Module

4

WASHINGTON READING CORPS

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

A Guide to Family Literacy and Involvement

WASHINGTON OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

A Guide to Family Literacy and Involvement

Beth Kelly, VISTA Sustainability Coordinator
Washington Reading Corps · Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building · PO Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200
Phone: 360.725.6058 · Fax: 360. 725.6047
http://www.k12.wa.us/curriculuminstruct/reading/readingcorps/

The Washington Reading Corps Toolkit

Module 1: Volunteer Reading Tutor Training Handbook: A Sample Guide for Schools
Module 2: Creating a Volunteer Reading Tutor Program
Module 3: A Guide to Community Partnerships and the Media
Module 4: A Guide to Family Literacy and Involvement
Module 5: Volunteer Recruitment and Management
Module 6: Peer and Cross-Age Tutoring

Table of Contents

Introduction 4

CHAPTER ONE
WHAT IS FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND LITERACY?
What Is Family Involvement? 5-6
Ways to Promote Effective Family Involvement 7-8
What Is Family Literacy? 9

CHAPTER TWO
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS
Family Literacy Opportunities 10
Sample Activities and Events 11-15

CHAPTER THREE
SUPPORTING FAMILY INVOLVEMENT
School Climate 16-18
Family Outreach 18-20
Enhancing Communication with Parents 20-22

Appendix A
Tool 1: Needs Assessment: Initial Planning 24
Tool 2: Event Planning Checklist 25-26
Tool 3: Event Evaluation Checklist 27
Tool 4: Family Information Worksheet 28
Tool 5: Sample Family-School Compact 29
Tool 6: Family Opinion Worksheet 30
Tool 7: Family-School Partnerships Assessment 31-33

Appendix B
Sample Newsletter 36-37
Sample Bilingual Newsletter 38-41
Sample FIN Flyer 42
Sample Flyer for Non-English Speakers 43
Sample Letter Home 44

References 45
Acknowledgments 46

Introduction

This module is a tool designed to enhance family involvement for tutoring programs and/or schools. It contains tools, ideas, and strategies to use in the creation of a climate conducive in family involvement and in family literacy activities and events. Because family involvement is a critical factor in determining the success of a student, a major effort to engage 'hard to reach' parents and families has become a key objective for Washington Reading Corps schools.

Key:

🕮 **New Section:** New topic in the chapter

🗁 **Subsection:** Samples or other elements that provides additional specific information on the topic

➲ **Formats and Strategies:** Offers information on sample material formats and strategies

Chapter 1

What is Family Involvement and Literacy?

This chapter provides information needed for schools in order to develop and or enhance family involvement programs, including the following:

- What is Family Involvement?
- Ways to Promote Effective Family Involvement
- What is Family Literacy?

🕮 What Is Family Involvement?

According to the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), the word *parent* includes all of those individuals who are involved in a child's education. For example, other adults such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, stepparents, and guardians may carry the primary responsibility for a child's education and development. All references to parent include any adult who plays an important role in a child's upbringing and well-being.

Parent or family involvement is the participation of parents or caregivers in every facet of children's education and development from birth to adulthood, recognizing that parents are the primary influence in the lives of their children. This involvement can take many forms, including:

- Two-way communicating between home and school,
- Serving as a child's primary educators,
- Participating in volunteer work,
- Sharing responsibility in decision making regarding child's well-being, and/or
- Playing a central role in school reform.

Exceptional family-involvement programs develop two-way communication between school and home, and involve parents in decision-making, planning, assessment, and curriculum development, and are regarded as partners.

Adapted from *Talking points: Parent involvement*. Retrieved from http://www.pta.org//ptawashington/legconf/talkingpoints/parent.asp and from Comuntzis-Page, G. (1996). *Critical issue: Creating the school climate and structures to support parent and family involvement*. Retrieved from http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa300.htm

