2009

School, Home, and Community: A Symbiosis for a Literacy Partnership

Karen C. Waters
Sacred Heart University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/ced_fac
Part of the Educational Methods Commons, Elementary Education and Teaching Commons, and the Family, Life Course, and Society Commons

Recommended Citation
My son, Dino, roared with laughter each time we came to the line “His mother called him ‘Wild Thing!’ and Max said, ‘I’LL EAT YOU UP!’” during each of the 43 separate readings of the *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) over the course of a year. Even at the tender age of 5, he understood the power struggle between mother and son, and although he could neither define nor spell the word *empathy*, he could easily make a text-to-self connection (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997) that transcended the simple story of a naughty child sent to bed without dinner: In truth, he was the main character of his own narrative and had effectively assimilated the monstrous attributes of the “wild things” in Sendak’s award-winning book, which he executed spontaneously in all of their unabashed authenticity whenever he perceived that yet another parental demand was brewing. His response to any such demand, inevitably punctuated with an “I’LL EAT YOU UP!,” was simultaneously accompanied with renewed giggles and a growing sense of independence.

As the director of literacy in one of the largest urban districts in my state, I prepared for family literacy events in my town by reflecting on the routines that I had long established for bedtime reading with my son that elicited reactions similar to the one described above. I wondered if my homespun methods could make the transition from mother’s intuition to best practices within the community as I began to use monthly interactive read-alouds (Barrantine, 1996) as the format for district family literacy events. Consequently, my experiences as the parent of a school-aged child were used as the basis for working with district parents during my tenure as director of literacy.
In this chapter I describe what happened when at-home literacy experiences provided the themes for a family literacy partnership between the school and community. I believed that fertile ground for a literate environment is created through a combination of oral language, ancestral anecdotes, read-alouds, and other best practices in early literacy. I knew it was possible to connect home and school communities if personal stories were publicized, traditions were honored, standards were maintained, and the context for literacy learning was broadened. Mutual respect among parents, teachers, students, and administration results when the most personal parts of our lives are made public; our heritage is dignified and preserved through retellings of familial stories that engender life lessons and shape the values, beliefs, and superstitions of our heritage.

As an educator for well over 30 years, I have had opportunities to talk with parents whose tumultuous and unstable lifestyles have precluded regular home reading and the reinforcement of skills taught at school. Those parents admitted that their own schooling had oftentimes been interrupted by the problems of living in a city rife with poverty, crime, and unemployment. Yet, according to Padak and Rasinski (2006), all parents want their children to learn to read, and most parents want to help their children but are unsure about how to proceed. I wanted to align the literacy goals of the district with home literacy practices to develop a user-friendly model that would enable our families to support the literacy learning of their children. A successful plan for parent involvement meant that the framework had to be based on the most current research which included strategies that could easily be replicated in the home.

Some strategies easily made the transition from the daily literacy block to family literacy practices, as we adapted procedures for implementing interactive read-alouds, shared reading, and Readers Theatre. During shared reading, we demonstrated the critical role of fluency to parents and children as we read familiar chants that would encourage the audience to read along. A modified definition of fluency has included the ability to use phonics to decode words precisely, automatically, and with the kind of prosodic expression that infers meaning (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2003; Pikulski & Chard, 2005). Fluent readers depend on their fund of sight words and efficient decoding strategies to read rapidly while getting the meaning, as opposed to readers whose comprehension is compromised because they labor in decoding unfamiliar words (NICHD, 2003). Repeated reading of the same text has shown to be effective in improving fluency (NICHD, 2003; Rasinski, 2003).
and is inherent in a variety of fluency strategies, including student-adult reading, choral reading, tape-assisted reading, partner reading and Readers Theatre.

