

Workshop 8

Connecting School and Home

In this session, you will investigate and apply research-based principles of home-school partnerships in early literacy.

Learning Goals

At the end of this session, you will better understand:

- how language and culture influence home literacy
- challenges and opportunities in building home-school partnerships
- differences between home literacy and school literacy

Factors Related to This Session

- Parent involvement at school and at home
- Regular teacher-parent communication
- Structured parent-teacher conferences
- Environments supporting home literacy
- Teacher-assigned home literacy activities
- Cultural differences in parents' perceived roles—for themselves and for teachers

Materials Needed for This Session

Participants: A student's work samples and assessment records, the Connecting School and Home Chart you completed for homework (see Session Preparation), and your Handbook for Effective Literacy Practices.

Facilitator: Copies for each participant of Connecting School and Home Lecture Posters (pages 204-206).

There are rich resources within each family. If we can find out what those funds of knowledge are we can build on them in the classroom. —Jeanne R. Paratore

Before You Watch

Video Summary

The video for this session examines the research and related practices for building positive home-school connections. Dr. Paratore presents research on how language, culture, and socio-economics influence the different ways parents use literacy at home. After the lecture, workshop participants discuss their experiences in promoting parent involvement. They then watch and discuss classroom excerpts illustrating ways to connect school and home literacy.

Session Preparation

To prepare for the workshop session, you will tap your prior knowledge, read an article on home-school literacy practices, and review important terms.

1. What do you already know?

Copy and complete the Connecting School and Home Chart (page 203).

Assignment: Save your Connecting School and Home Chart to revise at the end of the session.

2. Read this article:

Paratore, J. R. "Home and School Together: Helping Beginning Readers Succeed." In Farstrup, A. E., and S. J. Samuels, eds., *What Research Has To Say About Reading Instruction*, 48–68. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 2000.

This reading is available as a downloadable PDF file on the *Teaching Reading K–2 Workshop* Web site. Go to www.learner.org/channel/workshops/readingk2/.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE: Be sure that everyone has access to this reading.
You may want to have a few copies available for those without Internet access.

3. Review these important terms:

Review the following definitions found in the Glossary in the Appendix: background knowledge, emergent literacy, funds of knowledge, home literacy, and portfolio assessment.

4. Revise your chart:

Return to your Connecting School and Home Chart. Add any new thoughts, ideas, or questions based on the reading and review of important terms.

Watch the Video

FACILITATOR'S NOTE: When the workshop session begins, you may want to spend a few minutes reviewing the reading and the Connecting School and Home Chart to prepare for watching the video.

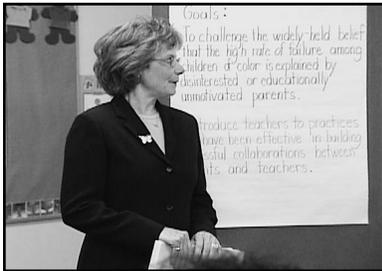
FACILITATOR'S NOTE: Hand out the Connecting School and Home Lecture Posters.

Lecture

Throughout this session, questions are posed to guide you through the topic. If you are working in a group, discuss your responses; if you are working alone, reflect on them in your journal.

In this section, you will watch Dr. Paratore's lecture on connecting school and home literacy practices.

As you watch the lecture, use the Connecting School and Home Lecture Posters to note important information.



Video Segment: Dr. Paratore's Lecture (approximate times: 3:30–10:50): Find this segment approximately 3 minutes and 30 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for about 7 1/2 minutes. Use the video image at left to locate where to begin viewing.

In this video segment, Dr. Paratore presents research related to parent involvement in children's literacy development. These findings suggest that parents play an important role in their child's literacy development and that positive home-school connections influence children's achievement in reading and writing.

An accompanying lecture transcript is also available as a downloadable PDF file on the *Teaching Reading K–2 Workshop* Web site. Go to www.learner.org/channel/workshops/readingk2/.

After watching the lecture, review your notes and consider these questions:

- Did any of the ideas in the session surprise you?
- What might you do differently to promote parent involvement?
- What information do you want to know about your students' home literacy practices and routines?



Video Segment: Perceptions, Actions, Obstacles (approximate times: 10:55–19:02): Find this segment approximately 10 minutes and 55 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for about 8 minutes. Use the video image at left to locate where to begin viewing.

Following the lecture, the workshop participants discuss their practices and obstacles in building home-school partnerships.

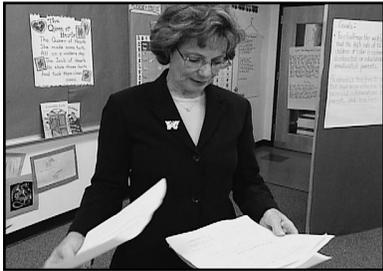
After watching the video segment, consider these questions:

- How did the workshop participants' perceptions of parent responsibilities compare with your own? What would you add to their list?
- Workshop participants emphasized the importance of communication to support home-school partnerships. How do you communicate with your students' parents or caregivers? What information do you share about school practices?

