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Effective family literacy practices

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Abstract

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EFFECTIVE FAMILY LITERACY PRACTICES

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Division of Literacy Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By

Stefanie Naumburg Riepe

May 2009

This Project by: Stefanie Naumburg Riepe

Titled: Effective Family Literacy Practices

Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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Abstract

This project focuses on effective family literacy practices. The project consists of family literacy activities that support student achievement, family literacy activities that build relationships, and family literacy activities that address cultural differences. These activities were developed from the literature supporting current teaching practices in a Midwestern suburban school. The implementation timeline for this project is one school year. It can be implemented yearly, with adaptations based on changing family needs.

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Introduction

Family literacy is a topic that has been researched for decades. It can take on many forms, from community programs that promote intergenerational literacy; to school programs set up to get parents involved in their children's schooling; to the everyday literacy activities in which families engage while at home, away from the school setting. Despite the different forms of family literacy, the common factor is the family. Parents and family members are a child's first teacher, and family plays a significant role in a child's literacy development and success at school. In the era of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, parental involvement is part of the legislation; thus, there is an increased importance set upon family literacy.

Rationale

I teach in a Basic School that was developed using the framework outlined by Boyer (1995) in *The Basic School: A community for learning.* One of the priorities of a Basic School is the school as community, with parents as partners being an important part of fulfilling the community priority. I have always felt that my school was successful in involving parents as partners. After attending a presentation on the work of Mapp, researcher in the field of families and communities in education, I realized there was more to be done at my school to involve parents. I wanted to study family literacy to determine how better to involve parents as partners at my school.

Purpose

The purpose of my study of family literacy was threefold. First, I wanted to find out the impact that family literacy has on reading achievement in order to show the importance of this priority at my school. Next, I wanted to discern which components of

family literacy programs made programs successful. Finally, I wanted to find effective ways to bridge what can be a cultural disconnect between literacy at school and at home. By doing so, I can determine ways that my colleagues and I can develop strong parent partnerships with all families at my school while embracing cultural and literacy diversity.

McIntyre, Kyle, Moore, Sweazy, and Greer (2001) emphasized "that children learn best when instruction matches their cultural ways of knowing through interaction within their 'zones of proximal development' or ZPD" (p. 265). While my colleagues and I are familiar with ZPD and the varying developmental levels of our students, we are not experienced in linking students' life experiences to instruction regularly or anticipating how students may respond to instruction in the typical school setting. This study will help my colleagues and me to link students' home and school lives, ideally almost seamlessly.

Importance

While family literacy has been researched for decades, it has been at the forefront of educational decision-making in recent years. As mandated in NCLB (2001), schools that receive Title I funds are required to implement parental involvement policies. "The aim of this section of the law is to ensure that parents are involved in their child's education in ways that will increase student academic achievement and school performance" (Jacobi, Wittreich, & Hogue, 2003, p. 11).

Giving family literacy and parental involvement similar credit as NCLB, Comber (2000) asserted quite simply, "Children's homes and family lives do not simply disappear when they begin schooling" (p. 39). She argued that educators must understand what students' lives are like at home and envision what their lives will be like when they get

older. She emphasized that a student's home life is not "background" to what happens in school; in fact, it is central. When children start school, they often have to "make sense" of school; sometimes there is a great disconnect between home and school. Comber (2000) described the "Catch-22 of readiness:"

> ...some children may appear "ready" for school because they come with a selective repertoire of social and communicative practices upon which school literacy learning is contingent. In contrast, other children may appear "unready" for school literacy learning because their participative repertoires are different from those required for literacy lessons (p. 40).

NCLB has put an increased, but necessary, importance upon family literacy and parental involvement. Administrators and educators must find effective ways to connect with families and to raise student achievement.

Terminology

Family literacy can take on many forms and definitions. The term *family literacy* was first coined in Taylor's (1983) book, *Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write*. Taylor did not explicitly define family literacy, but she wrote about her research involving families and the literacy activities that were part of the "fabric" of their everyday lives (p. 87).

Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2006) used a similar, broad definition of family literacy offered by McGee and Morrow (2005): "a concept that encompasses the ways that people learn and use literacy in their home and community lives" (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, p. 261). Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) cited that "parental

involvement is considered within a broad framework of experiences and activities located in both the home and school" (p. 77).

The International Reading Association (IRA), as reported by Morrow, Paratore, and Tracey (1994), views family literacy in a broad context. For the purpose of this literature review, the IRA's multidimensional definition of *family literacy*, adopted in 1994, will be used:

1. Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community.

2. Family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps adults and children "get things done."

3. Examples of family literacy might include using drawing or writing to share ideas; composing notes or letters to communicate messages; keeping records; making lists; reading and following directions; or sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading, and writing.

4. Family literacy may be initiated purposefully by a parent, or it may occur spontaneously as parents and children go about the business of their daily lives.

5. Family literacy activities may also reflect the ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage of the families involved.

6. Family literacy activities may be initiated by outside institutions or agencies. These activities are often intended to support the acquisition and development of school-like literacy behaviors of parents, children, and families.

7. Family literacy activities initiated by outside agencies may include family

    storybook reading, completing homework assignments, or writing essays or

    reports (Morrow, Paratore, & Tracey, 1994).

Research Questions

This family literacy project was guided by a primary research question: What

impact does family literacy have on reading achievement? From this primary question, I

determined there were two secondary questions:

1. What are the components of effective family literacy programs?

2. What are effective ways to bridge what can be a cultural disconnect between

    home and school views of literacy?

I wanted to find out what makes family literacy effective, whether it be structured family

literacy programs or everyday literacy in which families engage at home. I also wanted to

find out how better to make the link between home and school, especially when different

cultures and literacy beliefs are involved.

Review of the Literature

In his book, *The Basic School: A community for learning*, Boyer (1995) asserted, "the home is, without question, the child's first classroom" (p. 48). Boyer outlined four priorities for successful schools: the school as community, a curriculum with coherence, a climate for learning, and a commitment to character. Within that first priority – the school as community – Boyer called upon teachers and administrators to embrace parents as partners. Researchers have shown the importance of parental and family involvement throughout a child's schooling. In this review of the literature on *family literacy*, I examine the specific impact that family literacy can have on reading achievement. I also consider key components of effective family literacy programs. Finally, I address what researchers suggest as effective ways to bridge what can be a cultural disconnect between home and school with regard to literacy.

Impact on Reading Achievement

Through research and government data collection, it has been shown that family literacy has a positive effect on student success in school. It is important for educators to consider this evidence as they design comprehensive literacy programs – and specifically, family literacy programs – for their students.

In a 2002 brochure titled *Family-School Partnerships: Essential Elements of Literacy Instruction in the United States*, the IRA reported that family involvement in education is a more important factor in a child's success than family education or income. The IRA also reported that students from low-income households, and of culturally and racially diverse backgrounds, experience greater success in school when schools involve their families as "allies."

More than a decade ago, Henderson and Berla (1994) published a review of more than 85 research studies in the areas of family literacy and parental involvement that were conducted over 30 years. Through the research, the reviewers found that the most accurate predictor of a child's success at school was the family's ability to "1) create a home environment that encourages learning, 2) express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers, 3) become involved their children's education at school and in the community" (p. 15). In fact, Henderson and Berla found that if one or two of these criteria are met, children do "measurably better at school" (p. 15). There were documented benefits to students:

- Higher grades and test scores,

- Better attendance and more homework done,

- Fewer placements in special education,

- More positive attitudes and behavior,

- Higher graduation rates, and

- Greater enrollment in postsecondary education.

Morrow and Young (1997) conducted a study in which they designed a home-based literacy program with input from parents and teachers. The researchers' purpose for the study was to see the impact of a family literacy program on student reading achievement motivation and interest in literacy. To determine student growth in achievement, three measures were used: a story retelling and story rewriting test, a probed comprehension test, and the California Test of Basic Skills. The researchers also used teacher ratings to determine increased interest and motivation as well as interviews of students to determine increased literacy activity at home. The experimental group (the

group participating in the home-based literacy program) scored significantly better on the story retelling and story rewriting tests than did the control group (the group participating only in the school-based literacy component). The teachers of the experimental group rated the students higher in reading and writing interest than did the control group teachers. Interviews with the participants indicated significant home literacy involvement over the control group. The California Test of Basic Skills was the only measure that did not show significant differences between the two groups (Morrow & Young, 1997).

Researchers Paratore and Jordan (2007) reported the findings from two programs that support family literacy practices and the resulting student achievement. Project EASE was a yearlong program for families of children entering kindergarten; it consisted of parent-education sessions as well as at-home and at-school activities for parents and children. When families had completed the program, children were given different language and literacy tasks. The children made significant gains in vocabulary, narrative understanding, phonemic awareness, and story sequencing. More in-depth data analysis showed that the children's growth in these areas was directly related to the extent of participation in the parent-child literacy activities.

Paratore and Jordan (2007) also reported on Building Language Together (BLT), a program quite similar to Project EASE, but designed for pre-school children. The activities were simpler, shorter, and more playful in nature for the younger children, and had more of an emphasis on phonological awareness and letter recognition. BLT was created as a response to findings from the Home-School Study of Language Development, a longitudinal study conducted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Researchers reported "that mealtime talk, book reading, and parent-child play

opportunities had positive relationships to their children's later literacy achievement"

(Paratore & Jordan, 2007, p. 694). While the development of BLT was research-based,

"observed student outcomes include increased vocabularies, improved narrative

understanding, more developed phonological abilities, more interest in writing, and better

academic preparation" (p. 696).

In 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported results

from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. The study measured children's home

literacy activities using an index that counts how often parents reported reading to

children, singing to children, telling them stories, as well as how many books and

audiotapes or compact discs were reported in the home. The children who ranked higher

on this home literacy index also scored higher on a reading scale upon entering

kindergarten. This positive relationship existed for both poor and non-poor families alike

(NCES, 2003).

