

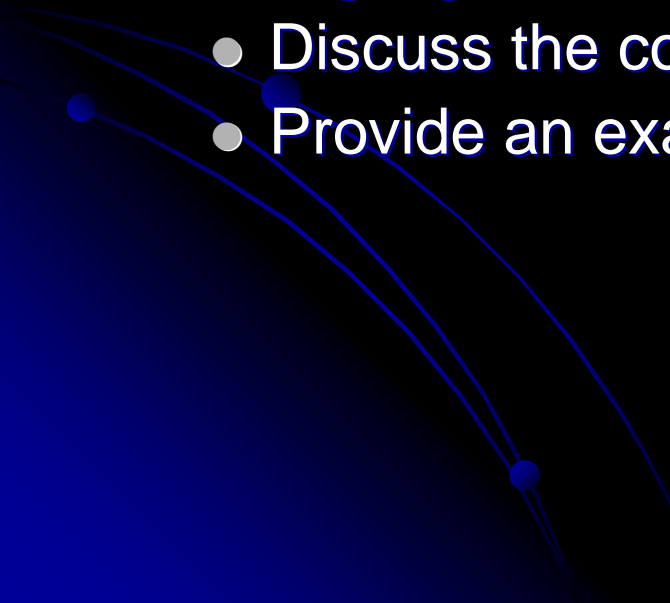


Beyond the Basic Needs: From Food, Clothing, Shelter to Home Literacy Practices

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Michigan State University
Literacy Summit
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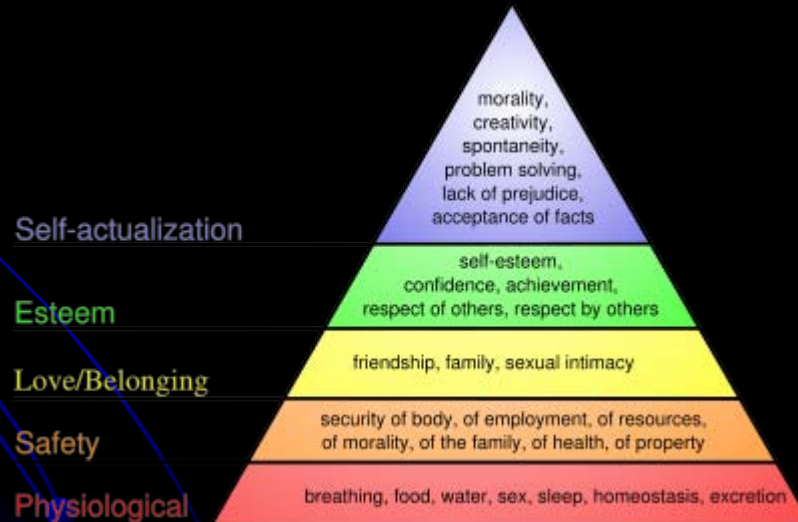


Objectives

- The purpose of this presentation is to:
 - Share some information you might already know.
 - Share the importance of connecting poor and low-income families to school-based literacy practices.
 - Define the phrase “literacy practices.”
 - Highlight the Donaldsonville, Louisiana Parent Story
 - Discuss the concept of “parent stories.”
 - Provide an example of a parent story.
- 

Maslow has set up a hierarchy of five levels of basic needs

- Physiological Needs
- Safety Needs
- Needs of love, Affection and Belongingness
- Needs for Esteem
- Needs for Self-Actualization



Schools Are At The Crossroads

Yesterday's
Traditions

Today's
Demographics

Tomorrow's
Technologies


This three-way intersection is, at this time, a hazardous crossing. We are seeing red to stop and head back toward traditional curriculum designs, We are seeing yellow signals of caution about innovative curriculum. We are getting green signals to go quickly in many directions with technological advances.



New Direction to Improve
Education

Parent
Involvement

Six Beliefs

- All families have strengths.
 - Parents can learn new techniques.
 - Parents have important perspectives about their children.
 - Most parents really care about their children.
 - Cultural differences are valid and valuable.
 - Many family forms exist and are legitimate.
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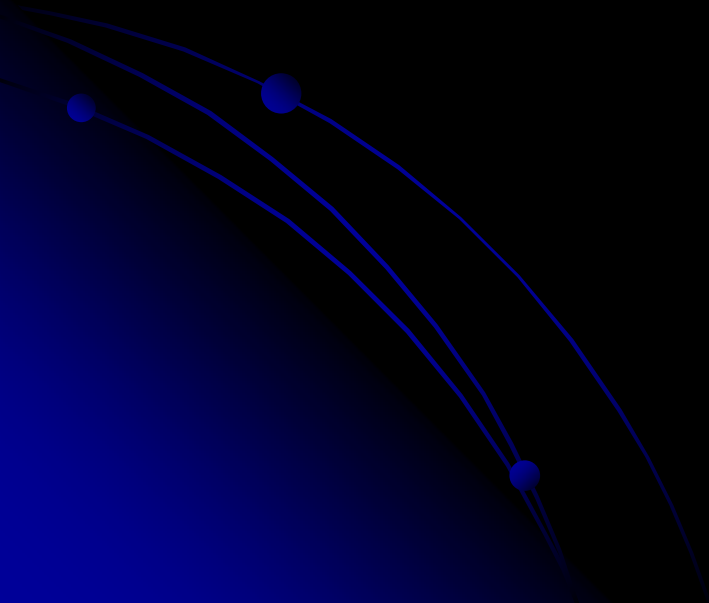
- Low income families often struggle to raise their children—to find safe, clean housing the family can afford, care for children when they are ill, find positive activities for them in their out-of-school time, and help them get a good education so they can have a better life. Increasing families' economic success includes helping parents develop skills to find – and keep – jobs that will pay a living wage and offer a chance at advancement. It means developing supports, such as child care, transportation, and counseling, to help parents succeed as workers.

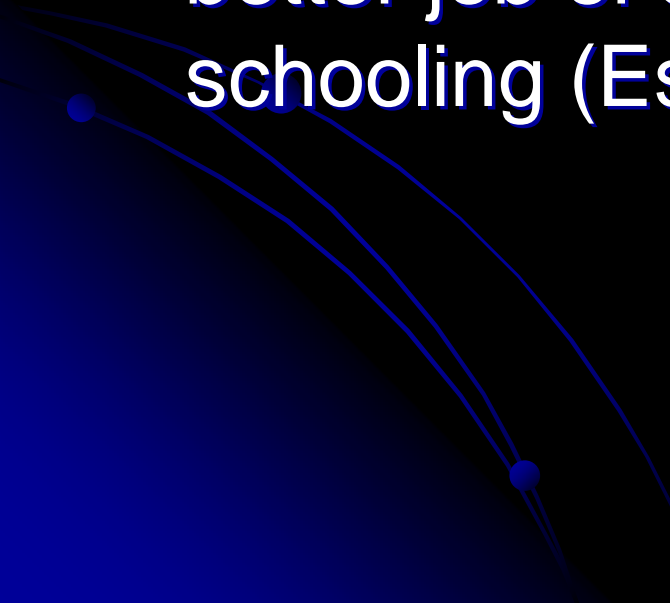
- Schools must be willing to work with new approaches to home-school interaction...[and] willing to restructure in ways that address families' needs for flexible times frames, childcare, and transportation. Schools may need to adopt an expanded definition of their mission and collaborate with other community service providers in providing educational services to parents whose life circumstances prevent them from being involved as they want to be ...If some parents are not going into the school, the school may need to go where the parents are and provide them with incentives and the support to become involved (Freedman, 1989)

Teachers must consider

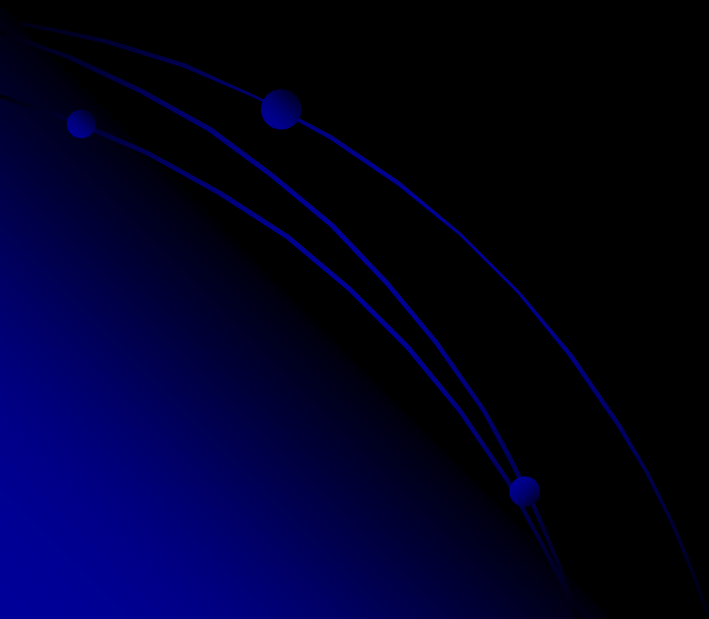
- Urban student achievement in terms of the social ecology of their neighborhoods—including ethnicity, SES, family, community resources and patterns of residential and educational segregation. This contextual approach would mark a departure from many traditional urban-reform efforts, which tend to treat schools as isolated entities, disconnected from communities and insulated from the political and economic realities that surround them. (Dittmann, 2004)

- Children from low-income and culturally and racially diverse families have the most to gain when schools involve parents. The extent of parent involvement in a child's education is more important to student success than family income or education.