Watch the Video, cont'd.

Classroom Excerpts

In this section, you will relate Dr. Paratore's lecture and the reading to teaching practices in classroom excerpts.



Video Segment: Conferencing Classroom Excerpts (approximate times: 19:05–26:00): Find this segment approximately 19 minutes and 5 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for about 7 minutes. Use the video image at left to locate where to begin viewing.

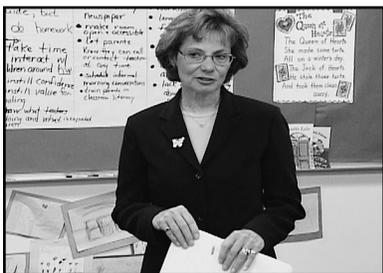
Now you will observe a parent-teacher conference in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. In each conference, both teachers and parents share information regarding the child's literacy progress.

After watching the classroom excerpts, consider these questions:

- How did the teachers and parents each contribute to a more complete understanding of the child's literacy?
- How might you have responded to Thalia's mother who said that she asks Thalia to read a book to her instead of reading a book together at home?
- What did you learn about Cassandra from her mother's comments? How would you use this information in subsequent instruction and assessment?
- How did William contribute to his teacher's and mother's understanding of his literacy development?

Discussion

In this section, you will watch the workshop participants discuss the classroom excerpts.



Video Segment: Discussion (approximate times: 26:05–35:45): Find this segment approximately 26 minutes and 5 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for about 10 minutes. Use the video image at left to locate where to begin viewing.

Following the classroom excerpts, the workshop participants discuss the parent-teacher conferences. Compare your ideas with theirs.

After watching the workshop participants' discussion, consider these questions:

- Several workshop participants reacted positively to William's participation in the parent-teacher conference. What did William's participation add to the conference? How did being part of the conference help William understand his literacy development?
- First- and second-grade teacher Marcy Prager was impressed that Ms. Perez shared results of the Developmental Reading Assessment with Cassandra's mother. What are the benefits of sharing assessment data with parents? What do teachers need to consider before sharing assessment data?

Watch the Video, cont'd.

More Classroom Excerpts

In this section, you will relate Dr. Paratore's lecture and the reading to teaching practices in classroom excerpts.



Video Segment: Home Activities Classroom Excerpts (approximate times: 35:50–42:12): Find this segment approximately 35 minutes and 50 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for about 6 1/2 minutes. Use the video image at left to locate where to begin viewing.

Kindergarten teacher Cindy Wilson reviews two students' home literacy assignments with the whole class. Note how she supports these students during their class presentations and how she connects home and school literacy practices.

After watching the classroom excerpts, consider these questions:

- How did the home activities of each student promote literacy learning?
- What areas of language and literacy were developed with each activity?
- How did Ms. Wilson's questions support each student as they presented to the class?
- What information did Ms. Wilson learn about both students from their home activities? How can she use this information to plan future instruction?

Further Discussion

In this section, you will watch the workshop participants discuss the classroom excerpts.



Video Segment: Further Discussion (approximate times: 47:55–57:12): Find this segment approximately 47 minutes and 55 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for about 9 1/2 minutes. Use the video image at left to locate where to begin viewing.

Following the classroom excerpts, the workshop participants discuss the assignments. Compare your ideas with theirs.

After watching the workshop participants' discussion, consider these questions:

- Second-grade teacher Cruz Sanabria and kindergarten teacher Kemp Harris discussed the purpose of Ms. Wilson's questions to each student. Were the questions intended to assess the students' home literacy practices or to assist the students in sharing their work?
- First- and second-grade teacher Marcy Prager raised the issue of parents who themselves struggle when reading and writing in English. What activities and materials would you assign for home literacy practice that children could complete with minimum guidance from their parents?
- Dr. Paratore referenced Luis Moll's work related to the rich resources of every family, which he terms *funds of knowledge*. How can you learn about the experiences and background knowledge of your children's families?

Watch the Video, cont'd.



Optional Viewing (approximate times: 42:15–47:55): Find this segment approximately 42 minutes and 15 seconds after the beginning of the video. Watch for about 5 1/2 minutes. Use the video image at left to locate where to begin viewing.

You may also want to watch the small-group discussions.

Examine the Topic

Extend Your Knowledge

In this section, you will expand your understanding of connecting school and home literacy. You will compare the ideas from the workshop video with passages from various publications. Read and respond to the ideas presented as they relate to your own experiences.