Time is a basic reason why parental involvement in a child's literacy development

is successful in increasing a child's reading achievement (Rasinski, 2003). This time

factor can be interpreted in two ways. First, it is important for students to learn how to

read in the primary grades; if they don't, they will likely fall behind and stay behind their

peers for the remainder of their schooling. The second impact of time is the amount of

time children spend at home compared to at school. Children are at home longer than

they are at school, and any literacy work done at home would likely be one-to-one time.

Schools are limited in the amount of instructional time given to students, and most

literacy instruction occurs in small groups or with the whole class. Rasinski (2003)

calculated that if parents worked with their children for 30 minutes per night during the

week, and 60 minutes on the weekends, it is possible that they could increase by 50% the amount of literacy support their child receives.

Components of Effective Family Literacy Programs

With family involvement and family literacy shown to have a positive impact on student interest in reading and reading achievement, it is important to look closely at effective family literacy programs. What aspects of these programs make them effective?

In an effort to define comprehensive family literacy programs – those with components that extend beyond school-age children – Holloway (2004) cited research by Padak, Sapin, and Baycich (2002). The researchers defined comprehensive programs as having certain components:

1. Basic skills education for adult family members to help them learn skills for the workplace.

2. Early childhood education for the children to bolster the skills they will need to succeed in school.

3. Parent education that enables adult family members to discuss parenting practices, nutrition, and the importance of literacy learning for their children.

4. Time for the adults and children to participate together in literacy activities that they can also do at home (p. 89).

Neuman, Caperelli, and Kee (1998) noted that when it came to the development of family literacy programs, "the voices of the participants themselves have largely been absent" (p. 244). In order for programs to meet the needs and long-term goals of families, it is critical to get input from the families themselves. These researchers reviewed 52 grant awards given by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. When

reviewing the resulting family literacy programs, these researchers studied quarterly and final reports from programs, as well as open-ended responses from program participants. While there was great variability among the family literacy programs – in order to meet the diverse needs of the participants – the researchers found "defining characteristics and key features of practice" (p. 246):

- Offered literacy instruction to families, broadly defined, to include parents, caregivers, siblings, and young children;

- Created strategic recruitment plans, using multiple methods that included word-of-mouth and local radio and newspaper announcements;

- Included strong participant involvement in curriculum planning and development;

- Emphasized retention through creative scheduling and transportation and childcare for those who needed it;

- Involved experienced teaching staff, who were knowledgeable about diversity (cultural, economic, and instructional) and learning development for both adults and children;

- Included ongoing monitoring of program quality from multiple stakeholders and participants;

- Created a supportive environment, where achievements (both short and longer term) were recognized and celebrated;

- Provided opportunities for family and social networks to be formed through activities in classrooms and communities; and

- Were knowledgeable about the community and its resources; sought active collaborations with other social and educational services (p. 246).

Open-ended comments from participants in these programs focused on the positive social connections they made, and how these connections extended outside the program. Families expressed desires for their children to have more than what they had growing up, but adults in these programs ended up commenting on how they saw what they could achieve and were motivated to keep learning along with their children.

Jacobi, Wittreich, and Hogue (2003) also highlighted participant involvement as key to designing a family literacy program that families will want to attend. They had two basic recommendations: "start by asking," and "create your parent involvement program based on the needs and interests identified by parents" (p. 12). If parents are given a voice and are asked for their input, they are more likely to participate and stay involved.

On a simpler scale, Padak and Rasinski (2006) outlined five "design characteristics" for successful parental involvement programs:

1. Identify key goals and use proven and effective strategies.

2. Provide ongoing training, communication, and support.

3. Provide authentic reading texts.

4. Make activities easy, enjoyable, and consistent.

5. Provide ways to document home activities (p. 292-293).

In their research, Padak and Rasinski (2006) provided rationales for each of the five design characteristics. Parents should get the most out of the time they spend working with their children, and this is more likely to happen when goals provide a focus and research-based strategies are implemented. Families not only need to know how to

participate in the literacy activities, but they also need to feel comfortable doing the activities regardless of reading ability or language spoken. This can be accomplished with ongoing communication and support. There is even greater chance for success if parents don't have to acquire appropriate materials for working with their children, but if teachers instead provide reading materials. Families need brief, simple routines for ease, with some variability to maintain interest. Less formal, playful activities are more enjoyable and maintain long-term interest. Finally, when families have a way to document activities, teachers can gauge the success of the program; documentation can be as simple as a log sheet for parents to fill out.

Padak and Rasinski (2006) used these design characteristics to create and improve a parental involvement program called Fast Start. In Fast Start, parents are involved in a 10- to 15-minute literacy session nightly with their children. During the session, a parent reads a brief text to the child several times, the parent and child read simultaneously several times, the child reads the text alone several times, and finally, the parent and child engage in a related phonemic or word study activity. The positive results of this program included student growth in vocabulary, letter identification, and reading fluency.

In its Standards for Parent Involvement Programs, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) listed six types of parental involvement:

1. Communication: Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.

2. Parenting: Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

3. Student learning: Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

4. Volunteering: Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

5. School decision-making and advocacy: Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

6. Collaborating with community: Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning (Jacobi, et al., 2003).

Klassen-Endrizzi (2000) shared her experience leading graduate students as they helped struggling readers during a four-week summer reading program. A critical component of this program was family participation. She involved families by holding pre-program conferences (parents asked questions and raised concerns about reading), having once-weekly family workshops, providing daily at-home literacy activities, reading/responding in a parent literacy book, and keeping a parent-teacher journal. Her reasoning for involving families in the summer program was threefold. First, parents are a child's first teacher and there is the potential for so much learning to occur outside the classroom. Second, she felt that parents needed to understand the "literacy events" their children were experiencing that summer as well as uncover their own "notions of literacy" (p. 63). Third, the author wanted to provide a supportive environment for parents to communicate.

Klassen-Endrizzi admitted that "radical change" didn't happen over four weeks (p. 69). The students returned to a school setting that used different reading approaches than the summer program. Similar to Padak and Rasinski's design characteristic – provide ongoing training, communication, and support – she acknowledged the need for ongoing support. "What was missing from this experience was the long-term support

families need as they explore broader avenues for helping their child as a struggling reader" (Klassen-Endrizzi, p. 69).

Continual reflection and evaluation might be another important characteristic of successful family literacy programs. The IRA (2002) pointed out that there "are no formulas for creating effective programs" (¶ 9). Designing effective programs involves educators asking key questions – of themselves, of their coworkers, and of their students' families – based on a particular situation and building home-school partnerships based on the answers to those questions. The IRA suggested questions for educators to guide their thinking:

1. Who are the family members and what roles should they assume?

2. What kinds of involvement are advantageous for our school?

3. What terms should be used to accurately portray the kind of balanced family literacy we want?

4. Are there areas in which families have expressed an interest or need to be involved? (¶ 9)

Forethought and purposeful planning are essential as teachers and administrators strive to develop home-school partnerships. However, as Cook-Cottone (2004) emphasized, there are so many family literacy programs, all with varied components, it can be difficult to determine which components or other factors make a program successful. A program's effectiveness has less to do with methods taught to families, and more to do with "the process by which literacy is learned and shared within the family. While different in many ways, all of these programs share family involvement in the learning process. That is, the families make the difference" (Cook-Cottone, 2004, p. 208).

Bridging the Gap between Home and School

While strong evidence exists in support of family involvement in education and family literacy programs, significant effort on the part of teachers, administrators, community members, and families is necessary to make such involvement programs successful. An important part of this effort is for teachers to broaden their views of literacy and parental involvement and to learn from the experiences of the children they teach and the families of these children.

Teachers have had diverse learners in their classrooms for decades. In 1982, Heath documented the literacy lives of three communities in the Southeastern United States. Maintown represented the mainstream middle class, Roadville represented a white milling community, and Trackton represented a black milling community. Maintown children had extensive experiences with books before attending school. By contrast, Roadville children had limited experiences with books and their narrative abilities were also limited. Trackton children had extensive narrative skills (although not necessarily linear, as is expected for writing), but they had limited experiences taking meaning from books. What is evident from Heath's study is that "the mainstream type of literacy orientation is not the only type even among Western societies" (p. 73). How can teachers recognize this, and learn about their students' literacy orientations?

Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) used the term "'funds of knowledge' to refer to… historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). The researchers attempted to study household knowledge, while taking a close look at classroom teaching, with the hope of connecting the two to make classroom instruction

more meaningful for the students and families. Other researchers have also taken on this task.

McIntyre, et al., (2001) worked together on a research project with one goal to connect students' home cultures with classroom instruction. These researchers conducted family visits to learn more about the students' home lives and cultures. Through the family visits, they were able to learn about the families' schedules and life circumstances. This knowledge gave the teacher-researchers something to think about as they planned for homework assignments, thinking about when the students would have time to complete them and who would be able to help them. The family visits were also a way for the teacher-researchers to learn more about the social, emotional, and academic needs of their students. In their own homes, parents and students alike were more comfortable sharing struggles, ways of dealing with stress, etc. The teacher-researchers also learned about the students' and families' funds of knowledge through these family visits. Getting to know students and families on a deeper level allowed the teacher-researchers to plan lessons around student interests, incorporate family members as experts, select literature with student interests and family events in mind, and gain a better idea of each student's ZPD (McIntyre, et al., 2001).

Morrow and Paratore (1993) examined the disconnect that exists between children's home lives and school lives. Even though some sort of literacy is evident in most homes, the specific home literacy activities might not contribute to a child's school success. On the other hand, the types of literacy activities practiced at school might not be meaningful for the children once they go home after school. "The nature of such conflicts can make it difficult for some parents to integrate school-based literacy events

into their children's lives" (Morrow & Paratore, 1993, p. 195). The researchers emphasized that family literacy must be viewed from a broader perspective, with input from children and families and with respect for different cultures and cultural literacy traditions.