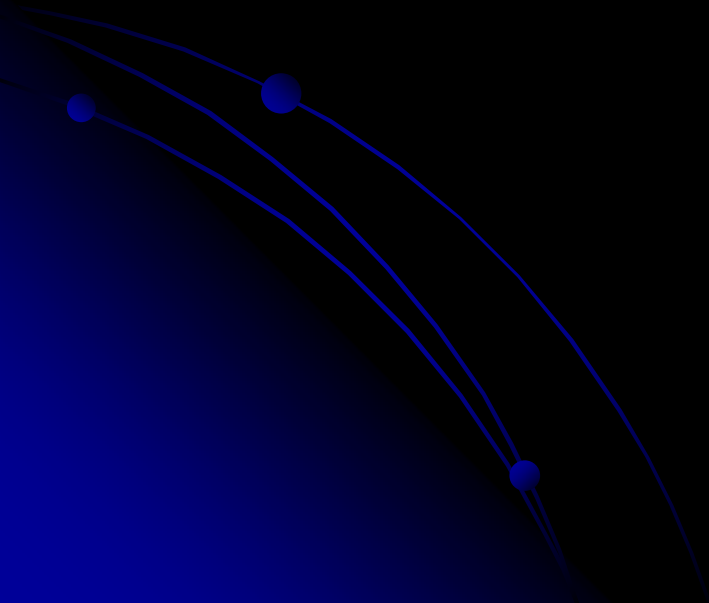



- There is remarkable consensus among educators, parents, and the general public that children will learn more and schools will improve if we can get parents to do a better job of supporting their children's schooling (Espinosa, 1995)
- 

- Epstein (1992, p. 1141) has summarized the research on parent involvement as suggesting “that students at all grade levels do better academic work and have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations, and other positive behaviors if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging, and involved.”



- We cannot look at the school and the home in isolation from one another; families and schools need to collaborate to help children adjust to the world of school. This is particularly critical for children from families with different cultural and language backgrounds.



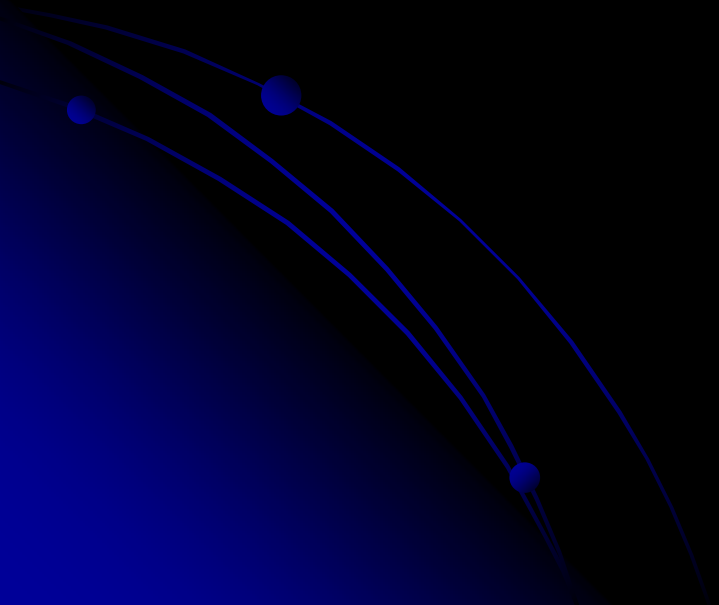
- When families are stronger, they are better able to support their children's success in school.
 - Schools are stronger when families are stronger.
 - Schools have a distinct opportunity to work in partnership with families in ways that strengthen them.
 - Communities benefit and are perceived to be strong when they have strong schools.
- 

Closing the Achievement Gap

- There's been a lot of talk lately about the achievement gap that separates low-income and minority children from other young Americans. For more than a generation, we focused on improving the education of poor and minority students. Not surprisingly, we made real gains. Between 1970 and 1988, the achievement gap between African American and white students was cut in half, and the gap separating Latinos and white declined by one-third. That progress came to a halt around 1988, however, and since that time, the gaps have widened.
- Although everybody wanted to take credit for narrowing the gap, nobody wanted to take responsibility for widening it. So, for a while, there was mostly silenced.
- (Haycock, 2001, *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 58, No. 6)

- Families send children to school, where they hope their children will become learners with the tools they need to succeed in life. Schools take children from and send them back to their families, where they assume the families will provide the support that children need to grow and learn. This circle, in which home and school share the resource of children, is one that has been the focus of development and debate.
- (*Representing Relationships Between Parents and Schools: Making Visible the Force of Theory*, M. Elizabeth Graue)

Effects of the Home Literacy Environment



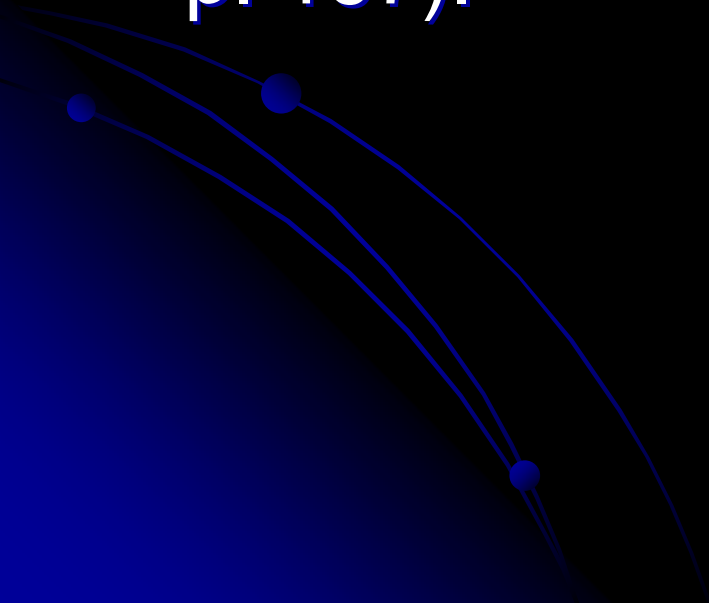
Why Learning to Work with Families is Important?

- If we think about the worlds of many of the children in our nation's classrooms, we might be overwhelmed by the fragmentation that takes place as they move from the hopes of their families and the promise of the early years through an educational system that gradually disconnects their lives. (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, p. 224)

Importance of Literacy Practices

- Brian Street (1984) employed the phrase “literacy practices as a means of focusing upon “social practices and conceptions of reading and writing” (p. 1). Street argues that “literacy practices” refer to particular ways of reading and writing, or thinking about ways to read and write, in certain cultural contexts.

What are literacy practices?

- “...literacy practices” articulates the links between individual people’s daily experiences and their wider social institutions and structures” (Maybin, 2000, p. 197).
- 

What are literacy practices?

- “mainstream literacy” (Heath, 1983), “schooled literacy” (Street & Street, 1995), or “official literacy” (Dyson, 2003) all refer to the literacy that is favored by the middle-class, value-added schools and tested by the educational institutions. These kinds of literacies also determine their success in school because their home culture and language (“unofficial literacy”) differs and are treated as deficit (Diaz & Flores, 2001; Street & Street, 1991; Villenas & Foley, 2002).

