



Indispensable Allies: Understanding family members' unique contributions to children's early literacy and what we can do to support them

Families play critical and unique roles in the early language and literacy development of young children. This interactive session will explore practices through which family members can have the greatest impact on early literacy learning, and will engage participants in examining the extent to which their centers, home visiting programs, and schools help support these practices, particularly in culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse communities. Join us to explore resources for promoting family engagement in early literacy activities, and collaborate with colleagues to identify actions you can take to increase support for family literacy in your setting.

**Professional Development for All
Buffett Early Childhood Institute
University of Nebraska**
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AGENDA

- I. Points to Ponder – Exploring what we believe about families' roles in early language and literacy learning
- II. Strategies that impact family engagement in early literacy activities: What the research says
- III. The power of the mirror: Representing our families in our collections and curricula
- IV. Restrictions in access to texts: Why it matters and what we can do about it
- V. Collaborative Action Planning & Review of Resources

Book lists, descriptions, and teaching guides for recommended text selections can be found at
www.kidslikeus.org



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Indispensable Allies: Points to Ponder

What do you think?

Take a couple of minutes to consider each of these statements. Think about the extent to which you agree or disagree with each, and why.

Choose one or two to discuss with colleagues at your table.

1. We should help parents understand that they are their children's first and most important teachers.
2. All language is good language when it comes to building a foundation for early literacy learning.
3. Reading to their children is the single most important thing parents and caregivers can do to support emergent and early literacy.
4. Any book is better than no book for supporting emergent and beginning literacy at home.

4 Easy Ways to Grow Brainpower!

Tips for Parents and Caregivers of Infants and Toddlers

Drawn from Glusman, M. & Killner, M. (2016). *I Love You Like Sunshine: How Everyday Play and Bedtime Stories Grow Love, Connections, and Brainpower*. Chicago: West Walker Publishing House.
Available at <http://iloveyoulikesunshine.com/>

TALK!

Notice what seems interesting to your baby and talk about it.

- Name and describe the things you see (Are they big/small? Soft/hard? Near/far?)
- Tell family stories. What were things like when you were little?
- Name the expressions you notice on your baby's face
 - If she frowns, ask her if she's upset.
 - If she smiles, ask her what's so funny!

SING!

Babies love music. Listening to songs and rhymes helps babies learn sounds that make up words.

- Sing lullabies or songs you remember from your childhood
- Listen to music and sing or hum along
- What are some of your favorite songs now? Sing them over and over as much as you like!

READ!

Babies like to look at pictures (especially baby faces), and they love to hear your voice

- Read with your baby and tell him about the pictures in the books
- Read books you remember from when you were little
- Look for poetry books or rhyming stories to share with your baby
- Read what makes you happy!

PLAY!

Babies learn by interacting with people

- Having fun with your baby is a great way to develop connections and brainpower
- Be silly, make jokes, dance around, play peek-a-boo, and cuddle
- Play pointing or counting games during feeding, baths, and diaper changes (show objects, count fingers and toes, etc.)
- When your baby makes noises, act as if he told you something and talk back to have a "conversation"



LITERACY AT HOME

Family members can help young children build strong language, reading, and writing skills.

Here are some ways to bring literacy home.



1. Talk to your child about his or her day. Have everyone in the family talk about their day. Describe what you did, how you did it, and what happened. Use words like, "First, I got on the bus, then I got off at my stop, and then I went to work." This helps children understand the order of events in a story.



2. Point out in the environment familiar words and letters that your child sees every day. For example, the letters on the bus, a sign, the subway, or in the grocery store. Ask your child if he or she sees other letters that match the letters in their name or letters they know.



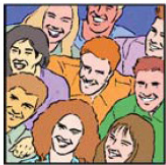
3. Take photographs at events that include family members. View the photos together after the event. Identify each family member and describe what they are doing. Use these photos to help your child tell a story or recall the events and activities. Recall helps children develop literacy skills.



4. Read aloud to your child as often as you can. Listen while your child "reads" or retells a familiar story. Ask the child to predict what will happen next or ask the child to tell you the story after you read it. This helps your child learn to sequence the story.



5. Look for times in the day when you and your child can share literacy activities that help you around the house. When it is time to prepare a meal or sit down to eat you can point out the letters and words on the boxes and cans you use to prepare the meal. You can talk to your child about where everyone will sit, what they like to eat, and how much they will enjoy the meal. Discuss with your child the ingredients in what you are making. Make a game from the labels and boxes.



6. The stories you heard from your family when you were a child will make great stories to read with your child. Tell your child a story and help draw pictures to illustrate the story. Write some of the words about the story under the pictures. Put the pages together for a unique book that you and your child can read together.