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- The most effective forms of family involvement are those that engage parents in **working directly** with children on learning activities in the home.
- **Programs that involve parents** in reading with their children, supporting their homework assignments, or tutoring them in materials and instructions provided by teachers **show particularly impressive results.**
- Family involvement is most effective when it is **comprehensive, long lasting, and well planned.**
- Family involvement should be **developmental and preventative, promoting strengths** rather than remedial intervention.
- **School practices** to encourage parents to participate in their children's education are **more important than family characteristics**, such as the level of a parent's education, socioeconomic, or marital status.
- Children from **low-income and minority families benefit most** when parents are involved in schools.
- Parents do **not have to be well educated** to make a difference.
- When parents help their children with schoolwork, the effects of poverty and the lack of a formal education are reduced.
- The **earlier family involvement begins** in a child's educational process, **the more powerful the effects will be**. Involving parents when children are young has beneficial effects that persist throughout the child's academic career.
- Family involvement **works for older children too**, even if they have not been involved previously.
- Most parents prefer **informal, personal** attention in parent/teacher relationships.
- Parents **want and need direction** to participate with maximum effectiveness.
- Studies document that regardless of the economic, ethnic, or cultural background of the family, parent involvement in a child's education is a **major factor in determining success in school.**
- Parent involvement also **contributes to other positive outcomes**, such as better school attendance, improved homework completion rates, decreased violence and substance abuse, and higher graduation rates.
- **Parent involvement** programs should be well structured and result in consistent parent participation, **not merely a one-time event** such as a parent-teacher conference or annual back-to-school night.
- **Parents must be engaged in substantive tasks**, such as school restructuring and setting higher learning standards.
- **Barriers** to parent involvement **must be removed**. **Children who are read to**, and who grow up in homes rich in literacy activities (like reading, writing, storytelling, singing, and lively conversation) are more likely to **value and develop a love of reading**.
- Children raised in literacy-rich environments often **become successful readers and writers**.

From *Handout 7: Research on family involvement* (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.nwrel.org/cfc/frc/pdf/Handout7.PDF and from *Talking points: Parent involvement*. Retrieved from http://www.pta.org//ptawashington/legconf/talkingpoints/parent.asp

🕮 Ways to Promote Effective Family Involvement

🗁 Benefits of Family Involvement

For students:

- Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
- Better school attendance
- Increased motivation and self-esteem
- Fewer Placements in special education
- More positive attitudes and behaviors
- Lower suspension rates
- Decreased use of drugs and alcohol
- Fewer instances of violent behavior
- Greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education

For schools:

- Improved teacher morale
- Higher ratings of teachers by parents
- More support from families
- Higher student achievement
- Better reputations in the community

For parents:

- 🕮Higher confidence in the school
- 🕮Higher opinions of them as parents and higher expectations of their children by teachers
- 🕮Greater confidence in children, school, and themselves as parents
- 🕮Increased chance of continuing their own education

Adapted from *Talking points: Parent involvement*. Retrieved from http://www.pta.org//ptawashington/legconf/talkingpoints/parent.asp and from *Benefits of parent and family involvement*. Retrieved from http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa11k37.htm

🗁 BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- 🕮Time is usually the largest barrier in most situations.
- 🕮School staff may have boundaries or territorial issues.
- 🕮Parents feel that they do not have anything to contribute or are intimidated by school staff, which could be due to a variety of reasons such as limited education, limited English proficiency, or negative experiences in the school system.
- 🕮School may present an unwelcoming atmosphere in staff interactions, attitudes, or physical appearance of the building.
- 🕮Parents may be unsure of how to contribute or even if they are needed.
- 🕮Families may be unfamiliar or not understand the school system or tutoring program.
- 🕮Families may be in need. If they are suffering from economic stress, immediate needs such as for food and shelter may take precedence.
- 🕮Childcare may not be offered.

- Language differences can prevent parents from understanding information about meetings, activities, and events.
- Parents or family members with disabilities may find it difficult or feel uncomfortable attending and contributing in family involvement events or meetings.
- Lack of transportation can prevent families from attending activities.

Adapted from Barriers to effective parental involvement: Roadblocks and detours by the National PTA

➲ STRATEGIES TO INCREASE FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- **Start out strong**. Involve parents in the decision-making process from the beginning of the year.
- Allow **parents** to **take leadership roles and help plan** activities.
- **Know your community** and **be respectful** to all families regardless of socioeconomic class, education, race, or culture.
- Provide **opportunities for parents to visit** your school **and provide feedback.**
- **Provide translators** for parents who speak other languages.
- Invite parents or family members to **read in their own language**.
- Produce **written materials in the languages represented in your school(s) or area.**
- **Use videotapes, cassette tapes, and/or home visits** to reach parents who may experience challenges with literacy.
- Have activities or meeting at **times** that likely to be **convenient for family** members (i.e. evenings or Saturdays).
- **Advertise** family involvement events; include that it is a free event.
- **Offer refreshments/healthy snacks** or a light meal during meetings.
- **Provide transportation assistance** if needed.
- **Invite the extended family** to participate.
- **Provide a place for young children** to go to while parents are involved in adult education programs, such as homework help or activities versus just daycare.
- **Collaborate** with other organizations.
- Keep the lines of **communication** open. For example, have one person serve as a contact for parents who can listen to the needs and feedback from the families that you serve.
- **Solicit donations** from your community **for materials to be given to the entire family.**
- Offer **incentives and reward** family involvement.
- **Develop a team and a plan** that is focused at promoting family involvement.