**District Family Literacy Night**

Through a combination of funds from Title I and state early literacy grants, we purchased several hundred copies of a “Book of the Month” to distribute at family literacy events. Each month we used a different trade book to demonstrate a particular reading strategy. For example, the texts *The Big Block of Chocolate* (Redhead, 1985) and *Something From Nothing* (Gilman, 1994) were used to model Shared Reading, while *Chicken Sunday* (Polacco,1992) easily lent itself to an interactive read-aloud (Barrantine, 1996) using the “turn and talk” strategy (Calkins, 2001, Harvey & Goudvis, 2005). Parents were invited to attend the monthly “Dinner and a Book Series,” when the lobby at the district central office was transformed into a reading restaurant, replete with tablecloths, inexpensive centerpieces, and handouts (simple poems and songs) at each table. Notification of the meetings was done via electronic and regular mail, as well as telephone reminders and flyers that were distributed to the children in 22 schools. My staff and I served a simple catered dinner to everyone, which usually consisted of pasta, chicken tenders, salad, and chocolate chip cookies.

To help the parents to feel as if they were part of an extended family invited to Sunday dinner, we stood behind chafing dishes in the meeting room and dished out the portions ourselves. Then we circulated from table to table, welcoming them as everyone ate dinner. Contrary to the principle of not serving refreshments before the program began, dinner was served first—and no one left after dinner. Why? Because the distribution of books—the real lure of the meetings—always took place at the end of the evening. In a district where parent attendance was a concern, we played host to over 150 parents and children at each family literacy event.

In collaboration with the Bilingual Department, we provided onsite audio interpretation in several languages to parents whose dominant language was not English. The range of topics at the reading restaurant included phonological awareness, an explanation of the benchmark assessment system used to track and teach students at their instructional reading levels, the state reading assessment, and the district curriculum—all without the jargon of literacy-speak, presented in terms that could be understood by the parents. We modeled the
research-based strategies delineated within the district’s comprehensive literacy curriculum that correlated with classroom practices.

Instead of sending them off to supervised care, the students were invited to participate at each session because they were already familiar with most of the strategies from their daily literacy block. In fact, they were delighted at the prospect of helping to scaffold learning for the parents. This was especially true when we implemented the concepts of interactive read-alouds and shared reading experiences through picture books, or sang favorite songs including “Willaby, Wallaby,” “Apples and Bananas,” and “Down By The Bay” (Yopp & Yopp, 2003), which the students greeted as old friends, and which teachers regarded as critical to developing phonemic awareness skills in the primary grades. In any case, parents sang right along with their children while we explained the importance of using phoneme manipulation in a lyrical format that included rhythm, rhyme, and repetition and predictability of text. An explanation and procedural adaptation for the implementation of the concepts of Interactive Read-Alouds, shared reading, and Readers Theatre follows.

**Interactive Read-Aloud**

Reading aloud to children has long been recognized as the single most important activity to promote children’s sense of story, vocabulary, and higher level thinking (Barrantine, 1996; Rog, 2001). An interactive read-aloud includes a rich introduction that sets the scene for the narrative and allows time for students to process their thoughts through spirited interactions with the teacher or with a peer. During the reading of the story the teacher stops at several predetermined junctures to model thinking aloud to arrive at a conclusion that has not been explicitly stated, or to encourage students to turn and talk to a partner (Calkins, 2001) about predictions and connections as the events of a story unfold.

At district family literacy events, each page of the selected text was scanned, presented, and read aloud using PowerPoint projection software so that both the text and the illustrations could be accessible to the crowd of parents and children. Observing the protocol for an interactive read-aloud, we stopped at various places in the story to encourage parents and children to share their thoughts, predictions, and connections. The room was abuzz with intergenerational conversations at each of the stopping points. Later on, parents remarked that this was an activity that they could easily do at home. Books such as *Big Al* (Clements, 1997) and *Thank You, Mr. Falker* (Polacco, 1994) easily lent themselves to the
themes of friendship and acceptance, while *A Bad Case of Stripes* (Shannon, 1998) focused on the importance of retaining one’s own identity and the problems associated with being a nonconformist. Parents and children alike shared their real-life connections to the events and characters in the narratives at junctures in the stories. Sometimes they spent a few minutes to recount the stories of their lives and took turns at the microphone sharing personal anecdotes with one another. This helped to create a context for trust, common understanding, shared experiences, and ultimately friendship within the parent community.

