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## Fostering home-school relationships to nurture children's literacy

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore ways teachers can promote a relationship between the home and school to nurture the literacy of primary-age children. A review of professional literature will address the home environment's influence on children's emerging literacy, ways parents can support their children's school program, and avenues teachers can use in communicating with parents. From this information base, the writer will plan ways to foster school-home communication.

Fostering Home-School Relationships  
to Nurture Children's Literacy

A Graduate Project  
Submitted to the  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Jenette M. Schulte

May 1994



Children's literacy begins long before they come to school. Parents are children's first teachers, serving as role models for their language behavior. A literate, supportive atmosphere in the home can greatly influence children's attitudes and *enthusiasm for learning to read and write. As children enter school, teachers should strive to establish a participatory role with families that fosters a parent-teacher-child relationship, thus nurturing children's emerging literacy (Hayes, 1991).*

#### Purpose of Paper

The purpose of this paper is to explore ways teachers can promote a relationship between the home and school to nurture the literacy of primary-age children. A review of professional literature will address the home environment's influence on children's emerging literacy, ways parents can support their children's school program, and avenues teachers can use in communicating with parents. From this information base, the writer will plan ways to foster school-home communication.

#### Review of Professional Literature

##### Role of Parents in Nurturing Children's Emerging Literacy

Parents have an important part to play in both the development of their children's language abilities and their appreciation of literature. Children look to parents and other adult caregivers for their first and often most important demonstrations of language use. Most language learning in the

home occurs informally as parents and children engage in the functions of language, such as reading signs; sorting junk mail; searching for specific places on maps; writing letters, notes, and lists; visiting the library; using TV schedules; using the computer; or reading stories at bedtime (Greaney, 1986).

In Becoming a Nation of Readers, the Commission on Reading (1985) states that "Parents play roles of inestimable importance in laying the foundation for learning to read" (p. 53). Dolores Durkin's study (1966) concludes as does studies by Clay (1972) and Clark (1976) that children who learned to read early had parents who played an important role in their early success in reading. Common elements were found in their home environment that were conducive to learning to read: A wide range of printed materials was easily accessible, and reading was a commonly occurring activity. The environment facilitated children's discovery that reading is a pleasurable and unique experience.

Another common environmental element in the homes of children who learned to read at an early age was the presence of writing activity. Writing and art materials were readily available for the children. The starting point of their curiosity about written language was an interest in scribbling and drawing. From these tasks, children moved on to an interest in copying objects and letters of the alphabet (Clay, 1987).

### Ways Parents Can Support Their Children's School Experience

Children's education encompasses their total life experiences, both in and out of school. Families and schools need to view these educational experiences as a collaborative undertaking. Including parents in their children's school experience can support students' growth and attitudes. Teachers can assist parents in supporting the school program by recommending activities that nurture their children's literacy (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1990a).

Modeling experiences. Children acquire behaviors that are effectively modeled by important people in their lives. In their responses to life experiences, parents can model the many functions of language. Children are quick to experiment with their parents' behavior (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1991). Children should see their parents read for pleasure. In this way, parents can demonstrate that reading is something valued in their homes. Frank Smith (1982) relates that for children to want to write, they must observe writing being done and see what it can do. If parents do engage in many meaningful reading and writing activities, their children will likely develop an interest in written language (Dudley-Marling, 1989).

#### Reading experiences and related expressive activity.

Reading aloud is the most natural and effective way for parents to encourage their children's language development (Doake, 1985;

Trelease, 1989). When parents share literature aloud with their children, they can help them begin a lifelong involvement with reading (Vukelich, 1984).

The public library is one of the best places for parents and children to find reading materials. It is the least expensive way to expose children to the extraordinarily rich and varied number of books that have been written especially for them. It is in the library that children can "try books on for size." Part of the joy of visiting the library is having a library card of one's own (Taylor & Strickland, 1986).

Literature experiences whether parents reading aloud to their children or children reading silently can develop a sense of story that supports emerging literacy. This understanding of the patterns in text allows children to predict, or create meaning, in reading and writing experiences (Allington, 1984; Fielding, Wilson, & Anderson, 1986).