Adapted from Greenlee G., Laws, H.P., Edwards, P., & Goldman, E. (1998, winter). *Family literacy: Tapping into the power of the family*. Retrieved from http://www.nwrel.org/learns/tutor/win1998/win1998.pdf

🕮 What is Family Literacy?

The U.S. Department of Education defines **family literacy** as "services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family and that integrate all of the following activities:

- 🕮**Interactive literacy activities** between parents and their children;
- 🕮**Training for parents** regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children;
- 🕮**Parent literacy training** that leads to economic self-sufficiency;
- 🕮**An age-appropriate education** to prepare children for success in school and life experiences."

➲ RESEARCH ON FAMILY LITERACY

Family literacy projects increase the frequency with which parents:

- Talk to their children's teacher
- Engage in extended conversations with their children
- Read or look at books with children
- Visit the library with children
- Volunteer at school
- Help children with homework
- Tell stories

Family literacy combines the education and development of a child and that of the family. This type of literacy is composed of the many ways in which families use language and engage in talking, reading and writing; moreover, it allows parents the opportunity to be teachers and role models to their kids. Literacy is an essential element of our daily activities. By integrating family literacy into your tutoring program, you are encouraging reading and writing to take place in the home. Parents are more likely to extend their own education and demonstrate that education is a priority to them. Tutoring programs can support parents' roles as teachers by providing activities that encourage reading and writing by adults and children. A child's main influence is his or her family, followed by school. Involving families in your tutoring program and/or school can strengthen learning, communication among the family, self-esteem, and family bonding.

Effective tutoring programs respect the diversity of the students and families that they serve. They strive to understand the language, culture, and community of each family, while remembering that everyone possesses unique needs, challenges, and assets. By becoming familiar with the people that you serve, programs can work towards supporting the specific needs of your families and communities. Family literacy leads to family involvement as an on-going process.

This section is adapted from *Family literacy: Tapping into the power of the family,* from *Benefits of parent and family involvement,* and from *It's all in the family: Planning high-quality family literacy events.*

Chapter 2

Family Involvement Activities and Events

This chapter provides information needed in order to develop family involvement activities and events, including the following:

- Family Literacy Opportunities
- Sample Activities and Events

🕮 Family Literacy Opportunities

In family literacy programs, children develop language and literacy skills with the support of their parents or primary caregivers, who also have the opportunity to improve their own skills. Family literacy increases family interaction and academic success for children as well as adults and can lead families on a path to economic self-sufficiency. The following are several types of programs that can be offered to parents as a way to increase family literacy and involvement:

Parent instruction about children's literacy and/or cognitive development: These types of programs provide parents resources and strategies to be meaningfully involved and to support their child's development, while building on their own strengths.

Interactive literacy experiences: Parents work together with their children in these activities can be put on as an event or be done at home. They help parents develop skills that support education in the home and feel more confident as a leader and teacher in their own family.

Adult education: This service gives parents a chance to expand their own education. They can take this opportunity to pursue their educational and career goals, to gain job skills, to learn language skills (English or Spanish as a second language), to learn about school culture, and/or to become leaders and supporters of their families and in their communities.