One of the most frequently offered suggestions teachers give to parents is to read at home with their children. However, parents may not know how to make reading at home meaningful and enjoyable. Read the following passage “Children Practicing Reading at Home” by D. H. Tracey and compare it to your expectations and communications with parents.

Despite the impressive amount of research that documents the powerful influence of parents and the home environment on children’s literacy learning, few studies have examined the natural practice of children reading aloud to their parents at home (Durkin, 1966; Hannon, Jackson, & Weinberger, 1986; Lancy, Draper, & Boyce, 1989; Morrow, 1993). This is most surprising because investigation of the topic seems necessary for several reasons, the most obvious being that it is a practice extensively recommended by educators. According to a survey of 600 schools in the United States and approximately 3700 teachers, parent-child reading is the parent involvement technique most frequently recommended by teachers (Becker & Epstein, 1982).... Two-thirds of the surveyed teachers reported often asking parents to listen to their children read to them or suggesting parents read to their children. Yet, despite the frequency with which shared literacy experiences are recommended to parents, we know very little about how the practice of children reading to parents is actually implemented and what takes place during these encounters. For example, we do not know if poor readers reading to their parents is actually a practice that contributes positively to the child’s overall literacy development or if it perhaps adds only frustrating, negative episodes to the child’s experiences.

A second reason that further study of the practice of children reading aloud to parents is needed is that parents want to learn more about how to help their children with reading (Boehnlein & Hager, 1985; Moor, 1990). It has been found repeatedly that parents, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, want guidance in how to help their children with reading and writing at home.... Yet, the only information we can currently offer parents is limited by the fact that it is grounded, almost exclusively, on school- and teacher-based models of education. Are parents to respond to their children’s oral reading as teachers do? Investigations of the ways in which parents naturally assist children during children’s at-home oral reading can allow researchers to identify parental strategies that are, and are not, supportive of children’s literacy development. —Tracey, D. H. “Children Practicing Reading at Home: What We Know About How Parents Help.” In Morrow, L., ed., *Family Literacy: Connections in Schools and Communities*, 256. Newark, Del: International Reading Association, 1995.

Examine the Topic, cont'd.

Consider these questions:

- What are the home literacy issues emphasized in this excerpt?
- How do these issues relate to your own classroom experiences?

Now read these suggestions to support parents reading with their children:

Ten Ideas Parents Can Use To Improve the Quality of Shared Literacy Experiences:

1. Get your children to talk! Children learn by talking and asking questions. Encourage your children to talk about what you are reading. One way to get them to talk is to have them guess what will happen next in the story.

2. Help your children understand the story. Sometimes children don't understand what is happening in a book. Check regularly to see whether your children understand the story. If they do not, try to explain what is happening in your own words.

3. Praise your children. Children love to be told nice things by their parents. Let your children know that you are proud of them when they ask a good question, say something interesting about a book, or read well.

4. Relate the book to your life. Use the book as a jumping-off point to tell your children something interesting about your life or an event the book reminds you of that really happened. Ask your children to relate the book to their lives as well.

5. Ask your children good questions during storybook reading. Questions that will help your children the most are those that require them to talk a lot to answer. Why and how questions are especially useful, such as "Why do you think the Pokey Puppy was sad?" and "How else could the prince have found Cinderella?"

6. Wait for answers. After you ask a question, give your children time to answer. Most children need time to think of good answers to good questions.

7. With younger children, point to words when you read. Pointing to words when you read to your children will help them learn what the words are, that we read from left to right, and that we turn pages only after we have finished reading all the words on a page. These ideas will help young children learn how to read.

8. With older children, take turns reading. Your children may find reading aloud to be difficult. Support your children's efforts by taking turns when reading.

9. Choose books carefully. Many books are enjoyable, but to help your children the most it is important to choose books that are not too easy and not too difficult. If you are not sure about the difficulty level of certain books, librarians can help.

10. Have fun! Above all, try to keep the book-sharing experience enjoyable!

—Tracey, D. H. "Enhancing Literacy Growth Through Home-School Connections," 50.

Encourage parents to select books that:

- relate to the child's interests
- reflect the child's own experience
- contain pictures that provide clues to words or overall meaning
- contain repetitive words or text patterns
- illustrate familiar concepts of themes
- have been read in school

Examine the Topic, cont'd.

Also encourage parents to try the “five-finger test.” Parents ask their child to read a page in a selected book. For every unknown word, the child holds up one finger. If he or she reaches five fingers before completing the page, the book is probably too hard. (This is best for the end of grade 1 or grade 2.)

Consider these questions:

- Are these suggestions reflective of school-based literacy practices?
- Which suggestions do you feel are most important for all parents?
- How will you know if these practices are being implemented at home?

Determine Conferencing Practices

In this section, you will explore an activity to better understand building home-school partnerships through parent-teacher conferences.