Children's literacy is extended when parents and children discuss their reading with each other. Hearing stories and having opportunities to discuss them with their parents are potent stimuli for young children's language development (Cazden, 1972). Becher (1985) found that children who had opportunities to discuss reading experiences with their parents developed more concepts. Discussions allow children not only to share what is important to them but to continue processing the piece of



literature, in some cases, moving to higher levels of meaning by engaging in more difficult comprehension tasks. Rasinski and Fredericks (1991a) recommend that parents before they read aloud to children should explain why they chose a particular book and what it is about. After a read aloud experience, parents can ask children if the book met their expectations and if they would choose another book on the same topic or by the same author.

Children's understanding of stories is extended by engaging in related expressive activity of different types. Simple retelling, narrative pantomiming, dramatizing, story and poetry composing, and drawing extend the ownership of the experience (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1990a).

Simple retelling adds to children's enjoyment of a story and lets them extend their sense of story by experiencing the tale as a whole, following a sequence of ideas, and becoming aware of such elements as plot pattern, characterization, theme, and author's style. Children's retellings can be told through such activities as flannelboard pieces, pantomime, dramatization, puppets, illustrations, dioramas, and rebuses. Children also can use the storytelling techniques of different cultures. Some of these cultural techniques include nesting dolls from Eastern Europe and the Orient, a story cloth from Africa, counting ropes used by early people to record significant events in their lives, and tangrams used by the Chinese (Harms & Lettow, 1992).

Writing experiences. The home environment can offer children many opportunities to create meaning through writing. To promote writing in the home, children should be provided easy access to writing materials. Children should be encouraged to write for a variety of purposes, thus engaging in the many functions of language. For example, they can make a shopping list for a trip to the supermarket, request information pertaining to the family's vacation destination from a state office of tourism or a Chamber of Commerce, write letters to relatives and friends in other towns, invite friends to a party, and compose poetry and stories (Durkin, 1966).

Family journals can be kept collaboratively recording family activities and serving as models of writing. Blackboards or bulletin boards in the home can provide a means for family members to write messages to each other (Durkin, 1966).

Literature experiences in the home can nurture children's writing abilities. Children quickly pick up conventional beginnings and endings like "Once upon a time" and "happily ever after" or borrow names or situations from stories (DeFord, 1981; Eckhoff, 1983). Children's stories reflect elements of their reading (Smith, 1982; Tierney & Pearson, 1983; and Calkins, 1986). The connections good books make between reading and writing foster children's emergent literacy (Hickman & Cullinan, 1989).

### Ways to Communicate with Parents

Involving parents in children's school programs can lead to impressive gains in achievement (Henderson, 1988). By transmitting information between school and home, a collaboration between parents and teachers can occur. There are many ways to keep parents informed through informal, frequent contacts (Vukelich, 1984).

Telephone conversations. Teachers can telephone individual families to convey information about their children's school responses. Occasional phone calls about some exciting happening in the school program can convey a spirit of optimism and inclusion to families (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1990b).

Written communication. Newsletters, calendars, and notes can inform parents of what is happening at school and can extend invitations to collaborate with the teacher. A newsletter can inform parents of instructional program activities, titles of books that have been read in the classroom, recommended book lists for reading at home along with related activities, and examples of students' writings and drawings. Also, upcoming events can be announced. A monthly calendar can be included to keep parents informed of school events and can suggest ways to extend school activities at home. For the summer vacation months, interesting reading activities can be listed on the days of the calendar (Siders & Sledjeski, 1978; Sittig, 1982).

Notes are a shorter written form of information. These can be sent home with individual children to praise some aspect of their success in school. Post cards can be sent before school to the child and the family welcoming them to the classroom. During the year, a specific child's activity or future involvement in the classroom can be noted on a card to the family (Hickey, Imber, & Ruggiero, 1979).

