How much time do you spend doing homework with your child each night?

15 minutes or less   15-30 minutes   more than 30 minutes

Do you go to the library with your child?

yes   no

If YES, how often?

once a week   once every 2 weeks   once a month   other_____

How many books do you have in your home for you?

20 or fewer   20-50   more than 50

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

20 or fewer   20-50   more than 50

Balanced Literacy
What is it? Why do we teach it?

Balanced Literacy is a framework for teaching literacy in which students are emerged in language throughout their day. Through a combination of reading and writing with varied levels of support, students become more independent and skilled readers and writers.

There are nine components to your child's literacy instruction. Each element may not occur every day, but throughout the course of the week, your child experiences each activity.

Element	What does it look like?
Reading Aloud	The teacher reads a book to the whole class that is above the students' independent reading levels.
Shared Reading	The students and teacher read a text together. This might be a big book, a poem, a song, or a chart the class has created.
Guided Reading	A small group a students of similar reading ability work with the teacher reading a text that is slightly above the students' independent level. This instruction is designed to push the students to a higher level.
Independent Reading	The students read on their own from books that are at their own independent reading level.
Shared Writing	The students and teacher collaborate to create a piece of writing. The teacher scribes.
Interactive Writing	The students and teacher collaborate to create a piece of writing. The students take turns scribing.
Guided Writing	The teacher supports student writing through mini-lessons and individual or small group conferences.
Independent Writing	Students write on their own.
Word Study	Students study letters, sounds, word families, and spelling patterns to increase their understanding of how our language works and to improve their decoding and spelling skills.

Adapted from Fountas, I. & Pinnell, G. 1996: Guided reading: good first teaching for all children. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Leveled Book Chart

Grade Level	Guided Reading Level	100 Book Challenge Level	DRA Level
Kindergarten	A	Y, YY	1
	B	G	2
Grade 1	C	GG	3
	D		4
	E	B	6-8
	F		10
	G		12
	H	BB	14
	I		16
Grade 2	J	R	18
	K		20
	L	RR	24
	M		28
Grade 3	N	Wt	30
	O		34
	P		38

Adapted from:
Rigby Leveling Guide. Harcourt Canada
Leveling System Correlations. American Reading Company.
http://www.100bookchallenge.com/howitworks_levelingsystem_correlations.php

Guided Reading Level: These are the letter levels the students know. They know, for example, if J books are Just Right for them.

100 Book Challenge Level: Some of the books the students take home are from the 100 Book Challenge program. They have colored stickers on the bindings that tell the color level. One stripe means the single letter, two stripes means the double letter.

DRA Level: DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) is the assessment program the school uses to determine reading levels, growth, and areas of need. The students know which level they have passed and which level they will work on next time.

Decoding Strategy Sheet

Decoding is when we use what we know about language to figure out unfamiliar words. Your child learns many different decoding strategies in school. Below are some strategies he or she might use, and some prompts you can use to help your child.

Strategies Using Only Phonics		
Strategy	**What is it?**	**How can I help?**
sounding out	Saying each sound of a word and then blending them together. Ex. /c/ /a/ /t/= cat	"What is the first sound? The next sound? The next sound? Good, now say all of the sounds together."
using onset and rime	Saying the onset (everything before the first vowel) and then the rime (the rest of the word) and then blending them together. Ex. /bl/ -end = blend	"What is the beginning of the word? What is the rest of the word? Good, now say both parts together."
chunking (pronounceable word part)	Breaking the word into known parts and then blending them together. Ex. car-pen-ter = carpenter	"What parts do you know? Good, now say the parts together."
If I know... then I know... (using analogies)	Comparing an unknown word to a known word. Ex. I know *part*, so that must be *chart*.	"Do you know a word that looks like that word?"

Other Strategies		
Strategy	**What is it?**	**How can I help?**
using picture clues	Using the illustration to guess an unfamiliar word.	"What does the picture show?" "Look at the picture; what could that word be?"
context	Using what is known about what is happening in the story or what makes sense in a sentence to figure out an unfamiliar word.	"What word makes sense there?" "What could that word be?" "Does that word make sense?"
context and the first sound	Using a combination of the picture and the first sound of the word to guess an unfamiliar word.	"What sound does it start with? Hmm, what starts with /c/ that would make sense there?"
asking, "Does it look right?"	Thinking about whether a word looks right.	"Does that word look right?" "Does that look like the word *people*?"

Comprehension Strategy Sheet

Comprehension means understanding. When we read, it is crucial that we understand what we have read. Otherwise, there is no point in reading at all! Your child learns many different comprehension strategies at school. Below are some strategies he or she might use, and some prompts you can use to help your child.