One year we did an author study on Patricia Polacco. A state-funded grant targeting early reading stipulated that a certain percentage of the funding be used for parent involvement, thus enabling us to purchase several titles for interactive read-alouds, including *Babushka’s Doll* (Polacco, 1995), *Chicken Sunday* (Polacco, 1992), *Thank You, Mr. Falker* (Polacco, 1994), *The Keeping Quilt* (Polacco, 2001), and others.

The format for family literacy events was always similar: an interactive read-aloud followed by provocative questions that sparked in-depth conversations between children and parents that were oftentimes captured in written form as well. At each juncture in the story we stopped to encourage parents and children to engage in conversation that focused on drawing conclusions about the story’s lessons, inferring meaning, discussing character traits through the character’s actions, supporting opinion through information garnered from the text, and connecting with timeless themes. After reading *The Keeping Quilt* (Polacco, 2001), a tender story about tradition and the passing of a keepsake quilted blanket from one generation to another, we gave the parents and children the option of constructing a personal memoir or writing in collaboration as the following excerpts, which were recorded during an open mic night, will demonstrate.

One parent demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the theme of the text in the following letter to her daughter:

> I want to write about my life, so one day you can read it to your children. I was born into a big family.... We grew up on a farm with a lot of cows, horses, chickens, dogs and cats. My mother was a very lovely person. She used to bake a cake for every brother and sister on our birthdays. Our house was like a kindergarten with 6 children. We played a lot with simple toys. At Christmastime we didn't give out presents. We used to make the nativity set together, put [up] the tree and make a lot of food and eat together. My mother loved to write and read. She wrote many poems and some were dedicated to me. Some day I will write [them] to you. The only thing is that they are written in Spanish. That is why I want you learn my language so you can understand better.
Another family collaborated in the telling of the following memory:

We are writing about the red cake. Every Christmas my great grandmother who I’ve never met would always make the red cake. The recipe was passed down to my grandmother, who up until a few years ago, had made it. Now last Christmas, it was myself, my mom, and my brother baking the red cake.

One family made an explicit text-to-text connection:

My mom made me and my brother and sisters quilts to put on our beds. She learned how to make them from her grandmother. My mom says that when we leave the house and move out, we can take the quilts with us.

A six-year-old boy recounted his memory of his first day of school to his mother:

In kindergarten I didn’t like to go to school. I thought we had a mean teacher. Then I learned to live with it. I also remember that we had snack. Now I like school.

A first-grade girl wrote this entry in emergent writing following the reading of Babushka’s Doll in response to the prompt “Tell about a time you were naughty”:

One time when I was naughty I didn’t listen to my mom and I got grounded. I couldn’t watch tv for five minutes. All because I jumped on the couch.

Through the interactive read-aloud parents understood the value of extended conversation and writing about the themes of their lives. They experienced the modeled literacy practices as compatible with at-home activities that could facilitate skill development in their children. They came to regard the mundane homemaking tasks of cooking, shopping, and cleaning as rich opportunities to increase vocabulary and extend language. In bridging a rigorous curriculum with the practical functions of everyday life, the parents became our partners in developing children’s literacy learning. Next, I will describe how we modified the concept of shared reading to provide practical home applications at bath time, bedtime, family celebrations, walks in the park, or rides in the car.