Conferences. Parent-teacher conferences are an invaluable means of providing an exchange of valuable information about children and their learning experiences. Parents have insights into their child's way of learning that will help the teacher develop an effective instructional program for the child. In turn, the teacher can explain the child's progress and needs to parents and can make suggestions for learning experiences that can be offered at home (Griffiths & Hamilton, 1987).

These sessions should be well prepared and conducted in a personal and stress-free manner (Potter, 1989). Losen and Diamant (1978) suggest that parent-teacher conferences to be successful must be designed in such a way that both parties work together to establish priorities, develop common goals, and achieve concrete solutions. By including children in the conference, they can become a partner in the discussion about their own learning. During the conference, children can give

their parents a tour of their learning environment and can share their accomplishments with them (Hill, 1989).

Home visits. Home visits offer an opportunity for teachers to meet children and parents in their familiar surroundings that can make the parents and their children feel more at ease. These visits can provide the teacher valuable information in planning learning experiences at school. The teacher can place children in their social contexts, develop an understanding of parents' aspirations, become aware of the parents' interest in participating in their child's education and their feelings of competence and interests, and begin to know the child as an individual. Home visits also provide opportunities to keep parents informed and reaffirm to them their importance in the emergent literacy of their children (Potter, 1989).

Homeroom meetings. Through group meetings for parents at the beginning of the year, teachers are provided with opportunities to share information about the goals of the instructional program and a chance to interact with parents, answering questions, and clarifying understanding of emerging literacy. Meetings later in the school year can be centered on specific topics (Hill, 1989).

Invitations to visit the school. Criscuolo (1980) suggests that parents can learn much about reading by observing in the classroom. Parents could be notified that they are welcome to

visit the school at any time. Parents can also be invited to read a favorite book to the class. This activity can provide a positive reading model for the children and develop a positive attitude between parents and the school.

Workshops. Sessions involving parents or the whole family can extend their understanding of the value of literacy activity in the home and ways to provide for language activity. At workshops, families can engage in hands-on activities that can be engaged in at home. Example topics for workshops are ways to retell stories and to make books (Vukelich, 1984).

Volunteers. Volunteers can be an integral part of a reading program. They can support and extend the goals of the language arts program in the classroom by working with individual and small groups of children. They can listen to the children read, read to them, work with groups in retelling, and assist children in their writing activity by taking their dictation and by supporting different stages of their involvement in the writing process (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1990c).

From volunteering in the school, parents can come to view the school in a positive way. Such activity can support children's understanding of the importance of education. Through volunteers, the school can send the distinct message that parents and the school need to work together and that the school is a high priority in everyone's lives (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1990c).

Plans to Extend Home-School Communication  
to Nurture Literacy

In the upcoming school year, the writer, a second grade teacher, plans to extend her collaboration with her students' parents. In planning ways to communicate with parents about the school's language arts program and to show them how they can support their children's emerging literacy, some allowances will have to be made for families who have both parents working or who have a single parent and for those who live in the remote rural areas of the school district. For example, home visits, homeroom meetings, and workshops may not be practical avenues of communication for some families.

Letter of Welcome

Before the school year begins, a letter will be sent to each home, addressed to the child and his parents/guardians, welcoming them to the school year, highlighting some of the interesting aspects of the school year, and encouraging them to make contacts with the school through telephone calls and visits. A small note pad with the sheets titled "From Home to School" can be included. In the letter, parents will be encouraged to send notes to school about their children's activity at home that reflects the school program. Suggestions for the content of notes can be made, for example, a visit to the public library to find more books on a topic studied at school, the child's writing

that is being compiled into a book, or the family diary recording the transition of seasons which is an extension of the autumn unit. Upcoming parent-school events can be announced and explained briefly, such as parent-teacher conferences and the homeroom meeting. The volunteer program can be introduced.