What do we know about the domains of home literacy environments?

- “Everything we know as social scientists suggests a very simple truth – that the literate practices observed within a group can best be accounted for by examining the external restrictions on the uses of literacy within a community.” (Anderson and Stokes, 1984)
- “..if we want to reach children in their homes in a manner that will facilitate the development of literacy practice, we would be well advised to focus on the social institutions that serve as the origins of the literate practices they observe.” (Anderson and Stokes, 1984)

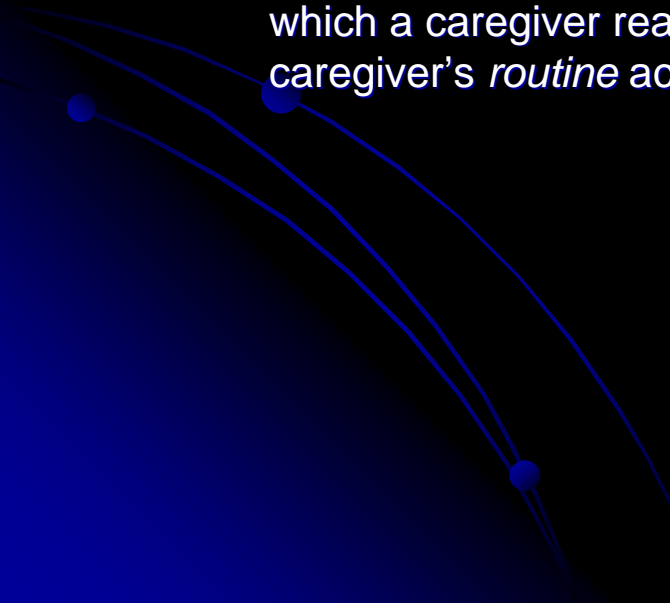
What do we know about the domains of home literacy environments?

- Leichter (1984) contends that conceptions about the ways in which family environments condition the child's experience with literacy can be clustered into three broad categories, as follows:
 - **Physical Environment:** The level of economic and educational resources, the types of visual stimulation, and the physical arrangements of the family set the stage for the child's experiences with literacy.
 - **Interpersonal Interaction:** The child's literacy opportunities are conditioned by moment-to-moment interpersonal interaction with parents, siblings, and others in the household with respect to informal corrections, explanations, and other feedback for the child's experiments with literacy.
 - **Emotional and Motivational Climates:** The emotional relationship within the home, parental recollections of their experiences with literacy, and the aspirations of family members condition the child's experiences with literacy. (p. 40)

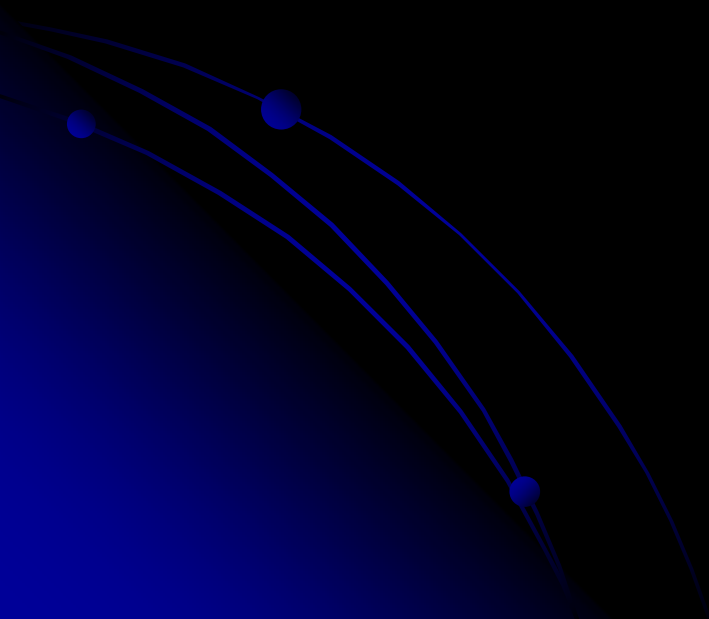
What do we know about the domains of home literacy environments?

- Anderson & Stokes (1984) identified nine domains of literacy activity:
 - **Daily Living**—Literacy events coded in the domain of daily living were embedded in activities that constitute the recurrent practices of ordinary life for the families.
 - **Entertainment**--Literacy events coded in the domain of entertainment were embedded in activities that passed the time of the participant or participants in an enjoyable, constructive, or interesting manner.
 - **School-Related Activity**—In most cases, the material that served as the focal point of the events coded into the domain of school-related activity came directly from the school.
 - **Religion**—A distinguishing feature of literacy events coded in the religion domain is that they typically involve more sophisticated literacy skills than do events in most of the other domains. For example, it was not uncommon for these events to require individual or group text analysis skills as a part of Bible study sessions.
 - **General Information**—The information being accumulated in general information literacy events covered a wide range of topics and may or many not have some future use.
 - **Work**—In most cases, the literacy events related to employment were associated with producing a product, performing labor, or providing a service that was exchanged for monetary resources.

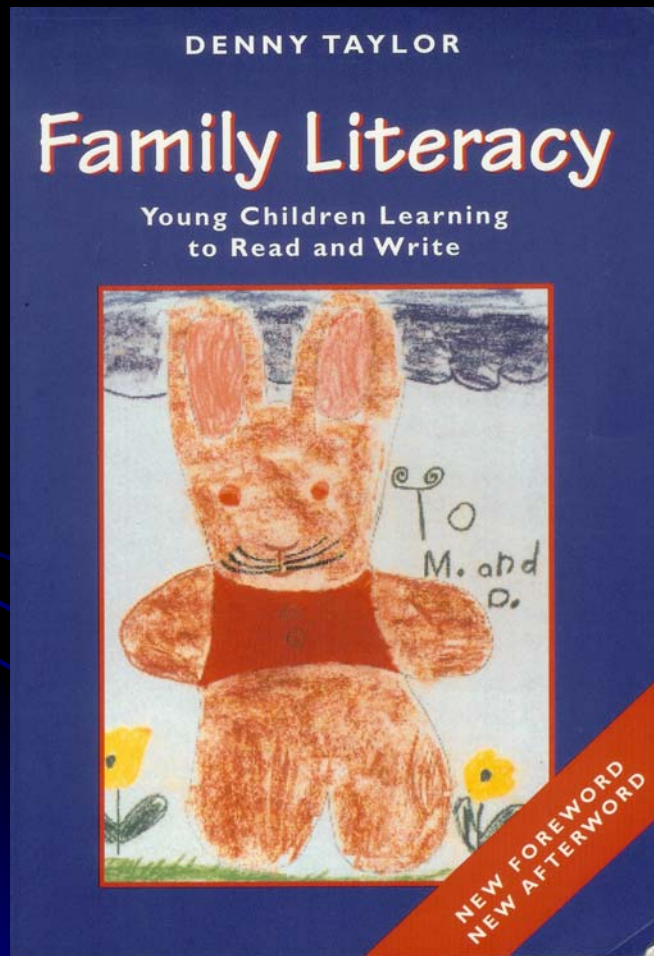
What do we know about the domains of home literacy environments?