Strategy	What is it?	How can I help?
Previewing	Getting your mind ready to read. Looking at the cover illustration, reading the title and back cover, taking a picture walk.	"What do you think this book is going to be about/teach you?" "What does the title/illustration/ blurb tell you?"
Predicting	Using what is known to predict an event or outcome.	"What do you think might happen next? Why do you think that will happen?"
Retelling	Retelling the events or information from the reading in detail.	"Tell me what happened in your book." "What happened first...next...last?"
Summarizing	Giving a concise summary of the reading.	"What have you been reading about?" "Summarize what you read. What were the most important events or details?"
Making connections	Using your own experiences to make connections to what you read to help you understand the text.	"What experience you're your life/other book/movie does that remind you of? How does that help you understand your book?"
Inferring	Using what the author has written and what you know from prior experience to come to a conclusion not stated in the text.	"How do you think the character feels? Why?" "Since you know ____, what do you think about____?" "What might happen if___"
Visualizing	Making a mental image of what you read.	"What image do you have in your mind?" "What are you picturing right now as you read?"

What are all of those sticky notes for?

You may have noticed your child bringing home books covered in sticky notes. What are they for? How are they helping your child become a better reader?

What are the sticky notes for?
The sticky notes are for your child to record his or her thoughts as he or she reads.

How are they helping your child become a better reader?
We encourage students to be constantly thinking as they read. What connections are they making? What questions do they have? What emotions are they experiencing? Meaningful thoughts about a text are a sign of understanding, so we ask students to record their thoughts so they get in the habit of thinking and so they can look back and reflect on the thoughts they had.

Sample Sticky Notes
Adapted from Harvey, S. & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that Work*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Text-to-Self Connection (T-S)

T-S   3/12/06
Peter and Archie running away from the big boys in <u>Goggles!</u> reminded me of when my big brother was chasing me to get my game. I was scared when my brother was chasing me, so I bet that Peter and Archie were scared, too.

Sticky note format

code   date
Reader's thought............................

Question

?   3/12/06
Why does the boy in <u>Hey, Little Ant!</u> Think that ants don't have feelings? I know dogs and cats have feelings, but I wonder if ants do, too.

Sticky note codes:
T-S: Text-to-self connection
T-T: Text-to-text connection
T-W: Text-to-world connection
?: Question
I: Inference
!: Surprised
☺: Happy
☹: Sad

Encoding Strategy Sheet

Encoding is spelling. Some words we memorize because we write them so frequently, like *because*. Some words we have to memorize because the sounds do not make sense, like colonel. However, many words are constructed from sounds that do make sense, with spelling patterns that are common to many other words. Your child learns many different spelling strategies at school. Most are connected to decoding strategies. Below are some strategies he or she might use, and some prompts you can use to help your child.

Strategy	What is it?	How can I help?
Stretching a word out or tapping a word	Saying a word sound by sound and recording the sounds to spell the word.	"Stretch it out/tap it; what is the first sound, next sound, etc."
Onset and rime	Saying the onset (everything before the first vowel) and writing it, then the rime (the rest of the word) and writing it.	"What is the beginning sound/blend/digraph? Good, record that. Now, what is the rest of the word? Good, record it!"
Chunking a word	Saying a word in small, known chunks (often, syllables)	"Chunk it. What is the first syllable? The next syllable? Etc. Good, say the first syllable again, and write it. Etc."
If I know…, then I know… (using analogies)	Comparing a known word to an unknown word.	"Do you know a word that sounds like _____? How do you spell that word? So how do you think you spell _____?"

Sample 2nd grade Word Wall Chart

Word Wall Words

A
about
after
and
are
asked

B
beautiful
because
before
behind
between
but

C
can
come

D
don't

E
every

F
friend
from

H
have
how

J
just

N
next

S
said

T
that
them
then
there
they
thing
this
to
too
two

V
very

W

went
what
when
where
who
why
with

Y
you
your

Make sure you study
these words every
night.

Use this list to help you
spell words when you
are writing at home.

Just Right Books

What are they? How do we find them?

What is a Just Right book?

- A book that a child can read independently.
- A book in which a child can read 90% or more words with ease.
- A book that has a few tricky words.
- A book that a child can read fluently- at a good rate, with appropriate phrasing and intonation- like a storyteller.
- A book that makes sense to the child.
- A book that a child can retell.
- A book that is interesting to a child.

How do we find them?

Children can choose Just Right Books with guidance.

- Help your child choose a book that looks interesting to him or her based on the cover, title, picture walk, reading the back cover.
- Listen to your child read the first page. Does it have more than 5 tricky words? If so, it's not "Just Right." If it has less than 5 tricky words, keep going.
- After your child has read the first page, ask him or her to retell what is happening in the book. If he or she can retell the story so far, it is probably "Just Right."