### Newsletters

A newsletter published twice each nine-week period, starting the second half of the first period will be sent to each family. These newsletters can provide reading lists to further children's home reading experiences. Also, the use of the public library can be encouraged. The librarian can provide an explanation of the services of the town library. Explanations of children's literary development can be given along with ways that parents can encourage reading and writing in the home, such as regularly scheduled oral reading by parents to their children, sustained silent reading with as many members as possible taking part, and provision for a collection of writing and art supplies to extend reading and writing experiences. Also, ways parents can cope with unknown words children encounter while reading and with children's spelling problems while writing can be explained.

Through the newsletter, special school events can be announced, such as the book sale and the Read-a-Million Minutes Program. Community-sponsored events that enrich children's lives and the school program can be promoted in the newsletter, for



example, a puppet show, a storyteller at the Public Library, and an exhibit at the museum. Also, upcoming television programs that will extend children's knowledge and may be related specifically to the school program can be listed. Activities of the volunteer group can be reported, for example, their assistance with the Friends at the Care Center Program or their bookmaking activity with children.

As the year progresses, more of the newsletter's content will be compiled by the students, giving them publishing and editing experiences. The newsletter can contain their stories, poems, and drawings as well as their articles on different aspects of the school program, recommended books, and special school events.

### Calendars

Beginning with the month of October, a calendar for each school month will be distributed to the families. It can feature children's birthdays; books and activities related to seasons, holidays, and school units; and special school and community events.

### Conferences

Conferences which are usually attended by most parents in the community can assist parents in understanding their children's progress in the school program and their instructional needs and in learning ways that they can further children's

emerging literacy. During the conferences, children's portfolios can be shared. This form of informal assessment which will be initiated next year provides a selected collection of exhibits representing children's reading and writing activity as well as their responses in other curricular areas.

During conferences, parents can be surveyed to determine topics of interest for homeroom meeting and for projects for family workshops. The volunteer program can be explained more thoroughly. Applications for cards at the Public Library can also be distributed.

#### Homeroom Meetings

Two homeroom meetings will be scheduled during the school year. The first meeting in the early fall will involve getting acquainted with parents and explaining the school program as it is related to the development of second graders. The second meeting scheduled in the spring can address topics of special interest to the parents.

#### Workshops

Workshops can be scheduled on a school night or during a half day on Saturday involving parents or the whole family in creating ideas and items. These are examples of workshop topics and projects.

Storywriting and bookmaking. Parents and children can engage in composing stories and can learn ways to construct a book which can provide housing for their stories.

Ways to retell stories. Parents and children can experiment with many ways to retell a story and construct props to assist them in their retelling.

Literature fair. A color fair or a folklore fair could be developed for the class to offer as an activity for the school's open house.

Displays for author's visit. Expressive activities related to an author's work can be developed as part of a school display to honor a visiting author.

Construction of a reading center. An intriguing center, such as a castle or a multi-story structure, can be constructed for the classroom or the library to encourage delightful reading experiences.

### Volunteers

Volunteers can be parents or other people from the community who participate in the classroom on a regular basis. The teacher plans to meet with them individually or in small groups to describe their role in the school and the developmental characteristics of second graders and appropriate responses to them. Volunteers can read aloud to children, can listen to them read stories, and can assist in bookmaking. They can check out

lists of books from the library for the teacher. To extend stories for school and home activities, they can tape stories and construct kits of accompanying activities. Volunteers also can assist with excursions such as the Care Center Friend Program.

#### Summary

The writer through reviewing the professional literature has found many suggestions for extending collaboration with the home to extend children's emerging literacy. She looks forward to implementing these ideas into her school program during the next school year. She anticipates that the extended avenues of communication with parents will reflect in children's responses to reading and writing at home and school, thus supporting the development of their thinking-language abilities.

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Supporting the Comprehension-Composition  
Connection in an Elementary Classroom

A Graduate Project  
Submitted to the  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by  
Carol M. Lutkenhaus  
May 1994

This Project by: Carol M. Lutkenhaus

Entitled: Supporting the Comprehension-Composition  
Connection in an Elementary Classroom

has been approved as meeting a project requirement for the Degree  
of Master of Arts in Education.