Fawcett, Rasinski, and Linek (1997) also emphasized the importance of teachers broadening their views of family literacy. These researchers received 99 responses to a survey given to teachers to determine the teachers' views on parental involvement in reading programs. The responses represented teachers at every K-8 level, Chapter I reading teachers, and a special education teacher. There were four response patterns to the survey: Parents should read to and with their children at home, parents should provide reading materials in the home, parents should reinforce school curriculum in various ways, and parents should participate at school as tutors and aides. Fawcett et al. believed these responses reflect limited views of (a) parental involvement, (b) literacy, (c) parental competence, (d) parental motivation, and (e) home-school collaboration. In order for teachers to broaden these views, the researchers thought the first step is for teachers to recognize and honor different learning types. This includes "traditions, experiences, and language expertise that can build language and literacy competencies" (Fawcett et al., p. 35). In order to remove obstacles that keep parents out of schools, the researchers posed questions for teachers to ask themselves:

1. Do we value the home literacies of our students?

2. Do we recognize that the school curriculum is not the only one?

3. Do we contact parents only when there are problems?

4. Is home-school collaboration a one-way or two-way street?

5. Do we realize that parents have knowledge about their children, and how they

    respond to our instruction at home, that can help us improve our curriculum?

    (Fawcett et al., p. 37)

Klassen-Endrizzi (2000) sought to involve parents and provide a supportive

environment for them during her summer reading program for struggling readers. Her

belief that home and school experiences are the basis of everyone's own view of literacy

made her want to include parents and tap into their "notions of literacy" (p. 63). Teachers

must acknowledge that students' activities outside of school – on a sports field, at

daycare, at church, etc. – play a significant role in their lives. "As teachers, it is our

responsibility to explore literacy learning potential with families inside and outside the

classroom" (Klassen-Endrizzi, 2000, p. 69). When teachers form partnerships with

parents, they "come to understand and respect family literacy environments. As teachers

develop a broader understanding of their students and those students' families, they can

teach children more effectively" (p. 69).

Cook-Cottone (2004) described another model for a family literacy program –

parents as mentors. In this program, parents were mentored in effective literacy teaching

methods so that they could be literacy mentors to their children. This mentor format

helped bridge the gap between home and school views of literacy because parents, when

teaching their children, would put concepts in a familial or cultural context more familiar

and meaningful to their child.

In their report published in 1979, Hunter and Harman (as cited in Taylor, 1983)

found that "only 2 to 4 percent of nonliterate adults participate in existing programs

because the programs are not immediately relevant to their everyday lives" (p. 88).

Taylor contended that program participants should have input in program design in order for the program to be personally meaningful. If parents embrace literacy and make it a meaningful part of their lives, it is more likely that this attitude will transfer to their children. Rasinski (2003) took this even further in his hope that if parents become involved in their child's literacy education, their children will grow up to view parental involvement as an essential part of their own children's growth.

In her study of 6 families, Taylor (1983) found that parents were filling their children's lives with literacy just by going about their daily routines; literacy was "a part of the very fabric of family life" (p. 87). For the children in these families, the transition from home to school was relatively easy. Taylor concluded that in order for children to be able to learn "through the pedagogical practices of the first-grade classroom" (p. 98), they need to have experienced reading, writing and story sharing first as cultural activities.

When attempting to bridge the gap between home and school, Neuman, Caperelli, and Kee (1998) proposed some key principles for administrators and teachers to keep in mind:

- Family literacy is not something that can be 'done' to people.
- Family literacy is not about changing people but about offering choices and opportunities to families.
- Parents come with rich histories and experiences that should be honored and used in program development.
- Family literacy programs have both direct and indirect benefits.
- Family literacy learning is a matter of 'small wins.' (p. 250)

The IRA (2002) makes seven recommendations to teacher educators, classroom teachers, and administrators regarding implementation of family literacy programs. Two of these recommendations relate directly to honoring home cultures and views of literacy:

1. Be aware of the way cultural assumptions and life experiences influence interpretation of events, and respect the beliefs, values, opinions, lifestyles, and childrearing practices of families.

2. Be able to build on family diversity in the classroom, at the school site, and in the home. (p. 20)

For educators seeking to involve families in their children's education, there exist sufficient resources in the forms of research, data, and information about current programs. Family literacy has been shown to have a positive impact on students' success in school, especially when careful attention is paid to program design, family cultures, and family views of literacy.

The Project

Context

Walton Elementary (pseudo name used to protect confidentiality of the school) opened in 1994 as the first Basic School in this region of the state, located in the Midwest. The current principal was one of the original teachers and proponents of the Basic School framework. There are 539 students enrolled at Walton. Nearly 20 percent are Asian, 11 percent are African American, and 4 percent are Hispanic. Additionally, 5.7 percent of Walton's students receive special education instruction, and 12.4 percent of the population receives free or reduced lunch.

I teach at Walton in a multiage classroom of 6- to 8-year-old students. I have 20 students: 9 females and 11 males. Of these students, fourteen are Caucasian, three are Hispanic, two are Asian, and one is African-American. Four students are receiving supplemental reading instruction, and three students are receiving supplemental math instruction. Three students receive free or reduced lunch.

As a Basic School, one of the main priorities at Walton is *parents as partners* (Boyer, 1995). The school opened with a focus on supporting parents; there was once some space off the media center hub for a parent room filled with literature and other resources on various parenting topics. The room was a comfortable space, complete with a coffeemaker. Due to Walton's growing enrollment and the lack of classroom space, the parent room was eliminated approximately four years ago.

Even without the parent room – a physical space – the philosophy of parents as partners is assumed to be a continuing priority. Specifically on Team 2 (the team of 6- to 8-year-olds), teachers try to involve families by having students read "just-right" books

nightly to family members, with a family member filling out a reading log. Other ways for parents to become involved on Team 2 are to volunteer in their child's classroom working with students or performing clerical duties, participating in teacher-parent-student conferences, chaperoning field trips, providing treats and supplies for class parties, and attending events or performances involving Team 2 students.

When family involvement is connected to learning, that involvement is likely to increase student achievement; mere involvement alone is not necessarily linked to achievement (Allen, 2008). Team 2 seems to have many opportunities for parents to become involved at the primary level of their children's education. However, to what degree do these opportunities and events support student achievement?

Purpose and Objectives

Henderson and Mapp (2002) offered key findings and suggested three approaches for successful family involvement: building respectful relationships, engaging families in supporting learning at home, and addressing cultural differences. With those approaches in mind, the purpose of this project is twofold. First, I want to evaluate my classroom practices regarding family literacy to determine if they meet the three approaches. Next, I want to develop a family literacy framework to implement in my classroom. This framework will involve building upon my current practices, as well as developing new ones, in order to build relationships, support student achievement, and address cultural differences.

In my efforts to fulfill this purpose, there are four objectives for developing this family literacy framework:

1. To examine the current family literacy practices available to families of my students,

2. To determine the extent my current family literacy practices build relationships, support student achievement, or address cultural differences,

3. To build upon my current family literacy practices to satisfy the three approaches,

4. To develop or adopt research-based family literacy practices to satisfy the three approaches.

Project Overview

Allen (2008) recommended listing current family-involvement practices and events, and then assigning each to one of these categories: Builds Deep Relationships, Supports Student Learning, or Does Neither (But We Keep Doing It Anyway).

I specifically examined the ways in which families of my students are involved at home and at school. Using Mapp and Henderson's suggestion, I divided these activities into three categories (see Table 1).

Upon examining my categorized list, I noted that the activities listed under Does Neither (But We Keep Doing It Anyway) had potential for becoming more meaningful. I wanted to strengthen them through this project. Additionally, some activities in the other two categories had potential to be more meaningful for families and students. This project will be the means through which all family literacy activities in my classroom are implemented.

The family literacy approach for this project will revolve around these three categories: Family literacy activities that build relationships, family literacy activities that support student learning, and family literacy activities that address cultural differences.

Ideally, an approach to family literacy involvement in my classroom will include activities that embrace more than one, if not all three, categories. The duration of this project is one school year (see Table 2), and it can be implemented each school year, with appropriate adaptations based on new family needs and interests.

Table 1

Current Family Involvement Opportunities, Team 2, Walton Elementary

Builds Relationships	Supports Student Learning	Does Neither (But we keep doing it anyway)
▪ Ice Cream Social	▪ Reading "book bags"	▪ Families coming to school to watch students perform
▪ Cultural presentations by families on United Nations Day	▪ Adult chaperones on field trips (parents are given educational roles)	▪ Families donating supplies for Founder's Day service project
▪ Parent-teacher-student conferences	▪ Parent-teacher-student conferences	▪ Families donating food for our annual 100th Day food drive
▪ Expert of the Week	▪ Back to School Night	
▪ Parents as classroom volunteers	▪ Parents as classroom volunteers	

Table 2

Family Literacy Project Implementation Timeline

Month	Family Literacy Involvement Activities
August	▪ Family visits
	▪ Ice Cream Social
September	▪ Back to School Night
	▪ First Family Literacy Night meeting
October	▪ United Nations Day family presentations
October, November	▪ Parent-student-teacher conferences (Fall)
November	▪ Poetry Alive! Performance
December	▪ Founder's Day
January	▪ Day 100 food drive
	▪ Team 2 musical performance
February, March	▪ Parent-student-teacher conferences (Spring)
April, May	▪ Family photo writing project
Throughout	▪ Family Literacy Night meetings (monthly)
the school year	▪ Literacy homework (as determined through contract between families and teacher)
	▪ Expert of the Week
	▪ Family member experts (during applicable units of study)
	▪ Family members volunteering in the classroom

Family Literacy Activities that Build Relationships

Parents are a child's first teacher. A child's family knows the child better than anyone. To meet the needs of my students, I want to get to know them and their families. In order to do this, I need to integrate family literacy activities that build relationships. It is important to build these relationships prior to or at the beginning of the school year, and to maintain the relationships throughout the year. This can be accomplished through family visits; family involvement in planning literacy meetings, events, and service projects; and communication at parent-teacher-student conferences.