- **Literacy Techniques and Skills**—Literacy events coded into the domain of literacy and skills were those in which reading or writing was the specific focus of the ongoing activity: That is, print is the thing that initiated and organized the activities. Specifically, these activities were organized to teach or learn literacy techniques, skills, or information.
 - **Interpersonal Communication**—Literacy events classified as interpersonal communication involved printed communication with friends or relatives, using in letter form.
 - **Storybook Time**—The domain storytime comprised those literacy events in which a caregiver read to a child or children in the family as a part of the caregiver's *routine* activity.
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Home Literacy Practices: Some Sample Texts

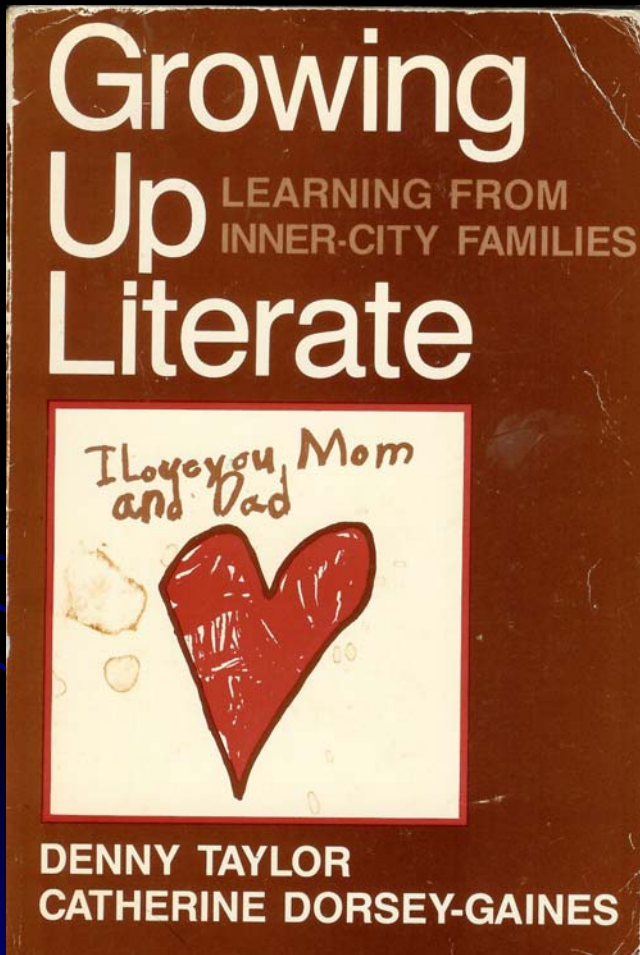


Family Literacy: Young Children Learning to Read and Write (1983)



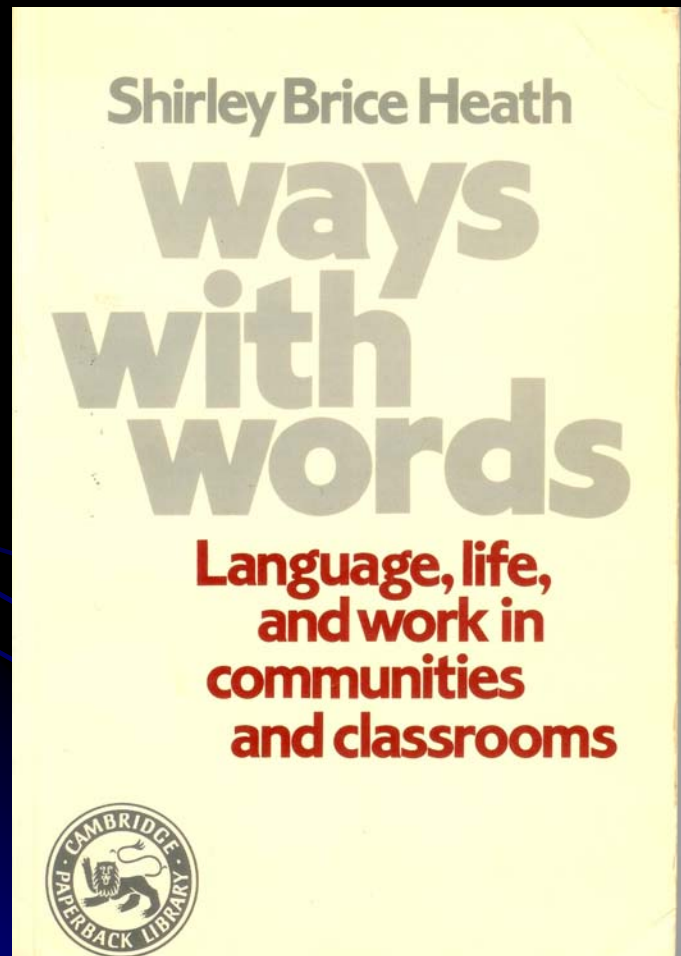
Family Literacy documents Taylor's three-year study of six families, each of which included a child who was considered by his or her parents to be successfully learning to read and write. Taylor offers an engaging story of the often complex interaction within each family and how that interaction contributed to the children's literacy development.

Growing Up Literate: Learning From Inner-City Families (1988)



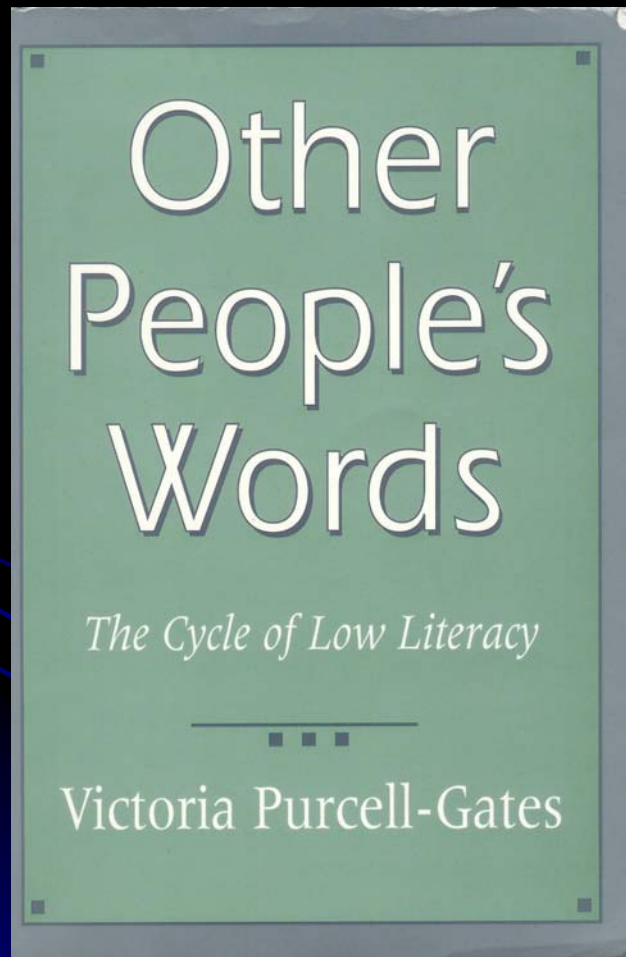
Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines aim in *Growing Up Literate* was to study the familial contexts in which young Black children living in urban poverty are growing up literate. Through their focus on children who were successfully learning to read and write despite the extraordinary economic hardships of their lives, they present new images of the strengths of the family as educator and the ways in which the personal biographies and educative styles of families shape the literate experiences of children.

Ways With Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms (1983)



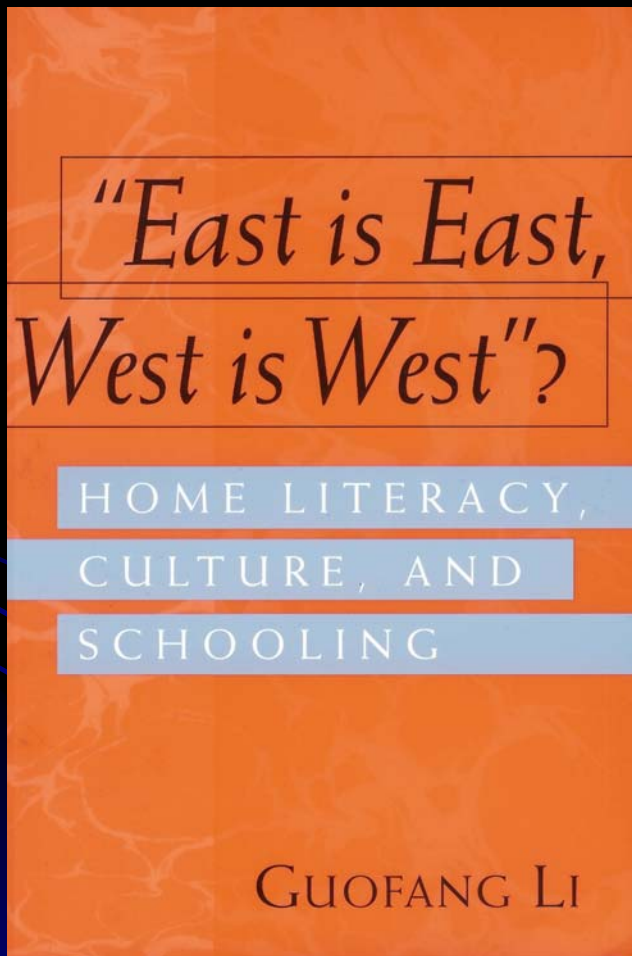
Heath's groundbreaking research focuses on literacy language learning in three different communities: Trackton, Roadville, and Maintown.

Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy (1995)



If asked to identify those children who rank lowest in relation to national educational norms, who have higher school dropout and absence rates, and who more commonly experience learning problems, few of us would know the answer: white, urban Appalachian families who migrated to northern cities in the 1950s to look for work. Literacy researchers have rarely studied urban Appalachians, yet, as Victoria Purcell-Gates demonstrates in *Other People's Words*, their often severe literary problems provides a unique perspective on literacy and the relationship between print and culture.

“East is East, West is West”? Home Literacy Culture and Schooling (2002)



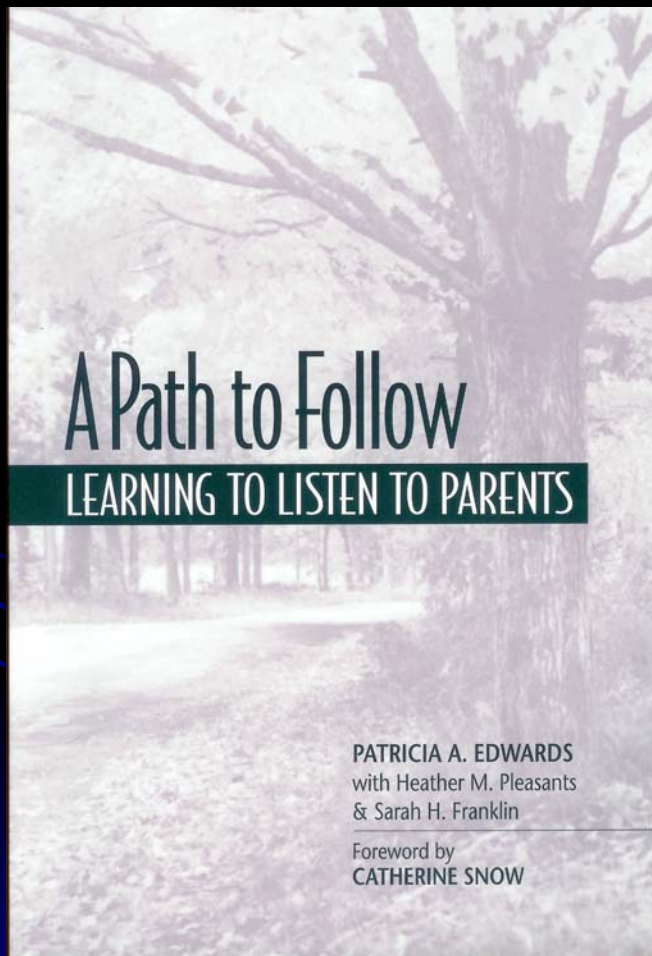
“East is East, West is West”? *Culture and Schooling* takes us into the homes of four families and allows us to look closely at four Chinese children as they begin schooling in Canada. Guofang Li does an excellent job of describing the challenges facing both academic both academic and entrepreneurial families as they try to make sense of an educational system that is very different from the one they experienced.



Parent Stories

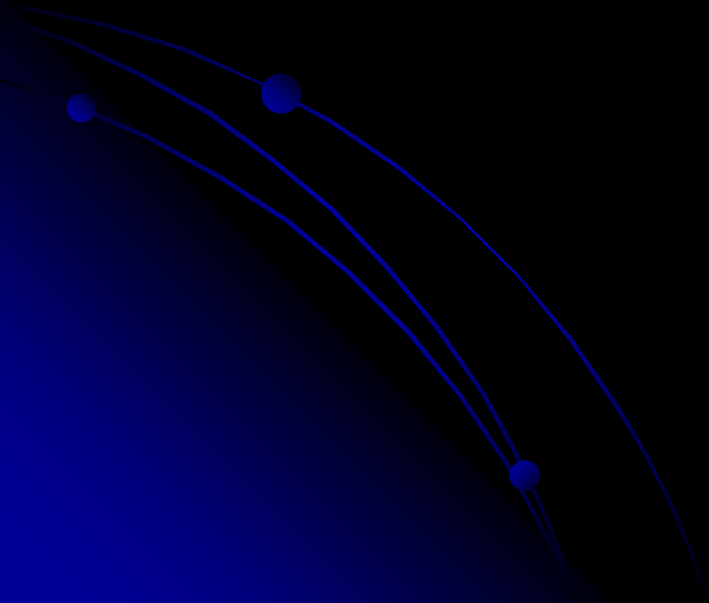


A Path to Follow: Learning to Listen to Parents (1999)



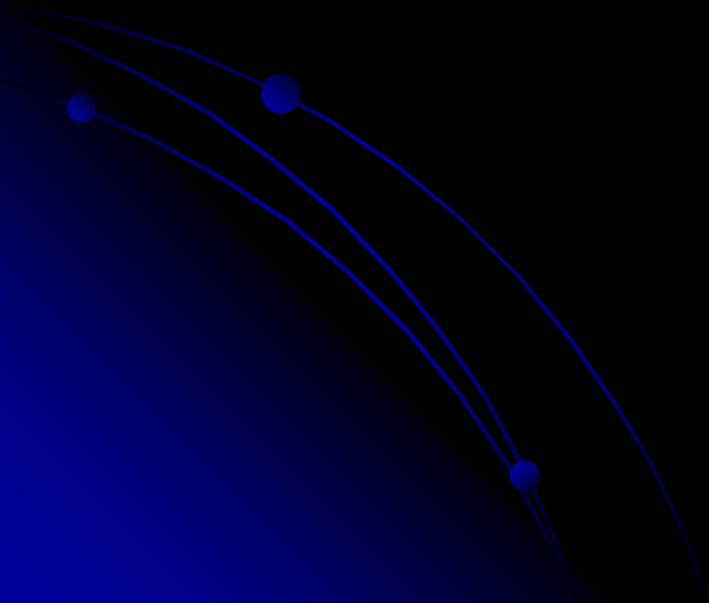
Pat Edwards and her coauthors suggest in *A Path to Follow* that parent “stories” can be a highly effective, collaborative tool for accessing knowledge that may not be obvious, but would obviously be of benefit.

Donaldsonville Parent Story



James Baldwin noted author stated:

- We learn who we are by how others perceive us.



- According to Taylor & Dorsey (1988):
If we are to teach, we must first examine our own assumptions about families and children and we must be alert to the negative images in the literature...Instead of responding to pathologies, we must recognize that what we see may actually be healthy adaptations to an uncertain and stressful world. As teachers, researchers, [administrators], and policymakers, we need to think about the children themselves and try to imagine the contextual worlds of their day-to-day lives. (p. 203)

Important Message to Teachers from Vivian Paley, author of *White Teacher*

Each year I greet thirty new children with a clear picture in mind of who shall be called “bright” and who shall be called “well-behaved.” Ask me where these “facts” come from and I will probably refer to my professional background. Yet, I doubt that the image I carry of the intelligent, capable child has changed much since my own elementary school days. It has been intellectualized and rationalized...(1979, p. 11)

What are Parent Stories?

- According to Vandergrift and Greene (1992) “every parent has his or her own story to tell” (p. 57)
- Coles (1989) further contends that “one’s responses to a story is just as revealing as the story itself” (p. 18).

One Dimensional Questions

- How many hours per week do you routinely spend reading stories to your child?
- Have you set aside a certain time every day to read to your child?
- Do you encourage your child to read or tell you a story?
- Do you provide books and magazines for your child to read?
- Do you talk and listen to your child?
- Do you and your child visit the library regularly?
- Are you selective in the TV programs your child can watch?
- Do you talk about and discuss the program with your child?

What are Parent Stories?

Although multicultural curriculum in teacher preparation programs has helped “the cultures” of school accommodate the customs of other cultures; multicultural education has not permeated pedagogy. Too often teachers focus on large or historical cultural traditions in their classrooms and fail to consider the “personal knowledge” of students that accompanies those traditions. Therefore, I offer parent stories as a mechanism for helping teachers consider the “personal knowledge” of families and children. (Edwards, 1999, *A path to follow*)

What are Parent Stories?

Parent “stories” are the narratives gained from open-ended conversations and/or interviews. In these interviews, parents respond to questions designed to provide information about traditional and nontraditional early literacy activities and experiences that have happened in the home.

(Edwards et al., 1999, pp.xxii-xxiii)

What are Parent Stories?