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Date Approved

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6/13/94  
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In developing instructional programs in the language arts, much attention is being given to the comprehension-composition connection: How to capitalize on the similarities of these language processes to provide more effective learning experiences for children is receiving serious consideration.

The comprehension-composition processes are used to create meaning. They are recursive in nature, for language users move back and forth between the two processes as they listen/read and speak/write. For example, in school programs students are encouraged to write about their reading and to read their own writing. Because of the similarities in the comprehension and composition processes, engaging in and studying one, strengthens understandings in the other. Therefore, language arts programs need to integrate these processes for instruction (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985).

#### Purpose of the Paper

This paper will focus on the comprehension-composition connection, specifically the similarities in the reading-writing processes. First, the reading-writing processes will be described, and then the comprehension-composition connection and its contribution to an integrated language arts program will be explained.

## Description of Reading and Writing Processes

The movement between language and thought results in thought being generated into language, which in turn generates more thoughts. Reading prompts prior knowledge which brings meaning to the text and results in the creation of new thoughts. Writing, too, brings prior knowledge into play as ideas are generated (Vygotsky, 1978).

Frank Smith (1988) collaborates with this view of the language processes by saying that readers must bring meaning to texts. They must have a modifiable set of expectations about what they will find in the reading experience so they can make predictions about the text, based on the presentation and visual cues. Readers need to predict what writers intend. The writer will likewise have expectations of how the text might develop and therefore will begin to consider questions such as "Why am I writing this? Who will be the reader? What type of language should I use? What is the best way to say it?" (p. 168).

Kenneth Goodman (1986) relates that writing and reading are both dynamic, constructive processes. Writers must decide how much to provide so that readers will be able to infer and recreate the writer's intended meanings. Readers will bring to bear their knowledge of the text and their own values and experiences as they make sense of a writer's text. Writers must

have a sense of audience, and readers must have a sense of the writer.

### Comprehension-Composition Connection

Reading and writing place similar demands on thinking abilities. The composing process is critical to children's emerging thinking abilities because it actively engages the learner in constructing meaning. Through composing, children develop ideas, connect ideas, and express thoughts. Comprehending requires the learner to reconstruct the structure and meaning of ideas expressed by another writer. Creating ideas from the process of reading requires competence in regenerating the ideas and in learning how to interpret the ideas of another. Thus, both comprehending and composing are reflections of the same cognitive processes (Squire, 1983).

The reading-writing connection is described as recursive (Boutwell, 1983). Children while writing are moving back and forth from writing to reading and then from rewriting to rereading. As children write, they will pause, switch to the child as reader, and consider the text. Readers read what writers write. Neither reader nor writer can exist without a text. Writers must produce them and readers must interpret them. Composing and comprehending occur interchangeably as children use language to construct meaning (Bromley, 1988; Cambourne, 1988).

Similarly, Calkins (1983) says that writing involves reading. When children view themselves as authors, they gain a sense of ownership over their reading. This author found that there was no way she could watch writing without watching reading. While composing, children read continually. They read to savor what they have written.

Loban (1963) investigated the relationship between reading and writing achievement. He found that good readers were good writers and poor readers usually wrote poorly as well. Other studies have corroborated Loban's findings. A positive relationship does exist between reading and writing (Stotsky, 1983). Graves (1983) says that children who write for others achieve more easily the objectivity necessary for reading the works of others.

#### Comprehension-Composition Connection and the School Program

Both reading and writing abilities are developed by creating meaning while involved in the processes of reading and writing. Fluency in both processes comes with years of engaging in them, not with repetitive and separate exercises and drills. In a print rich environment, children learn to read and write as naturally as they learn oral language abilities (Smith, 1983).

Shanahan (1992) says that children benefit when reading and writing are brought together in an instructional program.

Reading and writing should be combined in the classroom for three major reasons: First, reading and writing depend upon much of the same knowledge and the same strategies and tasks. Therefore, the combined teaching of common aspects of the reading and writing processes can provide more effective and efficient instruction. Second, reading and writing are communication activities. Writers need to think about their audiences, and readers need to think about authors. Those with experience with both processes can engage in thinking more effectively. Finally, reading and writing can be combined profitably within other functional activities across the curriculum. The collaborative use of reading and writing can be a more important study strategy than the use of a single process. Students need the opportunity to learn how to combine these processes to create powerful language.