Family visits. Family members are valuable resources for educators to improve upon their teaching practices (McIntyre, et al., 2001). To establish a relationship with families upon which to build, the first step in my family literacy approach is to conduct family visits. Family visits are a way to learn about families' schedules and life circumstances. They are also a way to learn more about the social, emotional, and academic needs of students. Parents and students alike can become more comfortable sharing struggles, ways of dealing with stress, etc. (McIntyre, et al., 2001). The focus of my family visits will be what I could learn from the families and students, not what they need to learn from me. I will have a set of questions (Appendix A) in order to learn more about each student and his or her family.

Ideally, the family visits will be conducted prior to the start of school; since I teach in a multi-age setting, perhaps meeting my new families prior to school will be a priority. If that is not possible, the visits will be conducted early in the school year to build family relationships right away. My first contact with families is usually at the Ice Cream Social, a few days before school starts. It is such a busy time and it is difficult to

spend much time talking to each student and family. It would be preferable for Ice Cream

Social to be a time to follow-up with families that I have already met, or a time for me to

be able to refer to a future family visit during which we will have more time to talk.

Family involvement in planning. After visiting families (either at home or a

community site comfortable for them), next I will want to involve families in planning at-

home literacy activities for their children. Neuman, Caperelli, and Kee (1998)

emphasized inclusion of participant voices in developing literacy activities; such

"information is critical if programs are designed to accommodate family needs and life

goals" (p. 244). Other researchers have underscored the varied literacy activities that

happen at home (Heath, 1982; Taylor, 1983). Likewise, Neuman, et al. (1998) stressed

that family literacy cannot be "done" to people (p. 250), and family literacy is about

choices and opportunities, rather than attempts to change families.

The first part of participant involvement will have taken place during family

visits, when families shared their extensive knowledge about their children. During the

visits, I will have collected information from families about their home literacy activities.

This will be compiled and sent home as a way for families to share informally with other

families, and as a way for their ideas to be validated (Jacobi, Wittreich, & Hogue, 2003).

The next part of participant involvement will be a series of family meetings that

could be held at school or a community location and videotaped for those who are unable

to attend. The purpose of these meetings will be a chance for two-way communication

(teacher, families) regarding literacy goals. An important part of scheduling these

meetings is to include all family members so childcare is not an issue. I will also try to

arrange for families to bring potluck meal items; food is a great way to draw people to

meetings, and it takes away the worry some families might have of finding time to feed the family (Jacobi, Wittreich, & Hogue, 2003). A sample flyer invitation for the first meeting can be found in Appendix B. This would also be communicated through email, phone calls, and any other means of communication families use that I learned about during family visits.

During the first meeting, I will first have family members introduce themselves and their children (even non-school-aged children). Family members will have a chance to share what they do for a living, hobbies, etc. This would be a jump-start for the adults to network and possibly develop some friendships. It is important for the participants to feel comfortable with one another, and to feel valued. (See Table 3 for an overview of the first meeting agenda.)

Table 3

Overview of First Meeting

Family Literacy Meeting Agenda
▪ Family, teacher introductions
▪ Share school district Language Arts Standards & Benchmarks (1st, 2nd grade)
▪ Share daily literacy activities and literacy assessments at school
▪ Plan future literacy meetings (suggest topic ideas)
▪ Social time

After family introductions, I will then share the school district's Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks for first and second grade (Appendix C), our daily classroom

literacy activities (Appendix D), and the types of literacy assessments used district-wide (Appendix E).

This first meeting will also be an agenda-setting meeting for the remainder of the year. The family participants will decide on literacy topics for future meetings; I will supply an idea list if necessary (Appendix F), but participants will be welcome to generate new ideas. Together we will decide on the dates and times that seem to work best (and again, all family members would be invited), and families could sign up to bring potluck items for the future meetings (Jacobi, Wittreich, & Hogue, 2003; Neuman, Caperelli, & Kee, 1998).

The last part of the first meeting will involve some time for the families to get to know one another. This might be a time when they set up play dates, ask if anyone knows a good plumber, exchange recipes, and the like. In their analysis of successful family literacy programs, Neuman, Caperelli, and Kee (1998) noted:

> Literacy is learned within a social context, as an extension of relations with other people. Consequently, activities and actions that encouraged relationships to be formed, both inside and outside the classroom, seemed to enhance the social significance for families and communities (p. 248-249).

Once subsequent meeting topics are determined, I will begin each meeting with a chance for families to share "celebrations" – ideas or activities they have done at home that they feel have been successful (Jacobi, Wittreich, & Hogue, 2003; Neuman, Caperelli, & Kee, 1998). The goal will be for these celebrations to be related to literacy; however, all celebrations would be welcome. Next on the agenda will be the meeting topic or focus. Before social and networking time at the end of each meeting, participants

will have the chance to ask any questions or raise any concerns they might have. Again, these might stray from a literacy focus, and that is fine.

Service projects. An area of family involvement that has not been very meaningful in my classroom involves service projects. Every December, we celebrate Founder's Day, which is the birthday of our school's namesake. Walton was dedicated to serving the community, and Walton teachers want to instill that orientation toward service learning in our students. Also, we have a school-wide food drive near the 100th day of school, with a goal of each classroom collecting 100 food items. For both these projects, I have simply asked parents to supply materials and food items. In order to make these projects more meaningful, I will seek parent input at a monthly meeting. Perhaps parents have a service project idea that is dear to their hearts, or with which their employers can help.

Parent-teacher-student conferences. Conferences have always been a time of celebrating learning and goal setting for my students and families. Family visits, regular communication, and literacy meetings should help families feel even more aware of their children's progress come conference time. In the past, I have sent home a pre-conference form (see Appendix G), and I plan to continue this form of communication. It provides a way for families and students to communicate thoughts and questions to me, and having them return the form before conference time allows me to think through the best ways to respond and the best advice to give. I am always sure to begin conferences by discussing each family's form so their thoughts and questions are valued, and not forgotten at the end.

Fall and spring conferences will also be a time for me to refer to the family visits from the beginning of the school year. Each family will have shared what they want their child to work on most this year, and what they hope their child can achieve (from Appendix A). This will be a time for us to check in on those specific goals, celebrate progress, and make any needed changes.

Family Literacy Activities that Support Student Learning

In their examination of 80 studies on family involvement, Henderson and Mapp (2002) concluded that family involvement was likely to raise student achievement when the involvement opportunities were directly linked to learning. Keeping this in mind, I want to implement family involvement activities throughout the school year that are directly related to student learning. Back to School Night will serve as an opportunity for family members to learn about their child's school and classroom that is meaningful and helpful to them. Throughout the year, family members will have the chance to volunteer at school and to be involved in planning literacy homework and special events.

Back to school night. Walton teachers host a Back to School Night each September as a way to share with families the curricular expectations of their team. This is also a chance for teachers to share the various communication methods that are in place, as well as a time to share behavior expectations. My team has developed a slideshow presentation (Appendix H) that we use each year. We might "tweak" the presentation each year, but it generally contains the same information. Along with the presentation, handouts are available for parents in their child's classroom.

While the teachers on my team and I believe that the information we present and pass out on Back to School Night supports student learning, it can be overwhelming for

families. Thus, we are left to wonder how effective our traditional evening has been. In order to make Back to School Night more meaningful for parents, I have developed a survey (Appendix I) to be given to parents prior to Back to School Night. My team and I will use this survey to tailor our Back to School Night presentation to meet parents' needs.

Volunteer opportunities. At Walton, teachers have an open-door policy; families are welcome to visit our classroom at any time that is convenient for them. In my weekly newsletter, I always include a paragraph emphasizing this open-door policy. I make families aware that if they would like to "pop in," I might not have time to stop and talk with them; they are welcome to observe the class or "jump in" and help out.

Each year, toward the beginning of the school year, I send home a version of a parent volunteer letter (Appendices J and K). If family members would like to volunteer in the classroom, they can make choices about when, how often, and what they would be comfortable doing. I have included in these letters a space for family members to list other activities they would be comfortable doing that perhaps were not listed in the letter.

Reading homework. The teachers on my team and I have typically asked that families read with their children nightly, for about 15 to 20 minutes. Each year, we send home a plastic zipper bag with a letter explaining reading homework to parents (Appendix L) and a reading log (Appendix M). The students choose a just-right book to bring home nightly; students who are reading chapter books might only read a chapter each night. Our purposes for having nightly reading homework include: a chance for students to practice reading, a chance for families to be involved in their child's reading progress, and a way for students and families to get into the routine of completing

homework each night. Time is also a factor in wanting children to read regularly at home. Over the course of a year, children spend more of their time at home than at school; any time spent reading at home with family members can aid overall literacy achievement. (Rasinski, 2003)

The teachers on my team and I have found that as the school year goes on, fewer and fewer students return their book bags to school each morning, and the reading logs are not filled out consistently. The year starts out fine, with most students doing well with the routine. The families are aware of the reading homework procedures, but for some reason, parents and students do not keep up with the reading log.

This does not mean, however, that families are not engaging in literacy activities with their children at home. It could be that filling in the log is time consuming, or perhaps their schedules do not allow for a nightly routine. I developed a survey (Appendix N) for families regarding literacy-based homework. I plan to send my traditional reading homework letter and reading log along with the survey (or the survey could be turned into an online survey) to give parents an opportunity to come up with a plan for working on literacy activities with their children at home, in a way that works for them. I have developed a contract (Appendix O) for families to fill out. At conference times, or at other times as needed, we can revisit the homework contract to see what is working and what needs to be changed. In this way, I am showing family members that I value their views of literacy and their input for supporting their child's reading achievement at home.