**Shared Reading**

Here again, as in the interactive read-aloud procedure, the entire text was scanned for a PowerPoint presentation. Sometimes we used the choral reading
of a poem as an icebreaker to promote interaction between parents and children. The purpose of Shared Reading (Holdaway, 1979) is to increase fluency and accuracy in oral reading using text that is characterized by rhythm, rhyme, repetition and predictability of phrases, vocabulary, and story, and is generally used in the primary classroom. Lessons are built in succession over a period of several days in scaffolded instruction that shifts the responsibility of reading from the teacher to the student. During our limited time with the families we did not have the luxury of repeated readings; nevertheless, we were able to engage them in choral reading and offer similar applications for the continuation of the activity at home.

On one occasion we used the text *Something From Nothing* (Gilman, 1994), a lyrical Jewish folk tale about the efforts of a persistent young child to save a beloved and tattered blanket despite his mother’s pleas to “throw it out,” a popular theme with which everyone could instantly connect. The story contained rich repetitive language that easily lent itself to my best imitation of my great-grandmother’s Yiddish accent. By the end of the story everyone enthusiastically read the refrain with fluency and accuracy:

But as Joseph grew older, the wonderful (blanket, jacket, vest, handkerchief, etc.) grew older, too...Joseph said, ‘Grandpa can fix it.’ He turned it round and round. His scissors went snip, snip, snip and his needle flew in and out and in and out and in and out. (pp. 6–9)

Parents and children busily wrote and shared their stories about time-worn raggedy beloved stuffed animals and the shredded “blankeys” that had been boxed up and put into the attic for posterity in responding to this story. One 7-year-old who was obviously skilled in making text-to-self connections wrote in fond remembrance of his earliest recollection of the friendship with his teddy bear:


(My teddy is like Corduroy. Corduroy didn’t have a button. My teddy didn’t have a leg. My dog bit his leg off. Mom put a bandage [on it.] He was my friend.)

Sometimes a piece of literature elicits a heart-wrenching confession for which there is no appropriate response. The following statement, dictated by a 7-year-old to his mother illustrates a child’s sad memory of his parents’ divorce:
I had a blanket with a big red strawberry on it. I gave it to Dad before he left so that he would remember me. I don’t know where my blanket is now and I don’t see dad.

One evening the city’s public library graciously offered to host our family literacy meeting, and we used *The Big Block of Chocolate* (Redhead, 1985) in a shared reading activity in bringing together parents, children, and teachers. We nibbled chocolates and repeated the rhyming phrases: “Just the very sight of it brings back the taste delight of it. I’ll savor every bite of it. But later, secretly” (Redhead, 1985, p. 3).

The children’s head librarian, Eileen, a colleague and friend for over 30 years, greeted the families with library cards, spoke about storytime in the children’s room, and explained how she could help parents find books for their children at the level in which they were being instructed in the classroom. The evening concluded when each parent received a copy of the text that was used in shared reading, and a list of other books that could be used for shared reading activities in the home.

**Readers Theatre**

Readers Theatre was a popular strategy at family literacy events because it gave the students an opportunity to showcase their combined literacy and dramatic talents. Readers Theatre is generally used as an opportunity for students to work cooperatively in assuming the roles of characters in a play that has been adapted from a folk tale or familiar story (NICHD, 2003). Students acquire fluency in oral reading as they rehearse their respective parts and perform the finished product for everyone’s viewing pleasure. We obtained scripts from websites that we distributed to all the families so that they could replicate the activities at home. Favorites included *Whose Shoes Are These?* (Roy, 1988) and *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). The websites www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm and www.readinga-z.com were extremely helpful in providing appropriate leveled scripts that corresponded to children’s Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA, 1999) levels, which will be explained further in the next section. The poem “Easy Solutions” (author unknown) was used as both an echo and shared reading activity between parents and children that elicited much dramatic interpretation from them (see Table 11.1).
Continuing the Partnership With the Public Library

At one meeting we presented an explanation of the DRA so that the parents could understand how their children were grouped for explicit, small-group instruction in the classroom. The DRA is a criterion-referenced tool designed to document students’ reading progress over time through teachers’ systematic administration of running records in leveled text to measure students’ oral reading behaviors, and is mandated by state legislation for priority school districts within our state.