#### Role of the Teacher as a Reader and Writer

Reading and writing must be modeled for students by those around them who are more linguistically able. The teacher, as a reader and a writer, serves as a model and a collaborator in the reading-writing classroom. As models, teachers need to be observed by their students engaging in the processes of reading and writing within the functions of language and genuinely liking to read and write. Holdaway (1979) says teachers must display themselves as joyfully literate readers and writers if they

expect their students to become successful readers and writers. Teachers play a critical role in affecting students' attitudes toward reading and writing. Their encouragement and influence help students adopt a positive attitude toward the language processes.

Teachers need to encourage their students to take risks while engaging in reading and writing. Without it, students cannot discover the potentials of literacy. Their approximations in reading and writing need to be accepted as their experimentations in speaking were accepted in early childhood. Prediction should be encouraged as readers make sense of print. Writers must be encouraged to think about what they want to say, to experiment with punctuation, to make approximations when spelling, and to explore genres. Teachers need to emphasize to children that miscues and invented spelling are part of the ongoing learning process; they are not a signal to shutdown reading and writing (Goodman, 1986).

Teachers should create a physical environment that is congruent with the nature of language. Immersing children in a literate environment will empower them to become more responsible for their own growth as readers and writers. Teachers should provide children with many opportunities in the classroom and through library facilities to engage in meaningful activities with print (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987).



During teacher-student conferences, the children's areas of interest become more apparent. Then, teachers can refer children to reading materials that will interest them. Teachers can suggest literature works to spark ideas for writing and extend a topic. Also, teachers can suggest that writers do a library search for information, using reference materials and other nonfiction texts to provide authentic details for their drafts (Calkins, 1986).

#### Providing a Rich Learning Environment

A print rich learning environment supports interaction between the comprehension and composition processes. Kenneth Goodman (1986) says that the learning environment should be rich in content and filled with a whole array of possibilities for engaging in the thinking-language processes, but at the same time is predictable and secure. Within such a classroom structure, children can engage in the functions of language to create their own meaning, thereby developing thinking-language abilities and discovering the nature of language.

Brian Cambourne (1988) believes that the real world does not provide the same conditions for learning to read and write that it provides for learning to talk. He advocates using the natural functions of written language to teach reading and writing as children learned much of their oral language abilities. Therefore, teachers need to create a stimulating

environment that supports children's involvement in the functions of language.

Children also learn from the models of language that quality literature provides. Quality literature exemplifies the richness of language and presents a wealth of vicarious experiences for young learners. Books provide patterns that children can use in their own stories (Goodman, 1986).

Read-aloud experiences. Read-aloud periods can offer unforgettable experiences with ideas and language. The teacher who has carefully examined a quality piece of literature can offer it as a model of language. As a result, children can experience the sound of language, the vividness of language through imagery, the associations of ideas made through figurative language, the flow of the plot, the unfolding of the characters and their relationship, the development of the theme, and the characteristics of the author's style. As children listen, they can use these elements to recreate the story in their minds and then in their writing (Harms & Lettow, 1986).

Reading aloud helps children to generate topic ideas. Children who experience many carefully selected reading aloud sessions are constantly building a background of prior knowledge. As a text is read aloud, it may prompt children to recall memories or to create new ideas. Also, children may attend to specific elements of the text (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987).

The language and content children use in their writing is greatly influenced by the stories and poems they hear. Whether consciously or nonconsciously, children pick up words and phrases from books they have experienced. Writers often internalize a storyline and reuse it to suit their own purposes. In their writing, children also use form, genre, and book design from literature experiences. For example, they try out quotation marks when they need conversation, and experiment with different genres. In publishing their writing, they use book design elements from tradebooks, such as endpapers and title pages (Calkins, 1986).