7. When you plan to shop for the family ask your child to help you make a list. Describe each item you are writing down, show your child the list, and point out familiar letters. While shopping, ask your child to mark off each item you select. Point out familiar letters on each label or package.



Some Tips for Reading with Young Children



- **Read together every day.**
Read to your child every day. Make this a fun, relaxing time you can share together.
- **Be interactive.**
Engage your child in actively listening to a story. Discuss what you see on the cover, point to pictures and words on the page, and answer your child's questions. Ask questions of your own, like "What do you think will happen next?" or "What was your favorite part of the story?"
- **Take your time.**
Try not to read too fast. Read slowly enough for children to build mental images of the story in their minds.
- **Read with fun in your voice!**
Read to your child with humor and expression. Use different voices for different characters.
- **Use pictures to "tell" stories**
It's ok to skip parts of a book or summarize a long story until your child's attention span can handle it. Feel free to add brief explanations or details to pages you think might be hard to understand.
- **Read books that interest and engage your child.**
Look for books with characters about the same age as your child. Choose easy-to-read rhyming books, books with colorful illustrations that help tell the story, pattern books with repeating text that let your child join in, and books related to your family's interests and experiences.
- **Read it again and again and again.**
Your child will probably want to hear a favorite story over and over. Go ahead and read the same book for the 100th time! Repeated readings help children develop language and literacy skills. Encourage your children to tell parts of the story they remember.
- **Talk about writing, too.**
Draw your child's attention to the way writing works. When looking at a book together, point out how we read from left to right and how words are separated by spaces.
- **Say how much you enjoy reading together.**
Tell your child how much you enjoy reading with him or her. Look forward to this time you spend together. Talk about "story time" as the favorite part of your day.
- **Know when to stop.**
If your child loses interest or has trouble paying attention, just put the book away for a while. Don't continue reading if your child is not enjoying it.
- **Keep books around the house.**
Check out books from your local library or your child's school. Look for inexpensive books at thrift stores, flea markets, library book sales, or used book stores. Ask friends or relatives who have older children for books their children may have outgrown.

Kahoot it! Survey on Access to Text

1. Our center, school, or program has a well-stocked, contemporary, and inviting library. YES NO
2. Our library has many books that are “mirrors” for the families and community we serve. YES NO
3. We have a good range of selections in all of our families’ home languages. YES NO
4. Our library is managed by a staff member and is open and accessible regularly. YES NO
5. Children and family members can check out multiple books at any time. YES NO
6. Purchasing a \$6-\$18 picture book is a reasonable expense for all of our families. YES NO
7. The closest Omaha Public Library is less than 5 blocks from my center or school. YES NO
8. I would allow my 10-year-old to walk those 1-5 blocks without my supervision. YES NO
9. All of our parents have the proper ID and address documentation needed to get a public library card. YES NO
10. We ensure that books to go home from our collection on a daily basis. YES NO



Representations of Family Diversity in Children’s Literature
KIDS LIKE US Recommended Texts

Title	Author	Representation
American Babies	Global Fund for Children	Many representations of family diversity
Birthday Swap. The	Lopez, Loretta	Close-knit extended family; bicultural experience
Black is Brown is Tan	Adoff, Arnold	Multiracial family
Bringing Asha Home	Krishnaswami, Uma	Adoptive family
Candy Shop, The	Wahl, Jan	Aunt as primary caregiver
Castle on Viola Street, A	DiSalvo, DyAnne	Family experiencing economic hardship/housing insecurity
Chair for My Mother	Williams, Vera B.	Intergenerational family/Mom, daughter, grandmother
Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin	Tonatiuh, Duncan	Extended family separated by distance; bicultural experience
Didi and Daddy on the Promenade	Singer, Marilyn	Divorced or separated parents
Everywhere Babies	Myers, Susan	Many representations of family diversity
Family Book, The	Parr, Todd	Many representations of family diversity
From North to South/De Norte al Sur	Laínez, René	Father as primary caregiver; Mom separated by distance/deportation
Hello, Goodbye Window, The	Juster, Norton	Multiracial family
How My Family Lives in America	Kulkin, Susan	First generation Americans; bicultural experience
I Love Saturdays y Domingos	Ada, Alma Flor	Multiethnic family
In Our Mothers' House	Polacco, Patricia	Adoptive family, same-gender parents
Kiss Means I Love You, A	Allen, Kathryn Madeline	Many representations of family diversity
Kitchen Dance	Manning, Maurie	Multiethnic family
Knock, Knock: My Dad’s Dream for Me	Beaty, Daniel	Separation from a parent, not named, but can infer incarceration
Last Stop on Market Street	de la Pena, Matt	Grandmother as primary caregiver
Mama Zooms	Cowen-Fletcher, Jane	Parent with physical disability/ Mom uses wheelchair
Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation	Danticat, Edwidge	Father as primary caregiver; Mom separated by distance/deportation
Mango, Abuela, and Me	Medina, Meg	Grandparent and grandchild separated by distance; getting to know each other