Including all family members. When Neuman, Caperelli, and Kee (1998) reviewed grant awards given by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, one of

the defining characteristics they found was that successful family literacy programs "offered literacy instruction to families, broadly defined, to include parents, caregivers, siblings, and young children" (p. 246). I believe that by incorporating literacy activities that can involve the whole family, families will be more likely to have time for the activities, and the activities might be more likely to become family routines.

Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2006) suggest the use of literacy learning kits that students can take home for a period of time. Such kits could include books at various levels, a response journal, writing and drawing tools, and puppets. My students would benefit from literacy kits, and for students who have siblings, the kits could be a way for my students to involve family members. The local public library has various themed kits with books and puppets. I plan to check these out periodically, and add writing and drawing materials. Students could take these kits home on a rotating basis as a fun way to interact with texts and other family members.

Another way to involve all family members in a literacy project is through a photo literacy project. Allen (2008) described a project called Photographs of Local Knowledge Sources (PhOLKS) in which students took pictures of what was important to them at home and in their community. Family members were invited to help the students write stories about the photographs; family members "contributed descriptions, memories, poetry, letters, and personal stories" (p. 24).

Walton teachers are given $100 each year to spend for classroom purposes. I will use part of my $100 to purchase a class set of disposable cameras and to have the pictures developed. I will begin this project by sharing some photo essays with my class (Appendix P), as well as sharing photographs about my life outside school. I will also

invite any parents or other teachers who have an interest in photography to speak with the students about capturing images through a camera lens. As a community connection, I will invite a photographer from the community's local newspaper (Appendix Q). Once we have developed background knowledge on photography and photo essays, the students will be able to take the cameras home. After I develop the photographs, the students will work with family members to write about the significance of their photographs (Appendix R). It would be wonderful to be able to have family members come to our class to share the photographs and writing; if schedules do not permit that, I will have the students share with each other in class.

Special events. Student performances and presentations at school are events that parents and students alike seem to look forward to in my class. However, as noted in Table 1, simply inviting parents to school does not build relationships or support student achievement (Allen, 2008). Rather than discount such activities or events, Allen advocated that educators build on those events and activities, and find ways to build relationships or support student achievement through them.

My students (and all Team 2 students) participate in two annual special events: a *Poetry Alive!* performance in November, and a team musical in February. Both of these events involve reading, work with fluency and expression, acting; the musical also involves singing and the use of instruments as part of the storytelling. While students sometimes want their families to be surprised by their poetry or musical performance – and perhaps the families like to be surprised, too – there are ways to involve families on a deeper level than as mere audience members.

For parents who have signed up to volunteer during the day, I now plan to have them work with groups of students reading their poem or musical parts, with a focus on fluency and expression. If there are any family members with an interest or background in acting or performance, they will be invited to help out, as well. Any family members with a music background will be invited to help students practice their instruments. For family members that cannot make it to school during the day, they can have their child perform their parts for them at home to practice fluency and expression. If they would prefer not to hear their child's part before the actual performance, they can help their child work on fluency and expression in general, by reading other poems and plays together. While our two annual special events have been viewed in the past as a way for students to "show off" for their parents, I now envision these events as collaborative ones, involving teachers, students, and families.

Family Literacy Activities that Address Cultural Differences

"When we make culture central to creating family-school partnerships, we acknowledge differences with respect, marvel at similarities, and open up dialogue about how to support each student as a unique learner" (Allen, 2008, p. 27). Through this family literacy project, I want to build relationships with families on a deeper level than I have in the past, so as to truly understand the whole child. To accomplish this, I plan to tap into families' funds of knowledge, involve family members in planning, and utilize an annual United Nations Day celebration as a way to celebrate the many cultures at Walton.

Funds of knowledge. Family visits, which I will conduct before or at the beginning of the school year, not only serve to build relationships; they are ideal for addressing cultural differences. These visits will allow me to tap into families' funds of

knowledge (Allen, 2008; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2001). Through my conversations with families, I will learn about their family and work history, household activities, and parents' views of their roles (Allen, 2008). This information will be helpful to me in a variety of ways.

As I learn about family and work history, I will gain knowledge about a family's culture, as well as work schedules. Knowledge about household activities will give me a sense of the literacy activities that are woven into each family's everyday life. Finally, as I learn about parents' views of their roles, I will be able to gauge in what ways they could support our classroom learning.

My notes from these family visits will be invaluable as the school year progresses; I will have gotten to know families on such a deep level. I will be able to call upon family members for projects that tap into their talents; I will be able to include them as experts in relevant units of study; and I will seek their input regarding their children.

Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2006) advocated for family literacy activities that "create a seamless wave of learning between home and school" (p. 265). Photography and writing projects, similar to the PhOLKS project (Allen, 2008), are methods these researchers suggest. Various forms of journaling and learning through cooking are two additional types of activities that can bridge home and school learning. I do provide a school-home partnership journal each year, with an introductory letter (Appendix S). I would like to include students in this journal as well; I have developed a revised introductory letter (Appendix T) in an effort to make this journal a three-way sharing effort.

The logistics of involving cooking projects at school might take some working through. However, I can envision families sharing recipes during our study of family traditions, or even as part of our neighborhood study. Cooking also is a wonderful fit with our measurement unit in math. Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2006) noted,

> Both home and school-based cooking activities provide the opportunity for sharing cultural specific recipes, practicing reading skills, using oral language, and the practical exploration of math and science concepts, such as measurement, temperature, and changes of state (p. 266).

An activity that my students and families seem to enjoy – Expert of the Week – is an opportunity for me to tap into families' funds of knowledge. Each year, I send home a letter to families (Appendix U) explaining Expert of the Week. Each student is assigned a "week" during which he can hang photographs or artifacts on a bulletin board and prepare a short presentation on a topic about which he is an expert. My purpose has always been to have students share something about which they already have knowledge. However, families might misunderstand this purpose, as students and families have begun researching new topics for Expert of the Week. With the school year starting off with family visits, I will gain insight into families' funds of knowledge. I can use this insight to guide students and families toward sharing their funds of knowledge during Expert of the Week. In fact, rather than family members coming to the classroom to watch their child's presentation, family members and children could collaborate on the presentation.

Participant involvement in planning. My goal of involving family members in the development of family literacy activities and monthly meeting foci helps to address

cultural differences. Research shows that there can be an incongruence between the literacy practiced at school and that practiced at home (Heath, 1982; Taylor, 1983). In order to bridge this gap, researchers suggest educators take on a broader view of family literacy by welcoming family input and honoring different cultures (Fawcett, Rasinski, & Linek, 1997; Morrow & Paratore, 1993). Neuman, Caperelli, and Kee (1998) also found that participants in family literacy programs tended to stay with the programs when their personal and family goals were supported. These participants held a broad view of family literacy, as their reasons for staying with the programs went beyond a literacy focus.

United Nations Day. Walton takes part annually in celebrating United Nations Day in October. Since it opened in 1994, Walton has had a diverse community of learners and their families; there is a significant international population at the school. U.N. Day is an event that certainly builds relationships, and I plan to continue to do my part by encouraging the participation of my students and their families.

As part of U.N. Day at Walton, students and family members are invited to wear special outfits or costumes from their native country, and to explain the costume's significance at an all-school assembly (Appendix V). Also, family members are invited to present a mini-session about their native country (Appendix W). This is an opportunity for families to share photographs, cooking, games, instruments – the possibilities are endless. Each year, I always send home the forms with a personal note, or I speak with family members personally, to invite them to participate. I value the families' funds of knowledge, and it is so worthwhile for their knowledge to be shared with the larger Walton community.

Conclusion

This approach to family literacy in my classroom is not a scripted curriculum to be followed each year. "Family literacy is not something that can be 'done' to people" (Neuman, Caperelli, & Kee, 1998, p. 250). If I am truly to offer families a voice in how they participate in their children's literacy education, my family literacy approach will evolve throughout a school year, and change each year as the students in my class change. I will always know where to begin each year, however, by keeping in mind the three categories: Family literacy activities that build relationships, support student learning, and address cultural differences. Walton might not have an official parent space anymore. However, with a focus on parents as partners, and by giving families a voice, families will always have a place at Walton.

This family literacy project was developed for the classroom level, with my own teaching practices and experiences in mind. The project can be easily adapted for my teaching team. After I have implemented this in my own classroom, I plan to take the approach to my team for possible team-wide implementation.

I believe that Walton's commitment to parents as partners needs a boost school-wide. After implementing this in my own classroom, and perhaps on my team, I feel it is necessary for teachers from each team to form a committee to examine family literacy practices school-wide. I welcome the opportunity to be a part of the committee and to share my research and this project.

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Appendix A

Possible Questions for Family Visits

1. How would you describe your child? (use child's name)

2. What are your child's interests/activities? What does she like to play?

3. Who are her friends?

4. How does your child get along with others? Siblings? Friends? Adults?

5. Does she have responsibilities around the home?

6. What are your child's strengths?

7. How does your child handle stress? How does she react when she is upset?

8. Does she like books? What kind?

9. Does she like to draw, color, write? What kinds of things? How often?

10. What do you think your child needs to work on most this year?

11. How does your child interact with others?

12. What would you like your child to be able to achieve this year?

13. Are there any health concerns I need to know about?

14. What else will I need to know to work best with your child?

15. What is the best way for me to contact you to let you know how your child is doing in school?

16. What ideas do you have of ways for families to work on their child's literacy development? (I will compile a list of families' ideas and send home with everyone.)

Adapted from:
McIntyre, E., Kyle, D., Moore, G., Sweazy, R. A., & Greer, S. (2001). Linking home and school through family visits. *Language Arts, 78*(3), 264-272.

Appendix B

Flyer to Advertise First Family Literacy Meeting

Attention Parents!

Do you want to meet other parents?

Do you want to enjoy good food and conversation?

Join me for an exciting evening getting to know each other better

and sharing ideas for reading and writing ideas with your children.

I hope we can meet monthly. We will have time to:

- Introduce ourselves and families,

- Learn about literacy learning and assessments at Walton,

- Share ideas for future meeting topics, and

- Socialize with other families!

