

2. Parents as Partners

Children learn best when home and school literacy environments work together in partnership. Greater parental involvement in education may be the strongest single factor that promotes a child's success in school. Teachers can help parents recognize the importance of a child's literacy development in a variety of ways. When the school environment is seen as inviting, collaborative, and in need of their support, parents often become involved.

When parents continue to provide relevant information regarding their child's development, teachers have a greater potential for meeting his or her needs. Parents can encourage their children to build on the work they are doing at school, play a

part in developing curriculum, and help as advocates for their children's school.

Parents need to be involved in the development of literacy. At the beginning of the school year, teachers can meet with the parents as a group to discuss their plans and goals for the upcoming year. During the school year, parental involvement and feedback about literacy programs can offer teachers a view as to what parents find most effective for their children.

Parent Volunteers

Supportive parents often serve as volunteers. Encourage male role models to participate whenever possible, since they, too, are essential for young children's literacy growth. Parents can

- listen to children read individually
- type children's stories so they can be published

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are your child's greatest learning resource. Recognizing this, our school has developed a Parents as Partners in Learning program. Projects within this program encourage learning and reading at home. They also provide an opportunity for me to talk with you about your child's learning throughout the school year.

Classroom Lending Library

Your child can borrow classroom books on a regular basis. This is a simple and efficient system that encourages reading at home. It also helps your son or daughter to develop a sense of responsibility.

Book Bags

Each Friday, your child will receive a tote bag that contains four or five quality children's books that share a similar theme. The bag will also contain a list of the books in the bag, a letter to you, instructions, activity ideas, and materials your son or daughter will need to respond to the readings (e.g., puppets). Instructions for these book bags will vary from week to week.

Monthly Parent Bag

Each month, your child can select ten books to explore with you. The books, chosen by your child, can cover a range of topics and can include novels, non-fiction books, poetry books, and anthologies.

Newsletters, Dialogue Journals, Parent-Teacher Meetings

These give us a place to talk about your child's learning. Newsletters will supply information on school and class events, and general news. Dialogue journals will be of a more personal nature and will keep you informed of your child's school experiences. Parent-teacher meetings will be held periodically through the year so that we can discuss your child and his or her school program.

Your support of this program is greatly appreciated. Please feel free to call me at any time to discuss your child's learning.

Yours truly,

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- help children do simple research
 - read to individuals or small groups
 - read stories on tape for the listening centre
 - share personal stories
 - work with children on projects and newsletters
 - help children select books at the library

Connecting Home and School

Learning at home provides an opportunity for a parent, child, and teacher to work cooperatively. Some ideas that cultivate literacy at home:

Borrow-a-Book: Children choose a book to borrow from school and share it with a parent – reading parts aloud, retelling what was read, discussing it, and writing about it.

Share-a-Tape: Children use a tape recorder at home to interview parents, grandparents, and other family members telling stories. They share the stories by using the tape, a transcription, or an oral retelling of the story.

Recognize the Efforts of Parents

A monthly newsletter or calendar can include stories about the school's sports teams, upcoming arts events, after-school programs, etc. These can be written by children, parents, and staff. This format enables parents to act as literacy role models for their children while becoming informed about school.

Parent letters can be an efficient means of recognizing parental contributions to their child's literacy while keeping them abreast of class and school events. The following letter was written to parents when one school undertook a home literacy campaign.