In the discussions, second-grade teacher Adrienne Bradshaw asks about parent-teacher conferences that do not go as well as those in the classroom excerpts. What factors contribute to a successful conference? What factors influence a difficult conference?

The interactive activity Determine Conferencing Practices allows you to organize and navigate a challenging parent-teacher conference.

Try It Online! Determine Conferencing Practices can be explored as an Interactive Activity. Go to the *Teaching Reading K–2 Workshop* Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/readingk2/.

Determine Conferencing Practices

Read this description of a parent-teacher conference. Think about how you would organize the meeting and consider how you would react to the challenges that occur.

Part 1: Beginning the Conference

First grade teacher, Ms. Ross is meeting with her student Kim's mother, at a parent teacher conference in March. Kim is one of the more outgoing students in the class, but is reading below grade-level expectations and making slow progress with her writing skills. When reading she demonstrates difficulty in word recognition, decoding, and oral reading fluency. When writing, she frequently confuses letter-sound associations. She does, however, have a great interest in animals, often reading or writing about them. During their November conference, Kim's mother expressed concern when Ms. Ross reported Kim's slow progress. She felt Ms. Ross' teaching practices were not engaging her daughter. At home Kim reads every night, silently, or aloud to a family member, but has mentioned her dislike of this reading time. Her mother reads to her infrequently, believing that it is more important for Kim to practice reading herself than to listen to stories. However, Kim is always an attentive listener when her mother reads to her. Kim's mother continues to feel the school is not meeting the needs of her child and has expressed her frustrations in letters to Ms. Ross.

Below are three steps that will occur during the beginning of Ms. Ross' parent-teacher conference. Think about the order in which you would arrange the steps.

- a. **Identify the child's strengths** and interests, and discuss them with the parent.
- b. **Share observations** of the child's literacy skills beginning with specific strengths and moving to specific needs.
- c. **Inquire about home reading habits** and what the parent has noticed about the child's reading ability.

Here's what happens:

a. Ms. Ross is encouraged by Kim's participation in class. She contributes to discussions and responds to the ideas of the other children. Ms. Ross also talks about Kim's keen interest in animals as evidenced in her journal writing and selection of books during independent reading.

Parent Response

Kim's mother says this is all "well and good" but what is the teacher going to do about Kim's reading?

What would you do in this situation? Write in your response below.

Compare your response with "Did you consider" on page 3.

Page 1

Part 1: Beginning the Conference continued

b. Ms. Ross reviews Kim's literacy skills, identifying her reading difficulties in developing word knowledge and oral reading fluency, and her writing difficulties with letter-sound associations. She tells Kim's mother that Kim is not reading within grade-level expectations at this time of the year.

Parent Response - - ►

Kim's mother says if she has known Kim is having difficulties all year, why hasn't Ms. Ross done something about it?

What would you do in this situation? Write in your response below.

Compare your response with "Did you consider" on page 3.

c. Kim's mother says that they read together on occasion but her primary focus is on having Kim read herself. When they do read together, Kim's mother usually reads the book without pointing to the words or pictures, and Kim listens attentively.

Parent Response - - ►

Kim's mother says that her home reading habits are teaching Kim to read better than Ms. Ross' classroom instruction.

What would you do in this situation? Write in your response below.

Compare your response with "Did you consider" on page 3.

Beginning the Conference: Did you consider...?

a. Did you consider:

- explaining the importance of interest and motivation in learning to read?
- emphasizing Kim's interest in discussing books in class and how her mother could do the same at home?
- providing Kim's mother with suggested books that match Kim's interest in animals?

b. Did you consider:

- explaining the wide range of reading ability within the first grade, and how some children often need more time to develop all of the complex skills involved?
- supporting Kim's mother by acknowledging her emotional reaction and explaining the instructional interventions you have used to support Kim's learning?

c. Did you consider:

- discussing the importance of reading aloud to Kim, sharing the words and pictures and discussing the story ?
- suggesting a balance between the mother's read-aloud and Kim's reading?
- emphasizing the importance of having Kim read easy books or books she has already read for home reading?

Part 2: Sharing Information

During the conference, Ms. Ross shares work samples and several assessment records from Kim's yearlong portfolio with her mother. Ms. Ross presents the information in chronological order to illustrate Kim's development since September. The monthly Running Records and DRAs from September, November and February show little improvement. In February, her DRA score was still at a beginning first grade level. Her oral reading miscues indicate that she guesses at words based on picture clues rather than using sound/symbol relationships and rarely self-corrects during reading. Selections from her Reading Response journal reveal a reliance on initial and final letter sounds when writing words ("gt" for "get," "wt" for "went.") This indicates some progress since Kim only used initial letters in September, but her writing is still below expectation. In March of first grade, Kim's writing was more detailed when she responded to stories about animals. Kim's reading program includes guided, shared and independent reading. Her writing instruction is based on Writing Workshop and reading responses.