Bring your whole family!

Pizza and drinks will be provided.

Time:

Date:

Place:

Note: I will be videotaping this meeting, and any future meetings. If you are unable to attend, let me know if you would like to check out the videotape for home viewing.

Appendix C

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks, Grades 1 & 2

- Chooses to read independently

- Uses a variety of reading strategies

- Acquires several new words

- Orally retells what has been read

- Predicts outcomes and draws conclusions

- Reads smoothly

- Writes in a logical sequence

- Acquires correctly spelled words

- Incorporates correct spelling into writing

- Writes with appropriate use of capitalization and ending punctuation

- Expresses ideas clearly when speaking

- Chooses to share orally

- Listens attentively

Appendix D

Daily Literacy Activities

- S.S.R – Sustained Silent Reading

- Shared Language – Whole-group shared reading

- Guided Reading – Small-group reading instruction

- Workstations – Literacy-based centers during our guided reading block

- Writer's Workshop – Our writing block consists of mini-lessons, guided and independent writing, conferencing with the teacher, and sharing time.

- Teacher Read-Aloud

- Math, Science, and Social Studies – Reading and writing are processes, and students read and write daily in all subject areas.

Appendix E

Literacy Assessment Tools

Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)

    Reading accuracy

    Retelling and comprehension

    Phonemic Awareness

District Writing Assessment

    Beginning, middle, end

    Supporting details

    Logical order

Teacher observation and judgment

    Notes and observations from reading daily with students

    Running records

    Student writing samples

    Teacher-student writing conferences

    Conference reports

    End-of-Year Progress Reports

Appendix F

Possible Literacy Topics for Future Meetings

Possible Meeting Topics

- What are "just right" books?

- Reading strategies

- Comprehension strategies

- Fluency

- How is spelling taught?

- Writing at home

- Summer reading programs, getting a library card

- Computer skills

- Literacy and technology

- Literacy and younger family members (babies, toddlers)

Appendix G

Pre-Conference Form

Dear Team 2 Parents,

Team 2 teachers and students are busy preparing for conferences. Each student has her/his own conference, and the following people come to a conference: parents, the student, and the classroom teacher. The conferences on Team 2 are student involved BOTH in fall and spring. We believe that parents, children, and teachers should work together to share strengths and set goals for improvement. We view conferences as a CELEBRATION of students' learning and experiences at Walton! Your child has been working hard and now it is his/her chance to SHINE!

We would like to begin the conference with 2 questions. Please write an answer to the first question to share at the conference, and then write a question of yours to ask at the beginning of the conference. <u>Our question is: What does your child say about school?</u> Second, please write a question to ask us about something you want to know. It could be about friends, behavior, or any subject area. Please write it below and return it to your child's teacher as soon as possible.

Thank you.

PLEASE RETURN THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

What does your child say about school?

_____

_____

_____

One question <u>from you</u> for the conference:

_____

_____

Appendix H

Current Back to School Night Presentation

Slide 1
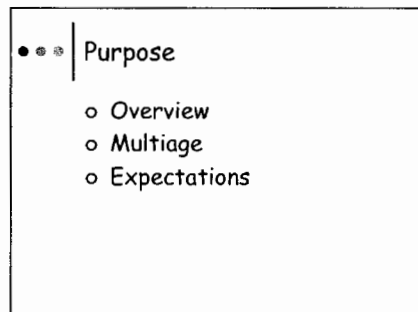
Team 2 Back to School Night

WELCOME!

Slide 2

Purpose

o Overview
o Multiage
o Expectations

Slide 3

After the Presentation...

o Classroom Visit
o Jot a note
o Questions?

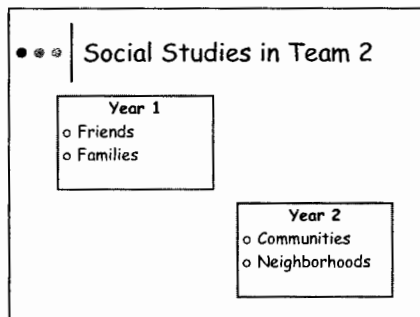**ENJOY!!** ☺

Slide 4

Integrated Curriculum

o **Science, Social Studies** and **Health** are integrated throughout the day during shared language, workstations, and writer's workshop.

Slide 5

Science in Team 2

Year 1	Year 2
o Life Cycles	o Living Things
o Balance and Motion	o Balls and Ramps
o Pebbles, Sand, and Silt	o Habitats

Slide 6

Social Studies in Team 2

Year 1
o Friends
o Families

Year 2
o Communities
o Neighborhoods

Slide 7

Reading in Team 2:
Whole Group Activities

Purpose: to discuss curriculum concepts, to
introduce reading comprehension
strategies, to model reading behaviors

Slide 8

Reading in Team 2:
Small Group Activities

o Purpose: to provide time for guided
and independent practice
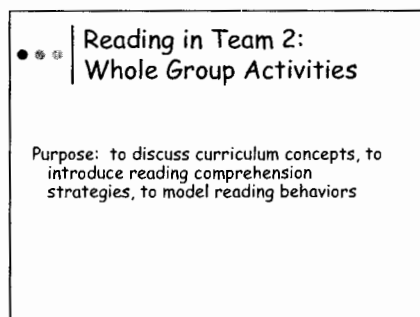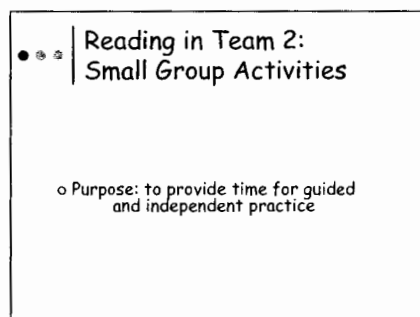
Slide 9

Reading in Team 2:
Individual Activities

o Purpose: to provide time for
independent practice

Slide 10

Ways to Help at Home

o Require daily reading (Book Bags)

o Read for fun ☺

o Model your own reading

Slide 11

Writer's Workshop
in Team 2

o Direct instruction.
o Time for practice.
o Varied writing experiences.

Slide 12

> # Writing happens all day long!
>
> ○ Guided Reading   ○ Workstations

Slide 13

> # All day long, *cont'd*
>
> ○ Math   ○ Science

Slide 14

> # Ways to Help at Home
>
> ○ Model your own writing.
> ○ Have writing materials readily available.
> ○ Provide authentic writing experiences.
> ○ Encourage the use of spelling tools.
> ○ Keep it relaxed and fun!

Slide 15

Everyday Mathematics

Slide 16

Content Strands for
First and Second Grade

o Number and Numeration

o Operations and Computation

o Data and Chance

o Measurement and Reference
  Frames

o Geometry

o Patterns, Functions, and Algebra

Slide 17

You can expect to see...

o A problem-
  solving
  approach

o Multiple
  solutions

o Flexibility of
  thinking

Slide 18

You can expect to see...

- o Activities and discussion

- o Use of various tools

- o Content beyond basic arithmetic

Slide 19

But what about MY child? ☺

At school...	At home...
o Same concept--- varied entry points o Flexible groupings o Individualized assessments and instruction	o Play math games o "How did you get that?" o Math in the "real world"

Slide 20

Core Virtues

- o Honesty
- o Respect
- o Responsibility
- o Self-discipline
- o Compassion
- o Perseverance
- o Giving

Slide 21

Honesty * Respect * Responsibility * Self-discipline
* Compassion * Perseverance * Giving
Walton Core Virtue Report

Student Name

Red = This consequence has been given.

Yellow = Warning or Reminder

Green = Improvement shown

I need to remember to **Put Myself in Charge**. My plan is to:
(1) Ignore (2) Ask to Stop (3) Walk Away (4) Report to an adult
(5)

Student signature

Slide 22

Team 2 Expectations

Excellence For All:

Within Walton Community
"...Every child has a right to a
quality education, that high
academic standards must
be set, and that every child
can and will succeed in ways
that reflect his/her own
unique aptitudes and
interests."
~Ernest Boyer

Appendix I

Back to School Night Survey

Dear Team 2 families,

The team 2 teachers are in the process of planning for our Back to School Night. We are trying to finalize our purpose for the evening and would like to get some feedback from families. In the past, we have met together to give a quick overview of a whole lot of things! This has included: sharing our curriculum overview for the year, district goals, a typical day on Team 2, review of the I-Care Rules/Virtues, a Science PALS overview, and our thoughts about the parent partnership.

We would like you to list a couple of things that you would like us to address specifically. Back to School night is coming VERY SOON- if you have thoughts that you would like to share, <u>please send this back by</u> _____.

THANK YOU SO MUCH for your input. It will be greatly appreciated!

<div style="text-align: right">

Sincerely,
Team 2

</div>

I would like information about these topics:

-
-
-

(Place a checkmark by your preference and add any details or comments that you would like to share about your preference.)

_____ I would prefer a general overview. In the overview, I would like to hear about:

_____

_____

_____ I would prefer an in-depth discussion about: _____

_____.

Additional comments:

Appendix J

Volunteer Sheet, Version 1

Would You Like To Lend a Hand?

As you know, you are always welcome to drop in to the classroom to observe and participate in our ongoing activities. You can look forward to an interesting and rewarding experience, while at the same time learning firsthand about your child's education. The regular and ongoing involvement and contributions of parents can richly enhance your child's learning. As Dr. Ernest Boyer states in his 1994 publication The Basic School: A community for learning, "The message is clear. It is simply impossible to have an island of excellence in a sea of community indifference, and when parents become school partners, the results can be consequential and enduring."

If you think a regular volunteer time fits with your schedule, take a look at the back of this note for possible volunteer times and the types of work you would be doing with kids at that time. Think about what works with your schedule and what you feel comfortable doing, and fill out the information below. I will send you a note when I have a final volunteer schedule put together, letting you know when we'll start! ☺

I prefer to come on (day of the week)_____
at (time)_____.