With the continued support of the children’s librarian, we compiled a list of trade books available at the public library with text features that correlated with the benchmark books for students’ reading levels on the DRA. Additionally, we provided each parent with at least three books that were related to their children’s DRA level: one at, one above, and one below the DRA level, so that parents could practice reading with their children at home.

Functional Strategies to Address the State Assessment

Parents were concerned about the state assessments and wanted to know how to help their children increase their reading achievement at home. I wanted

Table 11.1. “Easy Solutions” Read-Aloud

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s complaint</th>
<th>Parent’s solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gee, I’m hungry!</td>
<td>Have a sandwich!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gee, I’m angry!</td>
<td>Calm down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gee, I’m sleepy!</td>
<td>Take a nap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gee, it’s chilly in here!</td>
<td>Put on a sweater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gee, it’s hot in here!</td>
<td>Open a window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve got the hiccups!</td>
<td>Drink some water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My nose itches!</td>
<td>Scratch it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My feet hurt!</td>
<td>Sit down for a while.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My shoes are tight!</td>
<td>Take them off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a toothache!</td>
<td>Go to the dentist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a headache!</td>
<td>Take an aspirin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m lonely!</td>
<td>Call a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m bored!</td>
<td>Read a book!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
them to understand that there were probably many literacy-based activities with which they were already involved that needed only minimal modification to be useful. I developed PowerPoint presentations that included humorous graphics to show how open dialogue, questioning, and listening to children about their daily activities facilitated vocabulary building and oral language development in the primary grades.

Three strategies that easily transferred from the classroom to the home included Somebody–Wanted–But–So–And (Beers, 2003); a variation of this strategy for nonfiction texts, Who–What–When–Where–Why; and Read-A-Paragraph (RAP; Katims & Harris, 1997). Each of these strategies is aligned with the current National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) strand of Forming a General Understanding (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007), and provides a format for deconstructing as well as summarizing text.

**Somebody–Wanted–But–So–And**

I showed the parents how frameworks for summarizing fiction and nonfiction text could be used to depict the sequence of events in a text or main ideas of a story. Using “Cinderella” as an example of a narrative, we used the Somebody–Wanted–But–So–And strategy (adapted from Beers, 2003) to summarize the events of the story. With the framework projected onto a screen, we applied the story grammar terminology to parts of the story to construct a sentence that captured the essence of the story: somebody—Cinderella; wanted—to go to the ball; but—her step-mother wouldn’t let her; so—her fairy godmother made it possible for her to go by waving her magic wand; and—she went to the ball with the understanding that she would be home at midnight. We guided the parents through the process of constructing summary statements using the framework and gave them opportunities to discuss how the strategy could be used with other fictional text selections (see Figure 11.1).


In similar fashion, I showed them how to summarize nonfiction using a vertical pattern of who, what, when, where, why (5 Ws) to depict the main events of the reading selection. Using an actual news story that appeared in a local newspaper, I correlated each of the segments of the lead paragraph to one of the 5 Ws (see Figure 11.2), and we constructed a main idea sentence from a synthesis of who, what, when, where, and why. As the parents worked to develop summary
Figure 11.1. Somebody–Wanted–But–So–And Chart

Cinderella

- Somebody
  - Cinderella to go to the ball
- Wanted
  - her step-mother wouldn’t let her
- But
  - her fairy godmother made it possible for her to go by waving her magic wand
- So
- And
  - she went to the ball with the understanding that she would be home at midnight because the spell would be over

Figure 11.2. Who–What–When–Where–Why Chart


- Who?
  - Eathen O’Bryant
- What?
  - has sprinted up and down hardwood courts
- When?
  - for the past 9 years
- Where?
  - all over the world
- Why?
  - because he is a member of the Harlem Globetrotters
sentences, they could see how this strategy could be applied to reading sections of the newspaper.