Below are three steps Ms. Ross will take to share information during the parent-teacher conference. Think about the order in which you would arrange the steps.

- a. Clarify assessment strategies** – when and why you assess student performance. Explain the different assessment tools used and how results are interpreted.
- b. Show the parent** the assessment and work portfolio. Discuss the child's skills as identified by the assessment data.
- c. Clarify the instructional program** and identify the teaching practices that work for the child.

Here's what happens:

a. Ms. Ross explains that she takes Running Records during guided reading groups once a month, and DRAs three times a year. The assessments measure a child's word recognition, comprehension and fluency. And the results are used to determine if a child is reading books of an appropriate level, either independently or with guidance.

Parent Response

Kim's mother questions Ms. Ross about the amount of time she spends assessing Kim's reading instead of teaching her.

What would you do in this situation? Write in your response below.

Compare your response with "Did you consider" on page 6.

Part 2: Sharing Information continued

b. Ms. Ross reviews Kim's literacy skills, identifying her reading difficulties in developing word knowledge and oral reading fluency, and her writing difficulties with letter-sound associations. She tells Kim's mother that Kim is not reading within grade-level expectations at this time of the year.



Kim's mother is confused by all of the assessment data. She just wants to know if her child is going to learn to read and write.

What would you do in this situation? Write in your response below.

Compare your response with "Did you consider" on page 6.

c. Ms. Ross explains that Kim's reading program allows Kim to work with different groups of children for different reading purposes. Kim finds reading easier when the text is read to her first, or when its pattern is more predictable. Kim writes better when assisted in sounding out the letters in words and when using the Word Wall.



Kim's mother thinks the varied reading instruction may be confusing for Kim and asks Ms. Ross why she doesn't stick with one reading group.

What would you do in this situation? Write in your response below.

Compare your response with "Did you consider" on page 6.

Sharing Information: Did you consider...?

a. Did you consider:

- explaining that assessments help determine the appropriate instruction and materials for the child?
- explaining that Running Records do not take time from instruction since they are taken during guided reading groups?

b. Did you consider:

- reviewing the expectations for first-grade students in March of the school year and explaining how Kim's results correlate with these expectations.
- acknowledging that these assessments may be confusing but provide important information about Kim's progress and the instruction that best meets her needs?

c. Did you consider:

- acknowledging her concerns but explaining that different grouping options for reading actually promote reading achievement?
- explaining how different grouping options and instructional formats address children's individual needs and allow them to demonstrate their literacy strengths?

Part 3: Ending the Conference

As Ms. Ross ends the conference, she outlines her goals for Kim and how she intends to help Kim reach them. By the end of the year, Ms. Ross would like to see Kim reading texts at her instructional level more fluently and with effective strategies for decoding unknown words. Her instruction will focus on increasing Kim's sight vocabulary and teaching Kim specific strategies for identifying unknown words. She also will plan instruction to enhance Kim's understanding and use of letter/sound associations when she writes. For the rest of the year, Ms. Ross plans to improve home-school connections with a home journal for the class. Her students will take turns writing about their after-school activities. Ms. Ross also has several home literacy activities for Kim to practice at home. These include sending home books read in class for Kim to reread to her mother, word activities prepared and practiced in school, and a list of books for Kim's mother to read to Kim.

Below are three steps that Ms. Ross will use to wrap up the parent-teacher conference. Think about the order in which you would arrange the steps.

- a. Share your goals** for the child. Outline specific instructional practices you planned to support Kim's literacy needs.
- b. Review home literacy assignments** that will be presented in class. Discuss how you will support the child in class and how the parent can better prepare the child at home.
- c. Suggest home literacy activities** that will support the child's learning in terms of the parent's goals and the classroom curriculum.

Here's what happens:

a. Ms. Ross details the reading level she hopes Kim will attain by the end of the year, and the writing skills she hopes Kim will master. She targets the specific strategies that should improve Kim's weak areas.

Parent Response

Kim's mother wants to know how Ms. Ross will update her on Kim's progress since this is the last conference of the year.

What would you do in this situation? Write in your response below.

Compare your response with "Did you consider" on page 9.

Part 3: Ending the Conference continued

b. Ms. Ross describes how the home journal will be shared with the class. She also explains how Kim's mother can help Kim prepare at home, by guiding her writing and practicing what she will present.

Parent Response

Kim's mother stresses again that it is the school's responsibility to teach her daughter and she should not be required to help with that job.

What would you do in this situation? Write in your response below.