- Victoria Purcell-Gates (1995) states: “When we seek to understand learners, we must seek to understand the cultural contexts within which they have developed, learn to interpret who they are in relations to others, and learn how to process, interpret, or decode, their world” (p. 5).
- Courtney Cazden (1989) states: “Teachers, like physicians and social workers, are in the business of helping others. But as a prerequisite to giving help, we have to take in and understand” (p. 26).
- Resnick (1990) contends that school is only one place where literate activities occur: To understand the literacy crisis and imagine possible solutions, it is essential to examine the nature of literacy practice outside school as well as within” (p. 170).

What are Parent Stories?

Brandt (1985) stated that:

- School may have the official mission to bring literacy to students, but it is much more accurate to say that students bring literacy—or rather literacies—to school. Home literacy comes embedded in complex social and emotional meanings that need to be acknowledged and built upon, not ignored or dismantled, in school. (p. 135)

What are Parent Stories?

- ...Not all people read and write with equal ease and fluency or use writing and reading in the same ways or for the purposes. In the long run, it may be useful to think of “multiple literacies.” The notion of multiple literacies recognizes that there are many ways of being—and of becoming—literate, and how literacy develops and how it is used depend on the particular social and cultural setting. (McLane & McNamee, 1990, p. 3)

What Happened During the Parent Interviews?

...A thinking voice: thinking to remember, thinking to get what happened into words, thinking to understand it and fit it together with present experiences... The inner voice would come as the [parents] became interested in rendering the past. It moved in as they came to trust [me] and out as they suddenly wondered what [I was] thinking of what they were saying (Cleary, 1991).

What Can Parent Stories Provide for Teachers?

- Routines of parents and children
- Parents' recollections of their children's early learning efforts
- Parents' perceptions as to whether their occupations determine how they raise their children
- Descriptions of parents' "teachable moments"
- Artifacts of children's literacy histories (scrapbooks, audio cassettes, videotapes, photographs, etc.)

(Edwards et al., 1999, p.xviii)

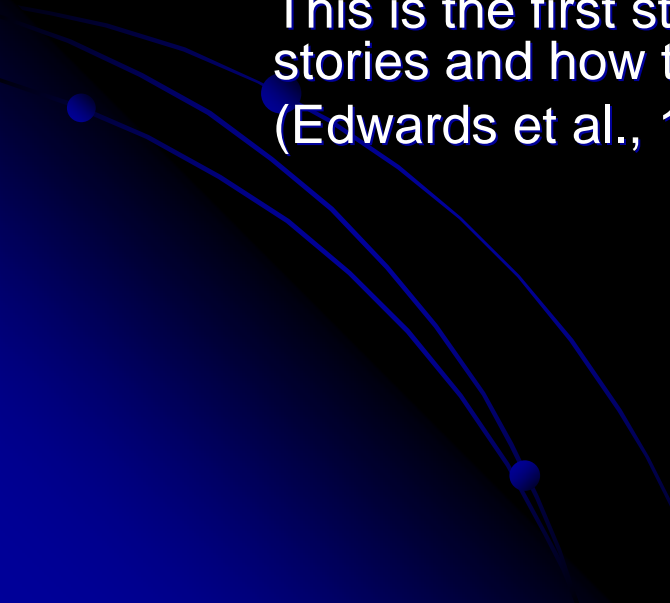
What Can Parent Stories Provide for Teachers?

Parent stories can also provide teachers with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the “human side” of families and children (i.e., why children behave as they do, children’s ways of learning and communicating, some of the problems parents have encountered, and how these problems may have impacted their children’s views about school and the schooling process).

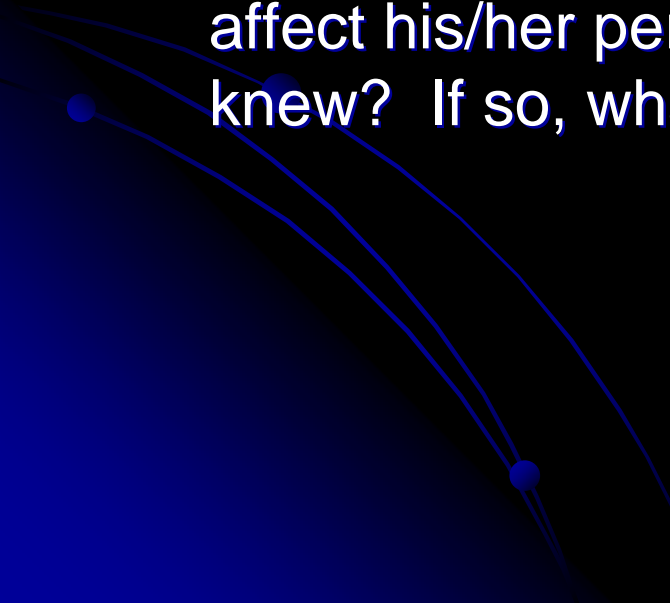
(Edwards et al., 1999, p.xviii)

What Can Parent Stories Provide for Teachers?

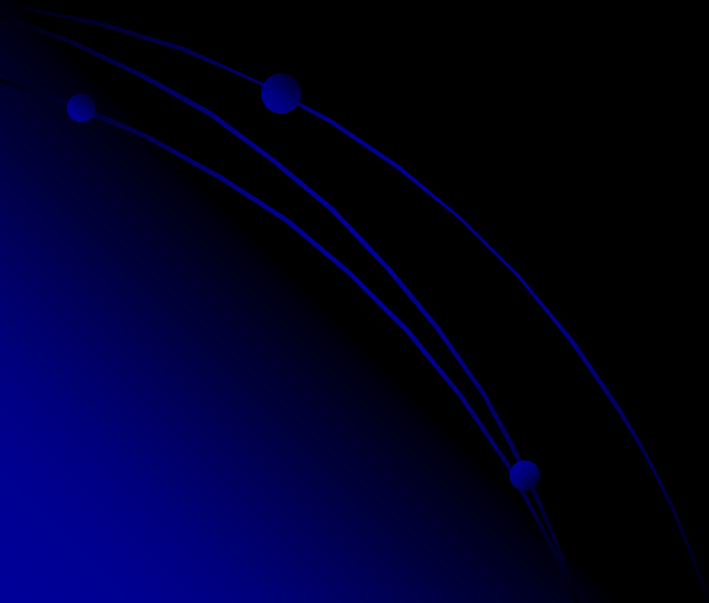
Further, parent stories offer a route out of the blame cycle and the justification teachers sometimes give for not successfully teaching labeled at-risk. Parent stories allow teachers to identify what it means, specifically, when we use the words “home literacy environment” to talk about students’ success or lack of success in school. By using parent stories in this way, teachers are able to look at specific issues, problems and strengths of homes, which influence the literacy development of students. This is the first step towards making connections between parent stories and how they can be used to better educate every child.
(Edwards et al., 1999, p.xxiv)



What Can Parent Stories Provide for Teachers? A New Way to Listen to Parents

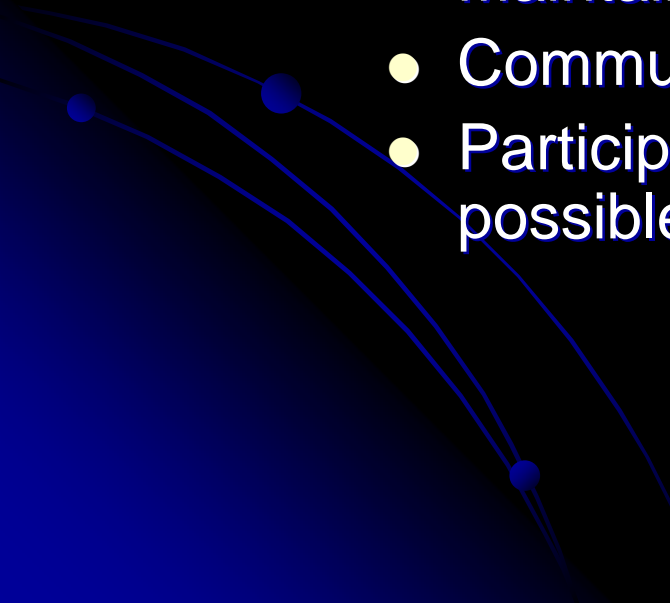
- Can you describe “something” about your home learning environment that you would like the school to build upon because you feel that this “something” would enhance your child’s learning potential at school?
 - Is there something about your child that might not be obvious to the teacher, but might positively or negatively affect his/her performance in school if the teacher knew? If so, what would that something be?
- 

Mrs. Looney's Parent Story



A Quick Glimpse

What I knew...