**Read-A-Paragraph**

Another strategy for summarizing nonfiction text is the Read-A-Paragraph (RAP) strategy (Katims & Harris, 1997), a simple format for helping students paraphrase main ideas and distill the important information from the details. Originally designed to help middle school special needs students comprehend the main ideas of a text selection, the procedure has been determined to be an effective metacognitive strategy in synthesizing the most important information for general education students as well. Essentially, the strategy consists of a two-line format: This paragraph is about ____________________. It tells me that ______________. The topic is entered in the first blank, and repeated in the second blank, along with descriptive details that are listed about the topic. Simple and fun to use, it requires the student to focus on the main idea or theme, and is especially useful in processing nonfiction text. The parents easily transferred the parts of the text to the appropriate lines to sift out the main parts of the reading selection.

After modeling the RAP strategy at one of our family literacy nights, I subsequently urged the parents to try it out at home and share the results at future family literacy nights. All of these summarizing strategies were referenced throughout our family literacy events to give parents opportunities to discuss how they adapted the strategies for at-home use, to reinforce their use at times when children were not in school, and to establish continuity from one parent workshop to another. Parents reported that using the strategies in the home to talk about narrative story structure was helpful to separate the important ideas from the extraneous details. Even the parents of kindergarten children tried out the strategy in recalling the misadventures of Alexander in *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (Viorst, 1972), or to talk about Harry’s fear of monsters in the basement in *Harry and the Terrible Whatzit* (Gackenbach, 1984). Some third-grade families used the strategy to summarize each chapter of *Freckle Juice* (Blume, 1971) or *Ramona the Pest* (Cleary, 1968). Almost any simple fiction story follows the narrative story grammar pattern, and the pattern can be used to glean its essence through the simple process of synthesis. Additionally, parents reported that they were able to use the RAP and 5 Ws strategies in helping children establish main ideas when completing a homework assignment.
The Family and the District: A Sociocultural Partnership

What better way is there to immortalize an original story of a child’s first day of school, a stay in the hospital, or an argument with your mother-in-law than by writing it down, adding it to the collection of stored memories, and using it as the text from which a child reads and rereads during the beginning stages of reading? One of my son’s favorite stories, *Chocolate Bunnies and Pork for Passover* (Waters, 2003), is my own anecdote of an argument between a wife and her mother-in-law in a two-religion family about Easter Sunday’s menu when it just happened to coincide with the first day of the Jewish holiday of Passover. The result: a nontraditional blend of ham and charoses (pronounced cha-rō’-sis, a fruit compote made of chopped apples, walnuts, and grape juice served at the Passover dinner), and a reconciliation of both holidays, that to this day still elicits giggles from one side of the family—and grimaces from the other. This anecdote, one of many that provided hours of happy reading for my son during the emergent stages of literacy, was one that I shared with the families to demonstrate the powerful nature of writing down the memories that constitute the fiber of our families.

To dignify home literacy learning is to pay homage to the recollections of memorable experiences that propel us to main character status in our personal lives. Dialoguing or dramatizing a past event with someone else enhances self-esteem, produces instant authorship, and validates the learner as a writer, all of which are critical factors in literacy development. A spontaneous yarn that approximates reality can aid in the development of oral language and the acquisition of vocabulary in promoting conditions for literacy learning, and the idea that every new experience is captured in a lexicon of content-experiential terminology. Consequently, when intergenerational sharing of stories and humorous anecdotes provides the context for skill reinforcement, there is a melding of strategies and stories and the creation of a literate partnership between home and school (Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995). And finally, when stories are shared through social networking, there is reassurance in acknowledging that our similar experiences actually bind us together as members of the same group.