Compare your response with "Did you consider" on page 9.

c. Ms. Ross suggests the variety of home literacy activities and reviews how they are aligned with the Kim's mother's goals. She details how mother and daughter should practice each activity, in order to support Kim's learning in school.

Parent Response

Kim's mother wants assurance from Ms. Ross that the school will teach her daughter how to read and write

What would you do in this situation? Write in your response below.

Compare your response with "Did you consider" on page 9.

Ending the Conference: Did you consider...?

a. Did you consider:

- suggesting a home-school notebook, sent home every Friday? Ms. Ross would comment on Kim's weekly performance and Kim's mother would return the journal with her comments on Monday.
- scheduling another conference in May to discuss Kim's progress once more before the end of first-grade?

b. Did you consider:

- sharing how home-school reinforcement help Kim improve faster with the consistent support.
- explaining that most of the home activities Kim could performed independently supported by a simple review from her mother.

c. Did you consider:

- acknowledging that both of you have the same goals for Kim and you will assess her performance routinely through the rest of the year to assure that these goals are met.
- suggesting that if Kim does not make the expected progress, you will consult with the school Reading Specialist to have a more formal evaluation done on Kim.

Examine the Topic, cont'd.

After completing the activity, consider these questions:

- How did this parent-teacher conference compare with a difficult conference you have experienced?
- Which aspect of the conference do you feel was most successful—for both teacher and parent?
- Which part of the conference might you have conducted differently? In what way?
- How would you follow-up on the conference to strengthen the trust and partnership between teacher and parent?

Assignment: Submit your written response to the questions.

Wrap Up

Reflect on Your Learning

In this section, you will review and complete your notes on connecting school and home.

Review the notes you have taken during this session. Return to the Connecting School and Home Chart you completed in Session Preparation. Add any new ideas and practices for promoting family literacy. Use your revised chart and the following questions to reflect on the ideas presented in this session. In a paragraph, respond to the following questions:

- How did the lecture support or change your beliefs about home literacy?
- What questions do you still have?
- What new practices will you implement to promote school and home connections?
- What challenges do you still face? What do you want to know more about?

Assignment: Submit your written reflection.

Put It Into Practice

Choose Activities

In this section, you will apply what you have learned to your own teaching. The three activities are designed to assist you in developing resources for promoting home-school literacy connections. Choose one or more from the list below to practice in your classroom.

Activity 1: Plan a Parent-Teacher Conference

Outline the information exchange between parent and teacher.

Activity 2: Publish a Newsletter

Publish a newsletter to inform parents of literacy instruction, student work, and important events in the school and class.

Activity 3: Create a Handbook

Collect resources for each workshop session in a Handbook for Effective Literacy Practices.

1. Plan a Parent-Teacher Conference

In this activity, you will develop a parent-teacher conference guide for one of your students.

Parent-teacher conferences allow parents and teachers to exchange information about student achievement, interests, and progress. Careful planning will ensure that both teachers and parents are informed about how to support children's literacy learning.

In planning for your parent-teacher conference:

- Choose a student who is having difficulty with reading and writing.
- Copy the Conference Planner (page 207). Complete the sections to help you focus on important information, questions, and documentation of reading and writing to share in the conference.
- Gather any support material you want to share with the parent to illustrate their child's performance. These may include writing samples and assessment results. Consider how you will explain any assessment results parents may have difficulty understanding.

Assignment: Submit a completed Conference Planner.

2. Publish a Newsletter

In this activity, you will design a parent newsletter to facilitate information sharing between teacher and parent.

One way to build strong home-school connections is to communicate frequently with parents about your literacy program and the progress of students. A parent newsletter can inform parents about specific projects, instructional practices, and materials that your students are engaged in throughout the year. This information can also provide a basis for parent questions in other forms of communication such as parent-teacher conferences, open house, and classroom visits.

Use the following parent newsletter format to model your own. You may want to use a simple publishing program to design your newsletter.

Put It Into Practice, cont'd.

Parent Newsletter

Consider how often you will publish the newsletter.

What We're Learning

Describe the topic, theme, or curriculum unit the class is studying.

Describe any special projects the class is working on.

Explain literacy strategies and skills the class is practicing.

What We're Reading

List the book titles used for shared reading, guided reading, and read-aloud.

List some of the students' favorite books.

Our Work

Include student-writing samples that illustrate the literacy strategies and skills practiced in class.

Allow students to contribute to the newsletter with submitted work or ideas.

Suggestions for Parents

Provide home-reading and writing tips for parents.

Suggest home literacy activities to support learning in school.

Encourage parents to communicate further with you.

Encourage parents to contribute to the class with their time.

Important Events

Highlight important events in the class and school schedule (e.g., testing schedule).

Highlight upcoming events parents should attend (e.g., conferences, school plays).

Highlight opportunities for parents to become involved with the class and school (e.g., PTO meetings, reading with students).