- Raises three children under the age of 6
 - Lives with the father of two of her children
 - Works full time for a collection agency
 - Graduated high school
 - Maintains close relationships with her parents
 - Communicates weekly with Alondra's teacher
 - Participates in classroom activities when possible
- 

About Alondra



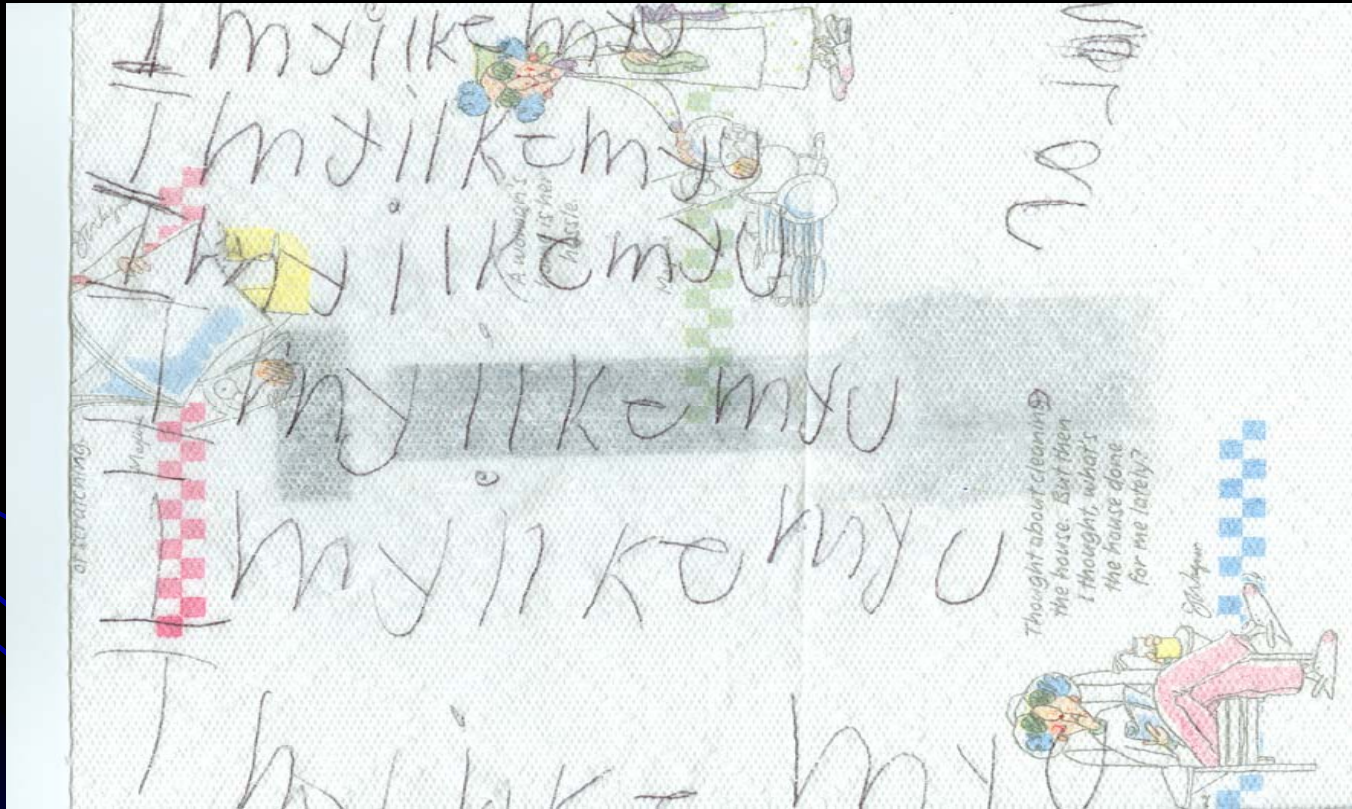
Loves school
Respects others
Follows directions
Scores at-risk on
assessments
Shows pride in her work
Loves to write

Alondra's Writing Samples

- Here Alondra has drawn a picture of her teacher and herself. She read the sentence and it says, "I have the best teacher".



- Here Alondra was practicing writing her sight words on a paper towel during breakfast at home.



Diana's Letter

- I receive letters from Diana often. She communicates clearly and effectively in letters. This letter was in response to Valentine's Day and her daughter's homework and notes folder, which had been lost during a recent move.

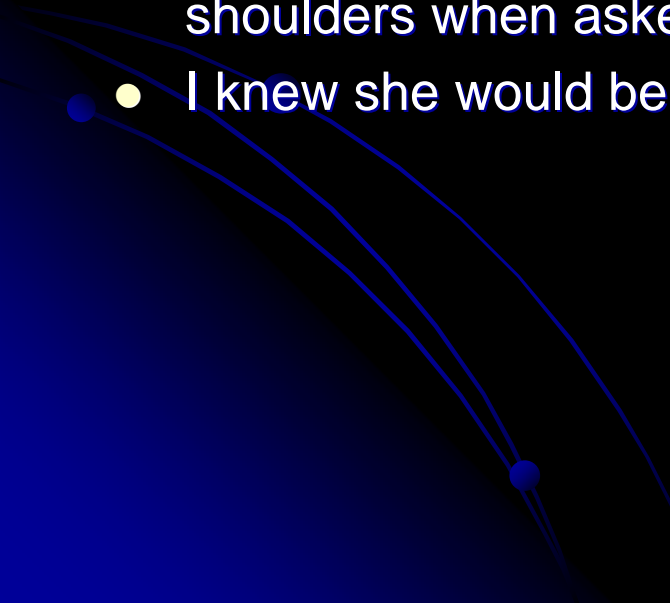
Monday 2-14-05

Mrs Looney:

I will be leaving work at 12:00 p.m today. I will be taking cupcakes to the class about 12:30 - 1:00 p.m. - Also I am soo deeply sorry; but we've been moving since Friday + Alondra's dad + I have not been able to find her homework folder. We looked everywhere. I feel so bad. If I need to purchase her another one let me know, I don't want her to not have one + feel left out. Again I'm sorry. I keep hoping it'll show up in one of our bags/boxes.

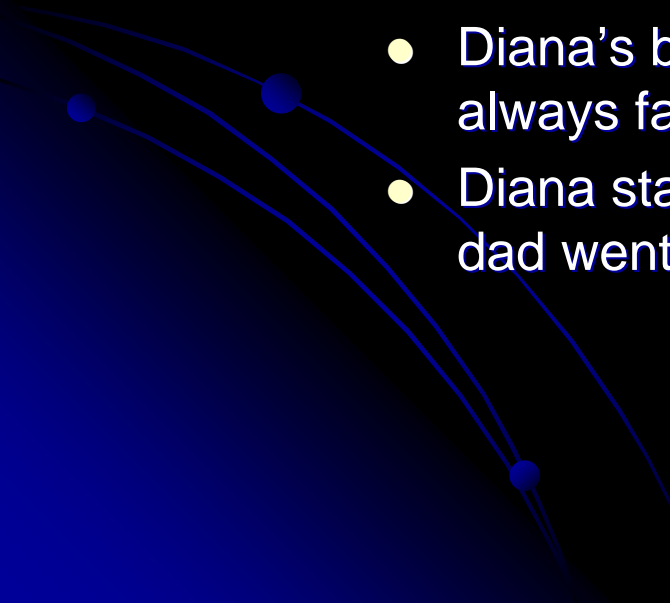
Thank You
Diana Karga.

Why Diana?