Title	Author	Representation
Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match/ Marisol McDonald no combina	Brown, Monica	Multiracial family
Mini Mia and Her Darling Uncle	Lindenbaum, Pija	Uncle as frequent caregiver; same-gender partner
Monicka's Papa is Tall	Jopling, Heather	Same-gender parents
My Abuelita	Johnston, Tony	Grandmother as primary caregiver
My Diary from Here to There/ Mi diario de aquí hasta allá	Pérez, Amada Irma	Family members separated by distance/bicultural experience
My Feet Are Laughing	Norman, Lissette	Parents divorced but “still good friends”
My Name is Yoon	Recorvits, Helen	Recently immigrated family/ bicultural experience
My Very Own Room	Pérez, Amada Irma	Challenges and rewards of living with a large, extended family
Night Shift Daddy	Spinelli, Eileen	Dad is night shift-worker; family adapts routines to time differences
One Family	Shannon, George	Many representations of family diversity
Quinito’s Neighborhood/ El vecindario de Quinito	Cumpiano, Ina	Close extended family includes aunts, uncles, cousins; Non-traditional gender roles in family (Mami is a carpenter, Papi is a nurse)
Shelter in Our Car, A	Gunning, Monica	Economic hardship/housing insecurity
Sunday Shopping	Derby, Sally	Grandmother as primary caregiver; parent and child separated by deployment
Tía Isa Wants a Car	Medina, Meg	Aunt and uncle as primary caregivers; family separated by distance
Two Mrs. Gibsons, The	Igus, Toyomi	Biracial family
Visiting Day	Woodson, Jacqueline	Grandmother as primary caregiver, parent and child separated by incarceration
We Had a Picnic This Sunday Past	Woodson, Jacqueline	Grandmother as primary caregiver; extended, multigenerational family
Where's Chimpy?	Rabe, Berneice	Family member with disability; daughter with Down syndrome
White Swan Express, The	Okimoto, Jean Davies & Oaki, Elaine M.	Adoptive families

In Search of Free Books?

How to build your collection without breaking your bank

National Organizations that Distribute Books

FIRST BOOK and FIRST BOOK MARKETPLACE - www.fbmarketplace.org
Books for Kids Foundation – www.booksforkids.org
Kids Need to Read - community.kidsneedtoread.org
The Literacy Empowerment Foundation - www.lefbooks.org
International Book Project - www.intlbookproject.org/
Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) – www.rif.org

Grant opportunities

There are a number of small foundations dedicated to providing grants for the purchase of children's books for schools, libraries, and personal ownership:

- The Barbara Bush Foundation
- Build-A-Bear Workshop Bear Hugs Foundation
- The Lois Lenski Covey Foundation
- National Home Library Foundation
- Snapdragon Book Foundation
- Target Foundation

Online options and eBooks

Links to these and other resources can be found at <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/search-free-books>

International Children's Digital Library (ICDL) - <http://en.childrenslibrary.org/>

The non-profit ICDL Foundation's library is a large digital collection of children's books in more than 50 languages. The complete ICDL collection is available as a free iPad app.

Open Library - openlibrary.org

Open Library provides access to children's books on archive.org with links to other online book collections.

Open eBooks - openebooks.net

Open eBooks is an app containing thousands of popular and award-winning titles that are free for children from in-need households)

More Ideas!

Goodwill

Garage Sales

Scholastic Bonus Points

Donorschoose.org

½ Price Books (give aways)

Give a book/get a book swap drive at school

Parent/family donations (of new books or gently used books that children have outgrown)

Dollar Stores

Library Book Sales

Wish list on Scholastic book orders

Adoptaclassroom.org

Get books from retiring teachers

SUPPORTING FAMILY MEMBERS AS PARTNERS IN EARLY LITERACY

How are we doing in...

- working with family members as indispensable allies?
- understanding the resources and values in our community?
- building on families' interests and routines to engage children in talking, singing, reading, and playing?
- understanding how our families use literacy every day?
- encouraging activities that can support language and literacy learning during everyday routines?
- ensuring that all of our children and families find themselves represented in our curriculum?
- helping ensure families have access to high-quality, culturally and linguistically relevant texts?

Action planning - Steps I can take in my own setting right away

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____