Note: The newsletter should be accessible to all parents. In some situations, you may need to translate the newsletter into the parent's native language.

Assignment: Submit a copy of your parent newsletter.

Put It Into Practice, cont'd.

3. Create a Handbook

In this ongoing activity, you will collect literacy resources in a Handbook of Effective Literacy Practices (see page 6) to use in your classroom.

Today, you will create a section focused on building connections between home and school. Include resources you already use and plan to use in the future. Place these resources in the section for **Connecting School and Home**. You may want to include:

- the chart you completed in Session Preparation
- the completed Parent-Teacher Conference Planner from Activity 1
- the parent newsletter you created in Activity 2
- a list of parent involvement practices you implement throughout the year
- a list of suggestions you provide to parents for working with their children at home
- parent surveys or questionnaires regarding home literacy practices
- samples of published brochures for parents (see the Related Resources for this session)

Assignment: Submit a copy of your completed Handbook at the end of the workshop series. **Idea:** Do this activity with your colleagues to create a comprehensive collection of resources and instructional plans.

Assignments

If you are taking this workshop for credit or professional development, submit the following assignments for session 8: Connecting School and Home:

1. Session Preparation

Complete the Connecting School and Home Chart.

2. Determine Conferencing Practices

Complete the activity and respond to the questions that follow.

3. Reflect on Your Learning

Review and complete your notes. Write a final reflection on the session.

4. Plan a Parent-Teacher Conference

Complete and submit the Conference Planner to determine the agenda of a parent-teacher conference.

5. Publish a Newsletter

Design and submit a newsletter informing parents of classroom literacy instruction, student work, and important events.

6. Create a Handbook

Submit a copy of your completed Handbook at the end of the workshop series.

Related Resources

Parent Resources

The following brochures on home-school connections are available from the International Reading Association (www.reading.org):

Family Literacy and the School Community: A Partnership for Lifelong Learning
What Is Family Literacy? Getting Involved in Your Child's Literacy Learning
Explore the Playground of Books: Tips for Parents of Beginning Readers
Get Ready To Read: Tips for Parents of Young Children
Library Safari: Tips for Parents of Young Readers and Explorers
Making the Most of Television: Tips for Parents of Young Viewers
Making the Reading-Writing Connection: Tips for Parents of Young Learners
Summer Reading Adventure: Tips for Parents of Young Readers

Professional Resources

Au, K. H. *Literacy Instruction in Multicultural Settings*. New York, N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993.

Baumann, J. F., and D. Thomas. "If You Can Pass Momma's Tests, Then She Knows You're Getting Your Education. A Case Study of Support for Literacy Learning Within an African-American Family." *The Reading Teacher* 51, no. 2 (1997): 108–120.

Barillas, M. "Literacy at Home: Honoring Parent Voices Through Writing." *The Reading Teacher* 54, no. 3 (2000): 302–308.

Delpit, L. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York, N.Y.: The New Press, 1995.

Edwards, P. A. "Combining Parents' and Teachers' Thoughts About Storybook Reading at Home and School." In Morrow, L. M., ed., *Family Literacy: Connections in Schools and Communities*, 54–69. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1995.

Epstein, J. "Parents' Reactions to Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement." *The Elementary School Journal* 86 (1986): 277–294.

Heath, S. B. *Ways With Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Moll, L. *Funds of Knowledge: Learning From Language Minority Households*. ERIC Digest. ED367146.

Morrow, L. M. *Family Literacy: Connections in Schools and Communities*. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1995.

Morrow, L. M., J. R. Paratore, and D. Tracey. *Family Literacy: New Perspectives, New Opportunities*. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1994.

Paratore, J. "Implementing an Intergenerational Literacy Project: Lessons Learned."

In Morrow, L. M., ed., *Family Literacy: Connections in Schools and Communities*, 37–53. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1995.

Purcell-Gates, V. "Stories, Coupons, and the TV Guide: Relationships Between Home Literacy Experiences and Emergent Literacy Knowledge." *Reading Research Quarterly* 31 (1996): 0–428.

Shanahan, T., N. M. Mulhern, and F. Rodriguez-Brown. "Project FLAME: Lessons Learned From a Family Literacy Program for Linguistic Minority Families." *The Reading Teacher* 48, no. 7 (1995): 586–594.

Teale, W. H. "Home Background and Young Children's Literacy Development." In Teale, W. H., and E. Sulzby, eds., *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading*, 173–206. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1986.

Tracey, D. H. "Enhancing Literacy Growth Through Home-School Connections." In Strickland, D. S., and L. M. Morrow, eds., *Beginning Reading and Writing*. New York, N.Y.: Teachers College Press, 2000.

Related Resources, cont'd.