I am prepared to come:

once a week_____   once every two weeks_____

once a month_____   other_____

My schedule makes coming into the classroom difficult, but I would be willing to help out at home._____

I would like to plan a time to visit the classroom at a later date._____

Questions/Comments:

Parent name and phone number:

Mondays
9:45-10:30 Reading with kids, working on "making words" with kids, helping kids with workstation work (workstations are like "centers").
10:30-10:55 Helping kids come up with ideas for writing, helping kids stretch out/spell words, typing up stories with kids who are ready to publish stories.
12:20-1:10 Playing a math game with kids, working with kids on different math problem-solving strategies.

Tuesdays
9:45-10:30 Reading with kids, working on "making words" with kids, helping kids with workstation work (workstations are like "centers").
10:30-10:55 Helping kids come up with ideas for writing, helping kids stretch out/spell words, typing up stories with kids who are ready to publish stories.
12:20-1:10 Playing a math game with kids, working with kids on different math problem-solving strategies.

Wednesdays
9:45-10:30 Reading with kids, working on "making words" with kids, helping kids with workstation work (workstations are like "centers").
10:30-10:55 Helping kids come up with ideas for writing, helping kids stretch out/spell words, typing up stories with kids who are ready to publish stories.
12:20-1:10 Playing a math game with kids, working with kids on different math problem-solving strategies.

Thursdays
9:45-10:30 Reading with kids, working on "making words" with kids, helping kids with workstation work (workstations are like "centers").
10:30-10:55 Helping kids come up with ideas for writing, helping kids stretch out/spell words, typing up stories with kids who are ready to publish stories.
1:10-1:35 Playing a math game with kids, working with kids on different math problem-solving strategies.

Fridays
9:45-10:30 Reading with kids, working on "making words" with kids, helping kids with workstation work (workstations are like "centers").
10:30-10:55 Helping kids come up with ideas for writing, helping kids stretch out/spell words, typing up stories with kids who are ready to publish stories.

Appendix K

Volunteer Sheet, Version 2

Would You Like To Lend a Hand?

You are always welcome to drop in to the classroom to observe and participate in our ongoing activities. The regular and ongoing involvement and contributions of parents can richly enhance your child's learning. As Dr. Ernest Boyer states in his 1994 publication The Basic School: A community for learning, "The message is clear. It is simply impossible to have an island of excellence in a sea of community indifference, and when parents become school partners, the results can be consequential and enduring."

To get the most out of your volunteer experiences, I have listed some activities I had in mind and when we would need volunteers. Please mark an **X** next to your interests and **circle** the day and time that works. You can mark multiple days/times, and I'll coordinate which will work best based on other volunteers. **(I will contact you with the specifics and when we can start.)** At times, you might be working with students in the media center to help minimize distractions and reduce our class size. Please remember, if you are unable to schedule a regular time to volunteer, you are welcome to "drop in" when you do have time!

LITERACY:
   9:00-9:45 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
   ___   Read one-on-one with students and their just-right books.
   ___   Assist small groups with their workstation activities (varied literacy activities).
   ___   Work one-on-one with students on various skills (sounds, reading strategies, spelling, etc.).

WRITERS WORKSHOP:
   10:20-10:45 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
   ___   Help students put books together, sound out words, get story ideas, dictate a story to you.
   ___   Publish Stories -- The students would read you their story as you type it on the computer.

MATH:
   12:20-1:05 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday (*Please note: Only 2nd-year students are with me for math.)
   ___ Work one-on-one with students on various math skills (perhaps playing a math game).
   ___Work with a small group of students on various math skills (perhaps playing a math game).
   (During our science units, a couple of these times/week will be spent doing hands-on science activities. If you are interested in helping with math and not science, or vice versa, just let me know! ☺)

SCIENCE/SOCIAL STUDIES:
1:35-1:55 Tuesday, 2:00-2:25 every other Wednesday, 1:05-1:35 Thursday

____   Help students with science investigations and/or with recording in their science notebooks.
Help students complete social studies activities.

Other Needs:

____   Mark an **X** here if you ARE WILLING to do some "clerical" duties (making copies, cutting, putting book orders together, hanging student work, etc.) during your volunteer times.

____   If you are unable to volunteer during the day in the classroom, but are willing to do at-home projects (such as cutting, putting book orders together, etc.), mark an **X** here.

Parent Name:

_____

(Jot any questions or comments on the back.)

Appendix L

Nightly Reading Homework Letter

Dear Team 2 Families,

Your child will be bringing home a Book Bag **EVERY NIGHT**. In this Book Bag you will find a book that your child has selected, sometimes with my help. For the first few weeks, as we learn the Book Bag routine, the book will be exclusively chosen by your child. After a few weeks, it should ALWAYS be a **Just Right Book**—one that your child can read independently. Jot me a note on the recording sheet if the books seem to be too easy or too hard! I appreciate your input! It is **EXTREMELY** important for your child to keep the Book Bag in his/her backpack at all times, except while reading, to prevent book loss. It is also **VERY** important that you help your child to return the Book Bag, book, and recording sheet daily.

On the green sheet, you will find four columns: Book Title, Date Read, Parent Initial, and Comments. Please make sure **an adult** fills out the information each night after your child reads. Students reading chapter books don't have to read the whole book in one night; one chapter per night will do! I will be looking over the sheets each morning and rewarding students for doing their Book Bag homework. (In the comments section you can write how s/he did, ask me a question, or leave it blank!) Many studies link families reading together at home to children's reading success, so the Just Right Book Bags play an important role in your child's development.

Reading At Home (book bags and OTHER reading!)
- Make it relaxing, enjoyable, and fun for children AND parents.
- This time should include a mixture of child and parents reading to each other.
- The purpose is for children to practice "just right" reading with familiar text, so just relax and enjoy it! Let the teachers and children do the "harder work" at school.
- Read with your child every night, even if it is only for 5 minutes.

Decoding (figuring out tricky words)
- Strategies your child uses when s/he is "stuck" (See enclosed bookmark)
- Prompts to help your child use these strategies (See enclosed bookmark)
- If your child gets stuck on a word, skips a word, or reads a word incorrectly:
    1. **WAIT!** (We want children to be independent in using strategies and/or noticing their mistakes, so let THEM try to catch their mistakes.)
    2. Give **ONE** prompt from the list. (The prompts guide children to use the strategies...usually.) If not, go on to #3.
    3. **TELL** the child the word. (Remember...keep it FUN!)

Comprehension
- For older readers who may be reading silently, choose **ONE** of these "checks" for comprehension:
  - ➢ **Retelling**—Ask your child to tell you the beginning, middle, and end of the story/chapter.
  - ➢ **Connecting**—Ask your child if the story/chapter reminded him/her of anything (a memory, another story, etc.).
  - ➢ **Visualizing**—"Tell me about the picture you saw in your head."
  - ➢ **Predicting**
    - ▪ **Before your child reads:** "What do you think will happen next?"
    - ▪ **After your child reads:** "Was your prediction right?"

THANKS for your support and interest in your child's reading! Enjoy the books! ☺

Appendix M

Reading Log

JUST-RIGHT BOOKS

Book Title	Date Read	Parent Initial	Comments

Appendix N

Reading Homework Survey

The purpose of this survey is to get family input about how much time students can or should spend doing literacy activities/homework and about the types of literacy activities that would be meaningful and valuable for students to do at home, to support their learning in school.

For questions 1 & 2, please think about your work and family schedules outside of school when answering.

1. How much time do you (parents or older family members) have to spend doing literacy activities/homework with your child?

2. How much time does your child have to spend doing literacy activities/homework on his/her own?

3. Do you feel the book bags (nightly reading, reading logs) are valuable for your child's literacy development?

   If yes, how so?

   If not, why do you feel that way?

4. What other activities do you think would be valuable for your child to do at home to support his/her literacy development at school and at home? (These can either be activities you already do at home, or new ideas you have.)

Note: This survey can be given as a paper survey, or it can be converted into an online survey.

Appendix O

Literacy Homework Contract

Reading and Writing Goals This Year for _____

(student's name)

Student's Goals	Parent's Goals	Teacher's Goals

To work toward these goals, we agree that _____
will do these activities at home:

Reading or writing activity	How often

We will re-evaluate these goals and activities at both fall and spring conference times. We agree to communicate regularly, and we agree that we can change these goals and activities as needed.

Signed,

_____   _____

_____   _____

Appendix P

Bibliography of Photo Essays

Ancona, G. (1995). *Earth daughter: Alicia of Acoma Pueblo.* New York: Simon &
Schuster.

Ancona, G. (2003). *Murals: Walls that sing.* New York: Marshall Cavendish.

Ancona, G. (1993). *Powwow.* Published San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Kendall, R. (1991). *Eskimo boy: Life in an Inupiaq Eskimo village.* New York:
Scholastic.

Reynolds, J. (2006). *Celebrate! Connections among cultures.* New York: Lee & Low
Books.

Russell, J. P. (2001). *Aero and Officer Mike: police partners.* Honesdale, PA: Boyds
Mills Press.

Swinburne, S. R. (2008). *Muchas, muchísimas rayas de cebra/Lots and lots of zebra
stripes.* Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

Appendix Q

Letter to Photographer from Local Newspaper

Dear Photo Editor,

I am a first- and second-grade teacher at Walton Elementary. I am going to be working with my students and their families on a photo writing project. The purpose of this project is for students and families to think about what is important to them in their home lives, to share about their home lives through photographs, and to write captions or stories to go along with the photographs.

Through the generous contribution of Walton's PTA, each of my students has a disposable camera to use for this project. I will be sharing various photo essays with my students, so they become familiar with using photographs to tell stories.

I am writing to you to see if you would be willing to visit my classroom and discuss some basic photography techniques with them. The cameras the students will be using are not digital, so any advice you have for them to be able to capture clear pictures would be wonderful. They might also need to know some techniques for photographing people vs. objects, and still objects vs. moving objects. Of course, anything else you can think of to help them out would be much appreciated!