Sample Open Classroom Schedules

Schedule #1 (1st or 2nd grade)

8:15-8:30 – Morning Math

8:30-9:00 – Morning Meeting

9:00-10:00 – Reading Workshop

      9:00-9:10 – Mini-Lesson

      9:10-9:30 – Partner Reading with Families

      9:30-9:50 – Reading Response

      9:50-10:00 – Share

10:00-11:45 – Writing Workshop

      10:00-10:15 – Mini-Lesson

      10:15-10:35 – Shared Writing with Families

      10:35-10:45 – Share

10:45-11:30 – Word Study

      10:45-11:00 – Mini-Lesson

      11:00-11:20 – Word Study Games with Families

      11:20-11:30 – Share/Goodbye

Schedule #2 (Kindergarten)

8:15-8:30 – Morning Math

8:30-9:00 – Morning Meeting

9:00-9:30 – Word Study

      9:00-9:10 – Mini-Lesson

      9:10-9:30 – Word Study Games with Families

9:30-10:30 – Reading Workshop

      9:30-9:45 – Mini-Lesson

      9:45-10:00 – Partner Reading with Families

      10:00-10:15 – Read Aloud

10:15-10:45 – Snack/Recess

10:45-11:30 – Writing Workshop

      10:45-11:00 – Mini-Lesson

      11:00-11:20 – Shared Writing with Families

      11:20-11:30 – Share/Goodbye

Sample Read-In Schedules

Schedule #1 (1st or 2nd grade sample)

8:15-8:30 – Independent Reading

8:30-9:00 – Morning Meeting

9:00-9:30 – Interactive Read Aloud

9:30-10:00 –Partner Reading with Family Members

10:00-10:30 – Guest Readers (families)

10:30-11:30 – Storytelling/Guest Author Assembly

11:30-12:30 – Lunch/Recess

12:30-1:00 – Independent Reading

1:00-1:30 – Reading Response (written/artistic response to any

     stories read or listened to throughout the day)

1:30-2:30 – Arts Class

2:30-3:00 – Community Snack/Read Aloud

Schedule #2 (Kindergarten sample)

8:15-8:45 – Partner Reading with Family Members

8:45-9:00 – Morning Meeting

9:00-9:30 – Guest Readers (families)

9:30-10:30 – Arts Class

10:30-11:30 – Storytelling/Guest Author Assembly

11:30-12:30 – Lunch/Recess

12:30-1:00 – Nap

1:00-1:30 – Interactive Read Aloud

1:30-2:00 – Reading Response

2:00-2:15 – Independent Reading

2:15-2:30 – Partner Reading

2:30-3:00 – Community Snack/Read Aloud

Word Study Games-1

Memory (Concentration)

Players: 2-4

Materials: Word cards (2 sets)

Goal: To collect pairs of matching cards

Instructions: Shuffle the cards and place all cards face down in rows. One player turns over one card, reads it out loud, and turns over another card and reads it out loud. If they match, the player keeps them and puts them in her own pile and goes again. If they do not match, the player turns them back upside down and puts them where she found them and the next player goes.

Go Fish

Players: 2-4

Materials: Word cards (2 sets)

Goal: To collect pairs of matching cards

Instructions: Shuffle the cards and place them face down in a pile. Deal 5 cards to each player. If players have any matches in their hands, they put them in front of them in their own piles and draw more cards from the draw pile. Players should always have 5 cards. The first player asks one of the other players for a word to match one of his own words. If that player has the word, she gives it to the asker, who puts the pair in his own pile and asks again. If the player does not have the word, she says, "Go Fish!" and the first player draws a card from the draw pile and the next player goes.

Word Study Games-2

Guess My Word

Players: 2-20

Materials: Word Wall OR Word List OR Word Cards

Goal: To guess the leader's secret word

Instructions: One player is the leader for each round. The Word Wall/List/Cards need to be visible to all players. The leader chooses a secret word from the Word Wall/List/ Cards. She then gives clues, one at a time, while the other players guess the secret word. The clues begin very general and become more specific. The person who guesses the word is the next leader.

Sample clue sequence for the word "grape": My word is a noun. My word has one syllable. My word begins with the blend /gr/. My word has 2 vowels. My word has a silent e.

Word Sorts

Players: 1-2

Materials: Word cards (1 set), word sort template

Goal: To sort the words into categories

Instructions: Put the word cards into a baggie. Take out one word at a time. Read it. Decide which column's rule it matches. Put it in that column. Continue sorting until all words are sorted. Then read down the words in the each column for reinforcement.

Word Cards Sample

bl/pl/cl sort

plan	blond	clock	clip
black	play	plastic	block
clay	clap	blast	plop
plum	clump	clam	pluck

Sample Word Sort Template

bl/pl/cl

blink	**pl**ease	**cl**iff

Literacy Event Feedback Form

[Event Title]

This event was useful to me as a family member.	Strongly agree 5	4	3	2	Strongly disagree 1
I learned some literacy activities or games that I can do with my child.	5	4	3	2	1
I enjoyed this event.	5	4	3	2	1

The event was:	too long	just right	too short
The amount of group work was:	too much	just right	too little

Comments/suggestions:

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