There is strength in the bonds of trust that are built between the school and the community. The books, stories, and experiences that emanate from a family that makes learning a priority and a district with the mission to provide shared
literacy opportunities between parents and children—this is a symbiosis that builds partnerships (Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995). For purposes of promoting family literacy within my district we modified the evidence-based strategies of Shared Reading and Interactive-Read-Alouds, as well as other strategies for summarizing narrative and informational text in a lively format that made learning accessible—and attainable. I encouraged our families to write down time-honored traditions and stories that served as texts from which children could practice and hone their skills. Ultimately, families recognized that they possessed the skills to facilitate reading and writing in their children and were imbued and empowered with intuition about how to grow readers.

When a seemingly different cultural literacy is integrated with school-based practices, we realize that we are not so far apart after all. Organic literacy practices can and should be incorporated into a comprehensive literacy program that accepts ethnically diverse preliterate essential understandings from the home. These understandings are inextricably linked with curricular standards, evidence-based strategies, and foundational skills to create a full-service literacy plan that ultimately teaches children to read and write.

ACTION PLAN

To implement the Shared Reading Experience (Holdaway, 1979), choose a book with text that is characterized by rhythm, rhyme, and repetition. Shared Reading is usually a 5–7 day lesson plan that begins as an interactive read-aloud, but concludes as a story that is read independently by all the students in the class. Acknowledging the time constraints of a family literacy event, the author adapted this strategy so that parents could benefit from participating in an activity that could easily be replicated in the home. Either scan the text and show as a PowerPoint presentation or read the text aloud to provide easy access by parents. (If you have sufficient funding to purchase the text for the parents, even better!) Then follow the procedure outlined as follows.

- Introduce the book by reading the title and author’s name, illustrator, copyright, and dedication, if any. Read story and pause long enough to encourage participation, but not so long as to break continuity. (If time permits, the book can be read it twice)
- Invite the audience to chime in as they become familiar with the text, the language and vocabulary.
• Finish the activity by employing oral cloze during the reading, because usually by this point the familiar chant will be internalized by both parents and children. Systematically delete words and have the audience supply the missing words. Pause long enough for the audience to finish the sentences. Ask several parents/children how they knew the words.

• Read the book again and employ written cloze using a pocket chart. Integrate with a phonics element that is contained in the literature. Give children an opportunity to see letter-sound relationships function in print so the phonics lesson should be “extracted” from the piece of literature.

• Response to Literature: Children put themselves into the very literature that they are reading: Ask questions related to the book, such as Have you ever had something (blanket, doll, Teddy Bear) that you would take everywhere with you when you were little? What happened to it? Write a story about what you would do with it. This can take the form of a journal entry, writing a letter, poem, another story, or engage in shared or collaborative writing to create an authentic (original) product.

• Independent Reading: Send home a copy of the book in a zip-top bag for independent reading. The book is accompanied with a note from the teacher, such as the following:

Dear Parents:
We have been reading (put the title of the text) this week. We have also written stories about what became of things that we once treasured. We would like to share our class story with you. Enjoy your time together.

Sincerely,
Ms. Brown

Children’s book suggestions for shared reading:

Other suggested book titles can be found at www.hubbardscupboard.org/Quick_Reference_Shared_Reading_Book_List.PDF
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION

1. The effects of parental involvement in their children’s education, “is profound and undeniable” (Padak & Rasinski, 2006, as cited in Deck, 2009, p. 1). Examine the family involvement component of your school action plan. How do you ensure their participation in meaningful ways that will allow symbiosis of partnership within your school or district?

2. After reading The Keeping Quilt (Polacco, 2001) the author invited families to share their personal memories in written and oral formats. What personal memories do you have of your own family that could be publicly shared at a family literacy event to inspire the families at your own school to share their memories? All the entries could be captured in a memory book, a collaborative effort between staff and families.

3. Which of the strategies mentioned in the chapter could be easily adapted to accommodate your own unique needs in conducting family literacy events at your school?

REFERENCES


**LITERATURE CITED**