Please call me at Walton or send me an email to let me know if you or another photographer would be able to visit my classroom in the next few weeks. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Appendix R

Explanation of Family Photo Writing Project

Dear Families,
Our class is beginning a photo writing project to coincide with our Families unit. Thanks to our generous PTA, each child will have a disposable camera to bring home. Your child should use this camera to take pictures of family life, family traditions or activities, important family objects (on their own, or being used), etc.

I have invited a photographer from the local newspaper to talk to the students about some basic photography techniques. When your child brings the camera home, please work with him/her on deciding what to photograph, in order to help the rest of the class (and me!) learn about your family. When your child has used up the film in the camera, send the camera back to school and I will have the photographs developed.

When the photographs are developed, I will send them home with your child. The next step in the project is for family members to work together with your child on writing captions, paragraphs, or short stories to explain the photographs. These can be done in some kind of order, to create a story, or they can be separate ideas that still tell the story of your family.

The students will be studying photo essays at school in preparation for this photo writing project. You are welcome to contact me if you would like to borrow any of the photo essays to get ideas. I can also send home a list of the photo essays we studied, and you can see if they are available at the local library.

I will keep you posted as this project progresses. I am looking forward to learning more about you and your family!

Sincerely,
Stefanie Riepe

Appendix S

School-Home Partnership Journal Letter

Dear Families,

Welcome to the **School/Home Partnership Folder.** Dr. Boyer says in his 1994 publication, The Basic School: A community for learning, "In the Basic School, the community extends outward to embrace parents, who are viewed as the child's first and most important teacher." Communication becomes a very important part of our partnership. This communication can occur in many forms including newsletters, phone calls, face-to-face, e-mails, and in written form. The purpose of this folder is to provide another easy way for you and me to communicate questions, concerns, celebrations, etc., in regards to your child and his/her educational experience at Walton Elementary.

Please use the notebook paper in this folder to respond to or ask questions about classroom procedures, student concerns, up-coming events, or just to let me know that things are going okay. Also, please feel free to include any upcoming information you feel I might need to know about your child.

Here are some examples of entries you might want to include:

I don't understand the book bag procedure. Could you clarify how long we are to read with our child each night?

My daughter has mentioned she can't find the chocolate milk at lunch time. Would you mind helping her with this?

When is the butterfly field trip? Do you need any drivers?

We are going on vacation beginning this Friday. My son will be staying with his grandmother for the week. We have given the emergency numbers to the office.

I will also use it to share information with you as is necessary:

Your daughter now has a milk buddy to help her at lunch until she is more comfortable with the process.

How many children can you take for the field trip?

Please note, however, that some student concerns might require immediate attention. In such cases, a phone call to me or from me would work best. You can ALWAYS feel free to call me before or after school or at home. Especially feel free to call if you need immediate attention to a concern or an immediate answer to a question.

This folder will be sent home at the end of each week with Walton/Team 2 mail. It is very important that you return the folder to school after the weekend (or the following day, if we are corresponding through the folder on other days) whether you write in it or not. I will read and make entries in the folder in response to your questions. Thank you!

Appendix T

School-Parent-Student Partnership Journal Letter

Dear Families,

Welcome to the **School-Parent-Student Partnership Folder.** In his 1994 publication, <u>The Basic School: A community for learning,</u> Dr. Boyer says, "In the Basic School, the community extends outward to embrace parents, who are viewed as the child's first and most important teacher." Communication becomes a very important part of our partnership. This communication can occur in many forms including newsletters, phone calls, face-to-face, e-mails, and in written form.

The purpose of this folder is to provide another easy way for you and me to communicate questions, concerns, celebrations, etc., in regards to your child and his/her educational experience at Walton Elementary. This folder also provides another way for your child to communicate to you and to me!

FAMILIES: Please use the notebook paper in this folder to respond to or ask questions about classroom procedures, student concerns, up-coming events, or just to let me know that things are going okay. Also, please feel free to include any upcoming information you feel I might need to know about your child.

Here are some examples of entries:

My daughter has mentioned she can't find the chocolate milk at lunch time. Would you mind helping her with this?

We are going on vacation beginning this Friday. My son will be staying with his grandmother for the week. We have given the emergency numbers to the office.

STUDENTS: Please use the notebook paper to ask me any questions or tell me anything you are worried about. You can also write to your family in this folder. You can get this folder from your mailbox at school to write in it during our reading and writing times.

Here are some examples of entries:

I'm a little nervous about p.e. because I hurt my leg last night. Can you help me tell the teacher?

I can't wait until book clubs – I want to know what happens next in the story!

Mom and Dad – we read such a funny book today! You should read it too.

I will also use it to share information with you/your family, or to respond:

Your daughter now has a milk buddy to help her at lunch until she is more comfortable with the process.

This weekend, think about which book you want to read next for book club. You can write some ideas in here and I'll see if the library has them checked in.

In the event that a student concern requires immediate attention, a phone call to me or from me would work best. You can ALWAYS feel free to call me before or after school or at home. Especially feel free to call if you need immediate attention to a concern or an immediate answer to a question.

This folder will be sent home at the end of each week with Walton/Team 2 mail. It is very important that you return the folder to school after the weekend (or the following day, if we are corresponding through the folder on other days) whether you write in it or not. I will read and make entries in the folder in response to your questions, and your child might want to write in here, too. Thank you!

Appendix U

Expert of the Week Letter

Dear Families,

I'm sure you've heard of classrooms celebrating their students by having a Star of the Week or a Family of the Week. Last year we tried something new and loved it: Expert Day!

Expert Day combines and reinforces several important skills as well as strengthening our classroom community in a meaningful way. It reinforces speaking skills and questioning skills, and it also offers a unique insight into each child. Your child will be assigned to a specific day on which to share. See the schedule on the back of this letter.

When planning your child's Expert Day with him or her, you might begin with these questions: At what are you an "expert?" What do you know a lot about? (hamsters? snakes? swimming?) What do you collect? Each child will have a day to shine and teach us about what s/he knows or share with us his/her treasured collections. I have devoted approximately 20 minutes for each Expert Day and your child may use as much of that time as needed. When given the chance to be "teachers," the kids really take it away!

I will begin by modeling an Expert Day myself. One year, I shared my knowledge about using sign language with babies to help babies and toddlers communicate. I talked about a baby signing class I attended with my daughter that got me interested in this topic. I shared pictures of my own daughter using some signs, and I shared books that I read with my daughter to help her learn signs. I'm trying to think of a different topic for myself for this year… Be sure to ask your child about my topic after my presentation!

Some Expert Days that have gone well for us in the past were on topics such as softball, gymnastics, photography and playing the piano. Presentations can involve pictures, demonstrations, etc. You're welcome to bring instruments, props, etc. (and we have access to a piano here at school…). Some children even came with index cards that had notes written on them so they wouldn't forget anything! For 2nd year students who were "experts" last year, they can choose the same topic this year, or try something new – it's their choice! ☺

Another component of Expert Day is questioning. After your child shares his/her information with us, we will ask questions about the topic. We will be talking about how to ask good, thoughtful questions. This is when we really get to know our friends better. Please let me know if you have any questions!

Sincerely,

Stefanie Riepe

Appendix V

United Nations Day Costume Parade Form
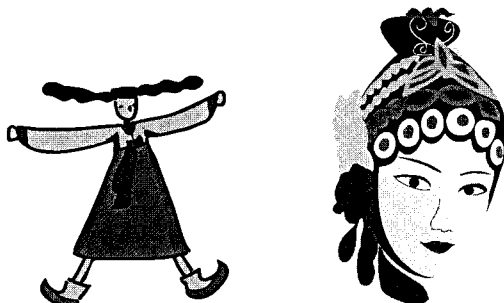
United Nations Day
Parade of Native Costumes

Do you and/or your child have a native costume from your country that you could wear and share on UN Day? As part of our celebration on _____, October ____, we will have a parade of native costumes at our all-school assembly. If you or your child can join us, please fill out the information below and return to school. We should begin at __:__ a.m. and be finished by __:__ at the very latest.

* *

Child's Name:_____

Child's Teacher:_____

Parent Name (if parading with the child):_____

Country: _____

Name of Costume (if there is one): _____

When is this clothing worn? _____

_____

Names of any special parts of the costume:_____

_____

_____

Any special information about this clothing:_____

_____

Appendix W

United Nations Day Mini-Session Form

Calling all International Families...

Dear International Families,

Walton School needs your help! Each year Walton School celebrates our many cultures on United Nations Day. We are now planning our United Nations Day activities and we need families from all cultures to come and share their cultures with our classes. In the past, parents and children have worked together to share many interesting things about their culture, including:

- a special ceremony
- a traditional song or dance, or performance on a native instrument
- a discussion of special event such as a wedding
- special food
- native costumes

Students are most interested when they have hands-on types of things to see and perhaps participate in learning something the speaker can teach.

Each volunteer will give two 20 minute presentations to 2 classrooms of students (about 50-55 students each time). There will be a 5 minute break between sessions. If you can come the morning of U.N. Day and share something from your culture, please fill out the form below and return it to your child's teacher as soon as possible. Parent-child teams are welcome and encouraged.

In addition, we are asking for volunteers that could stay for our all school assembly at and perform for all the students. If you are sharing some performance that a large group could see or hear and enjoy, please consider sharing your talent with the school.

Thank you in advance for helping us celebrate our diversity and learn more about your culture.

United Nations Day Volunteer Classroom Guest

_____ Yes, I will share my culture on United Nations Day during two 20-minute sessions.

_____ Yes, I would like to share a performance at the all-school assembly.

(You can choose one or both of the above. Time and other volunteers may determine which place is best.)

My name: _____

Child at Walton's Name and Teacher Name: _____

_____

Phone Number where I can be reached at night: _____

Native Culture: _____

Description of Activity: _____

_____

_____