Sustaining centers. These centers are permanently placed in the classroom to provide a secure, predictable environment. A listening/reading center and an author center, both sustaining centers, can contribute to a print rich environment (Harms & Lettow, 1992).

The listening/reading center contains literature representative of all genres. The stories the teacher has read aloud can also be placed in the center. Cassettes, commercially prepared or developed by the teacher or the students, to accompany picture books allow children to follow along with the print. These experiences help children attend to text, provide models of language, and foster an awareness of the song of language. These experiences can also provide ideas for related

expressive activities. Retelling opportunities, such as puppetry, nesting dolls, and flannelboard stories generated from listening/reading experiences can strengthen children's understanding and appreciation of stories and can help them internalize the structure of stories (Harms & Lettow, 1992).

Throughout the school year, the author center focuses on the works of various authors. For each featured author, a biographical sketch and their representative works are displayed to help children see how the author's experiences have influenced their work and how they engage in the reading-writing processes (Harms & Lettow, 1992).

#### Providing Opportunities to Engage in the Processes

Engaging in the language processes to create meaning takes time. Reading and writing require large blocks of time, so children can be free to think about the meaning they are creating and to discuss it with others. Jane Hansen (1987) says readers and writers need long blocks of uninterrupted time: Readers need time to select books, read them, and then respond to the ideas created through expressive activity and interactions with others. Writers need time to explore topics just as readers peruse books, follow through with the writing process, and then share their compositions with others.

Atwell (1987) relates that short writing periods rush students, hampering their thinking, and restricting the quality

of their writing. When students are given time to reflect on prior literacy experiences and apply new knowledge, they will take risks. When they consider what they have written, children are more likely to achieve clarity, the voice of good writing.

Because of the similarities in the reading and writing processes, the common thinking-language tasks reinforce children's learning. A school program needs to provide many opportunities for children to make reading-writing connections. These opportunities--shared book experience, intertextuality, literary borrowing, redrafting and revising, and sharing with peers--will be explained.

Shared book experience. This group activity which includes both teacher and student involves sharing stories, poems, and songs for the pleasure of enjoying fine literature. According to Holdaway (1979), this experience fosters student participation, encourages independent reading, and generates ideas for writing topics. Children can discover different kinds of book format, and reading and writing strategies.

Connections between reading and writing can be brought into play during shared book time. Often shared reading leads to shared writing with the teacher and students collaborating to compose a text based on the ideas and patterns found in their reading. As the teacher takes down the dictation on a chart or chalkboard, both students and the teacher say the words aloud as

they are writing. Then, the children's own natural language becomes the predictable text that they read. This experience can help children understand the patterns of language and the organization of the stories (Butler & Turbill, 1987).

Intertextuality. This process involves interpreting one text by connecting with previously constructed texts. While reading a text, readers may make connections with other texts that they have written or read. These connections change both the meaning of the current evolving text and the understandings of the past texts (DeBeaugrande, 1980).

Harold Rosen (1986) relates that a story exists only because of experiences with other stories. Writers construct their own stories by connecting their current experiences with their past ones. In sharing their stories with others, writers not only bring stories to life, but they also make new connections and create meanings. Once they share a story, the text becomes a source of further dialogue and composing by both the reader and the writer; thus the process of intertextuality is endless.

Literary borrowing. In this process the reader reconstructs another writer's style and intentions. As a result, connections are made between reading and writing. Literary borrowing takes three forms: genres, topics or themes, and techniques modeled by another writer. According to Atwell

(1987), a writer cannot write without appropriating ideas, frameworks, rhythms, and form from their literary heritage.

Students who are exposed to a wide range of literary resources are more apt to tap into their literary backgrounds when encountering various types of texts. Students who seldom read for pleasure are deprived of experiences that capture their imaginations or satisfy their needs and therefore will not become literary borrowers. Elementary school students who read only the voiceless prose of basals do not borrow. What captivates students as readers inspires their writing (Atwell, 1987).