Related Research

Edwards, P. A. "Fostering Early Literacy Through Parent Coaching." In Hiebert, E., ed., *Literacy for a Diverse Society*, 199–213. New York, N.Y.: Teachers College Press, 1991.

Edwards, P. A., et al. "Designing a Collaborative Model of Family Involvement in Literacy: Researchers, Teachers, and Parents Work Together." In Lancy, D., ed., *Children's Emergent Literacy*, 325–340. Westport, Conn.: Praeger Press, 1994.

Edwards, P. A., et al. *A Path To Follow: Learning To Listen to Parents*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1999.

Epstein, J. L., and S. L. Dauber. "School Programs and Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement in Inner-city Elementary and Middle Schools." *Elementary School Journal* 91 (1991): 289–304.

Heath, S. B. *Ways with Words*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Moll, L., and J. B. Greenberg. "Creating Zones of Possibilities: Combining Social Contexts for Instruction." In Moll, L. C., ed., *Vygotsky and Education*, 319–348. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Moll, L. C., et al. "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms." *Theory into Practice* 31 (1992): 132–141.

Paratore, J. R. *Opening Doors, Opening Opportunities: Family Literacy in an Urban Community*. Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 2001.

Paratore, J. R., et al. *What Should We Expect of Family Literacy? Experiences of Latino Children Whose Parents Participate in an Intergenerational Literacy Program*. Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1999.

Purcell-Gates, et al. "Literacy at the Harts' and the Larsens': Diversity Among Poor Minority Families." *The Reading Teacher* 48 (1995): 572–579.

Purcell-Gates, V. *Other People's Words: The Cycle of Illiteracy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Classroom Excerpts Used in the Video

Classrooms shown in the video session are from *Teaching Reading K–2: A Library of Classroom Practices*.

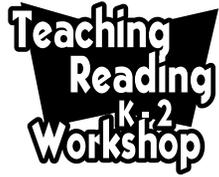
Becoming Readers and Writers with Sheila Owen

Cassandra Becomes a Fluent Reader with Hildi Perez

Promoting Readers as Leaders with Valerie Kostandos

Staying on Topic with Martha Duran-Contreras

William Finds His Base with Stacey Soto

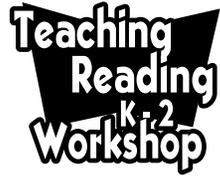


Connecting School and Home Chart

Instructions:

- Complete this chart by listing how parents can support their children's literacy at home.
- Use this chart as you move through the workshop to add any new information, instructional practices, and/or questions.

	Before you Watch	Reflection
Home Literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can parents support their child's literacy development? • How do you find out about students' home literacy interests and practices? 		
Home-School Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you encourage home literacy? • How do you promote home-school connections? • How do you support parents? 		
Challenges and Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the difficulties you face in building home-school connections? 		

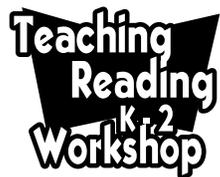


Instructions:

As you watch Dr. Paratore's lecture, use the posters to note important information.

Session 8: Connecting School and Home Poster 1

What We Know
<p>Language, culture, and class influence the ways parents and children use literacy and the ways they understand schooling; BUT,</p>
<p>Virtually all linguistic, cultural, and social class groups perceive education to be of critical importance in their children's lives.</p>



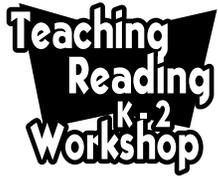
Instructions:

As you watch Dr. Paratore's lecture, use the posters to note important information.

Session 8: Connecting School and Home Poster 2

Making Sense of What We Know

Teachers need to exchange, rather than prescribe, ways of using literacy and language.



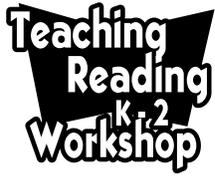
Instructions:

As you watch Dr. Paratore's lecture, use the posters to note important information.

Session 8: Connecting School and Home Poster 3

"Parents' education did not explain their experiences with parent involvement unless teacher practices were taken into account. In the classrooms of teachers who were leaders in the use of parent involvement, parents of all educational levels said they were frequently involved in learning activities at home."

Epstein, J. "Parents' Reactions to Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement." In *The Elementary School Journal* 86 (1986): 277-294.



Student's Name: _____

Conference Planner

Conference Date: _____

Student's Strength What strengths will you report?	Student's Needs What needs will you report?

Evidence of Performance What writing samples and assessment records will you present to illustrate the strengths and needs?

Home literacy What questions do you have about the student's home literacy practices? The student's home literacy skills?

Teacher's Goals What are your goals for the student?	Parent's Goals What are the parent's goals for the

Follow-Up How will you follow-up on this conference?

Notes