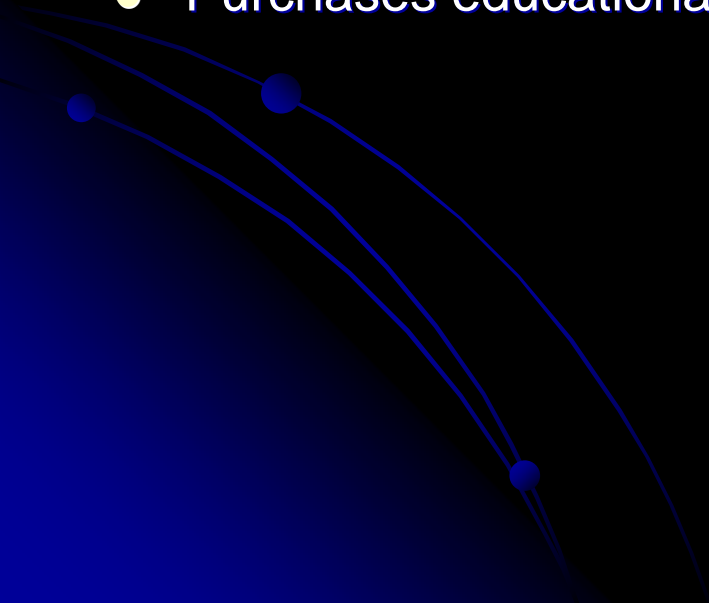
- Her daughter was struggling to meet Kindergarten expectations.
 - She expressed true concern when she received a possible retention letter.
 - I could see her being a difficult parent if she wasn't "on your side".
 - I was interested in knowing what was causing Alondra to shrug her shoulders when asked a question.
 - I knew she would be honest.
- 

Interview Highlights

What I learned

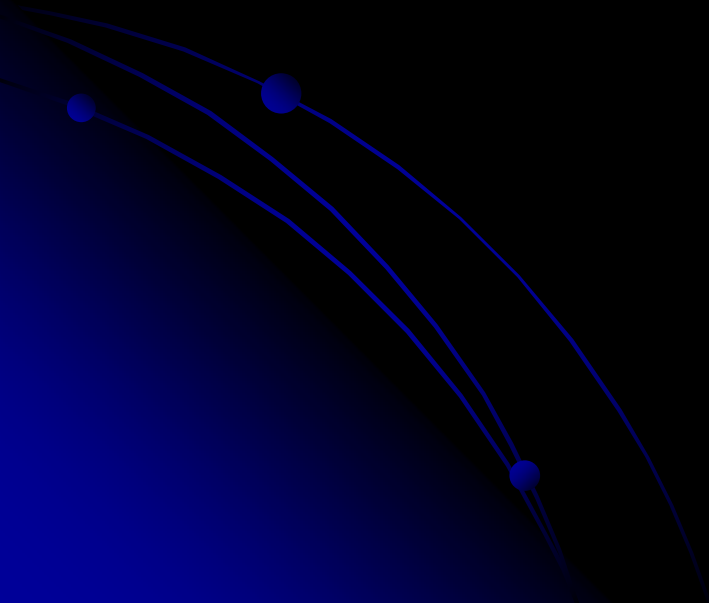
- Diana was 21 when she had Alondra.
 - Diana graduated high school despite family struggles and a dislike of school.
 - Diana's dad has spent 19 years of his life in prison.
 - Diana's boyfriend has spent time in jail and is not always faithful.
 - Diana started to dislike school during the same time her dad went to federal prison.
- 

Positives

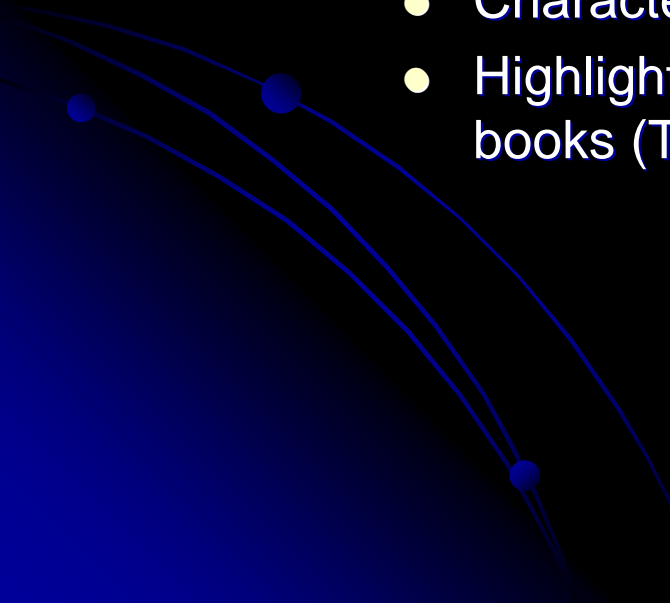
- Loves her children and family
 - Does not let her negative school history impact her daughter's opinion of school
 - Knows being involved is important
 - Provides one on one time for her and Alondra (laundry day)
 - Maintains a close relationship with her parents.
 - Purchases educational material for her daughter
- 

Negatives

- Strong focus on appearance
- Her negative school history
- Her busy work schedule
- Activities with family are not learning-based
- Appears to have low self-esteem
- Can have 'attitude' with others



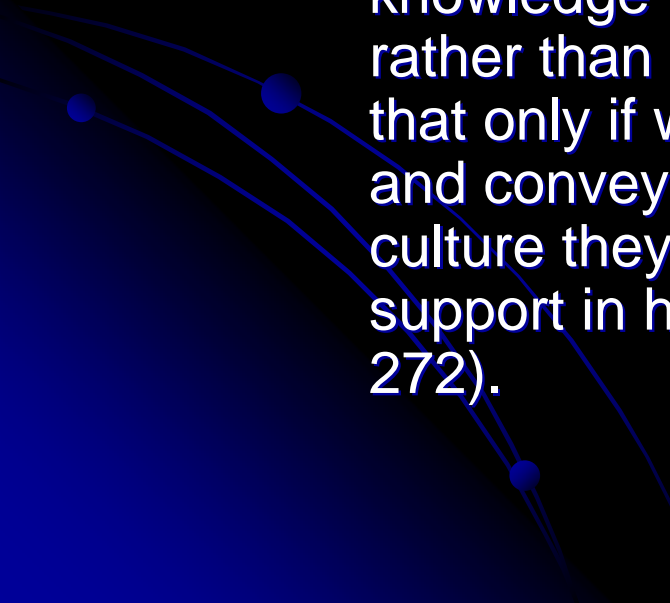
Instructional Activities

- Self-esteem building through personal power activities
 - Writing all about me stories that focus on positive attributes
 - Success stories from the street where Diana would be invited
 - Character education activities
 - Highlighting strong powerful women through picture books (The Paper Bag Princess and Swamp Angel)
- 

A Word of Wisdom from P. D. Pearson Dean, Graduate School of Education, University of California--Berkeley

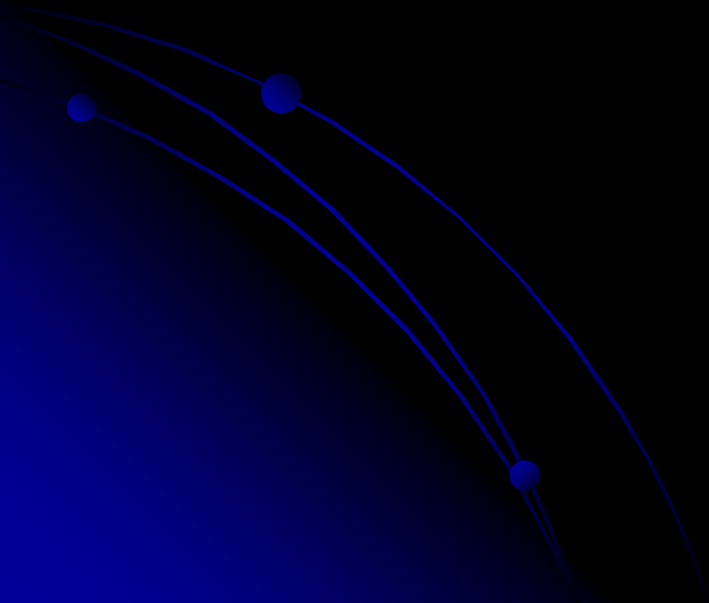
According to P. D. Pearson (1996),

Children are who they are. They know what they know. They bring what they bring. Our job is not to wish that students knew more or knew differently. Our job is to turn each student's knowledge and diversity of knowledge we encounter into a curricular strength rather than an instructional inconvenience. We can do that only if we hold high expectations for all students, and convey great respect for the knowledge and culture they bring to the classroom, and offer lots of support in helping them achieve those expectations (p. 272).



- In trying to understand families' home literacy environments we must also try to understand ourselves, true and false, personal perceptions and deceptions, the ethnocentrism of our own mental baggage. It is here that we, as researchers, educators, and policymakers who wish to enhance the learning opportunities of young children, must begin.

Questions?



For More Information...

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Thank you