Probable passages, a form of literary borrowing, is a process that involves readers in predicting the types of information that an author might provide and then using this information to construct their own text. Readers can examine the story title and pictures and some of the major vocabulary words. Using these clues, they write their own story. Then, students read the original story and compare their responses to it. Through this process, children come to see that prediction is a form of composition and that the types of thinking they do when they create their own compositions are similar to what an active reader does during reading (Shanahan, 1992).

Innovating on text is another form of literary borrowing. This process involves making up a new sentence or story based on the structure of existing text. It is done by substituting,

adding, or deleting words and phrases. If one or two words are substituted, many other words in the text may need to be changed in the story to make sense. From engaging in this process, children can gain insight into how other writers write. When they are reading books, they can notice the author's use of language and think about changes the author could have made to improve the clarity of the story. By showing various writers' techniques and by demonstrating revision with their own writing, teachers can help children begin to develop a repertoire of their own strategies (Butler & Turbill, 1987).

Redrafting and revision. Readers and writers have similar concerns after completing their tasks. Readers may consider whether or not they have achieved their purpose for reading and have reconstructed the author's intended meaning. Writers may check to make sure that what they constructed is meaningful and whether or not they have achieved their purpose for writing. The redrafting phase of the composition process best illustrates the recursive nature of writing. As children rewrite parts of their composition to refine the meaning, or redrafting, they are continuously reading and rereading their work to ensure that they are communicating the meaning to their audience. As they reread what they have written, they often rewrite their ideas, making additions, substitutions, deletions, and rearrangements. After writers have focused on content, they turn to revising to provide



form that will assist in signaling writers' meanings (Calkins, 1986).

Sharing with peers. A learning community can foster children's social development through cooperative language activities. The classroom can be carefully structured so that the children learn from each other, from their teacher, and from the literature that surrounds them. Young writers need a host of strategies for gathering information, such as discussing their topics and drafts with others and reading related literature (Calkins, 1986).

Peer conferences can support children in writing for an audience. In such conferences, the author reads the piece and asks the peers for comments and needed assistance if requested. The responder's role is to listen, make comments, and ask questions. The children's questions during these conferences reflect how they engage in the writing process: What do you mean when you say \_\_\_\_? Could you read that part again? What happened when \_\_\_\_? Tell me more about \_\_\_\_? These kinds of questions help the writer understand what readers look for when approaching written material. Therefore, these conferences help the writer develop a reader's perspective on their writing (Atwell, 1987).

The group sharing sessions provide children with opportunities for the publication of their works. As children

read aloud their compositions to their peers and the teacher, they are making a comprehension-composition connection. In these sessions, children find out what their peers have been writing. A special place can be designated for sharing writing with others, which is sometimes called the "author's chair." Authors sit in a special chair and read their works to the rest of the class. The children respond with positive comments about the piece and ask questions about the writing. Sometimes the author's chair is used for sharing writing of professional authors, a reading experience (Graves & Hansen, 1983).

Group sharing can energize children, both the writer and the audience, to engage in further writing experiences. Ideas can spread like wildfire through the classroom as children borrow topics and themes from each other. It is important to understand that in retrieving and borrowing, the writer is not imitating or plagiarizing. Everyone who writes is a borrower because their reading experience comes into play when they write (Atwell, 1987).

#### Summary

This paper reviewed the professional literature concerning the nature of the comprehension-composition connection, particularly between the reading-writing processes. This review supports combining reading and writing instruction to provide more effective, efficient learning experiences for children.

Both processes have common thinking-language tasks, so instruction in one enhances the other.

Because language is a recursive process, instructional programs need to present children with opportunities to make connections between the reading and writing processes. A reader reconstructs the author's meaning and may make note of the elements used by the author in creating that meaning. In other words, the reader is reading like a writer. In reading a piece, a reader may be energized to create his/her own meaning. As a reader becomes a writer, it is likely that he/she will use some of the same reading tasks in writing. A writer is continually moving back and forth from writing to reading the text. In these instances, the writer is writing like a reader. These connections strengthen children's thinking-language abilities.

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