Adapted from *Family literacy services* (2003). Retrieved from http://www.famlit.org/FamilyLIteracyServices/index.cfm

🕮 Sample **Activities and Events**

There are many different reading and family involvement activities that your tutoring program can plan. Some of these activities can be done in the home as well as be put on as an actual event at the school or site. You may be able to coordinate with other school programs such as Title I to collaborate and share resources. These activities or events should include children, parents, teachers, volunteers, and school staff. The focus should be to encourage parents and family members to support their child's reading as well as be actively involved in his or her educational and emotional development. The following are samples of various activities that can be incorporated in to *Family Involvement Night or FINs*. For additional information on planning and evaluating a FIN, See *Tool 1: Needs Assessment: Initial Planning Checklist, Tool 2: Event Planning Checklist,* and *Tool 3: Event Evaluation Checklist.*

The next section has been adapted from the following sources: *Handout 9: Suggestions for including families and the community in literacy activities,* from The power of reader's theater. *Scholastic Instructor.* 22-27, and from material by Page Ahead Children's Literacy Program. For more information, go to: http://www.pageahead.org

➲ KEY STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL FAMILY READING EVENT

- Involve parents, school staff, and community members early in the planning process (at least two months before).
- Reading motivation events spaced throughout the year.
- Organize interactive activities for the family to do together.
- Provide food so families do not have to cook that night.
- Consider families with special needs including transportation assistance, language interpretation, and dietary restrictions.
- Offer free books for families to take home.
- Raffle off prizes in exchange for completed surveys.
- Recruit plenty of volunteer helpers.
- Advertise in multiple ways such as:
  - A translated flyer-keep it simple
  - School children write personalized invitations
  - Phone calls home in various languages
  - Town criers (students visit classes wearing posters)
  - Reminder wristbands that students wear home

From *Key steps to a successful family reading night at your school* by Fremont Public Association.

➲ WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

When your program plans family literacy and involvement activities, think about whether or not it is inclusive of:

- Students served and their parents
- Extended family
- All cultures and language speakers in your program
- At-risk students
- School staff, tutors, and volunteers
- Community members
- Media

- Local politicians
- Local businesses and organizations

Sample Activities and Events: On Site

The following examples are mainly interactive events or activities that your school or site would hold for families to participate in. Some projects may be adapted to take place at home.

Book Swaps

Book swaps are good projects to combine with a reading activity. Families should bring books from home that they have outgrown or are willing to swap. Then, each family can trade for used books with other families.

Self-Guided Nature Walk

This activity provides an opportunity for parents to take their child on a nature walk. A resource book is used to identify birds, trees, flowers, and other elements of nature and to record them in a journal.

Creating a Reading Journal

To create a reading journal, parents and children work together to create a reading log. The blank pages of the book can be filled with pictures of the child's favorite part of the story or descriptions and feelings about the story.

Field Trip to a Library

Have a librarian provide a tour of the library focusing on resources available to the students and parents. Educate the students and parents on how to take proper care of the books and provide information on how to create a library at home. Allow time for parents and children to get a library card and check out materials.

Learn to Read a Recipe

This activity is an opportunity for parents and children to create a small meal or a snack by reading and following directions from a recipe. Children will learn measurements, times, and temperatures, as well as how to follow sequenced directions.

Authors' Party

Have the students in your tutoring program create their own books. They can include an "about the author" section and a comment page for parents and visitors to use in responding to the book. Children can retell a traditional story or create a unique story. Then, the books can either go home with children and be shared with family members or you can have an Author Party. For this event, invite families to listen to their child read his or her own individually written and illustrated books. Offer time to make comments in the comment section and time to view other children's stories. Your program could invite local personalities to come to your site to share their favorite books with the students. One possible way to contact local

authors and illustrators is through the website for The Society of Children's Writers and Illustrators, Washington Region at: www.scbwi-washington.org.

Meet Your Tutor/Teacher Day

This activity is a good icebreaker between students and tutors. Ask tutees to put five things they like in the bag or five things about themselves or their families. Put together a bag for yourself. During the initial days of tutoring, go through the bags and discuss the information that you wish to share with each other.

Reader's Theater

This inexpensive activity gets families to read together. It can improve reading fluency, confidence, and motivation. First, your program should choose a prepared script, or have students choose a book from which to develop a RT script. If you decide to adapt a script from a book, have the students identify all of the speaking parts and break the story into dialogue. To choose the right book, look for one that contains peppy dialogue, a little action, humor, lively narration, and enough parts for all of the students. Next, assign parts or have them choose their roles themselves. They can practice the lines or in groups during tutoring. Performances require little props or costumes. Nametags, stools, or music stands on which to rest scripts, may be all that you require. The cast reads the play aloud for an audience, often made up of parents or younger students. Your tutoring program can vary this activity by staging them as puppet shows, television shows, movies, or radio shows. For free scripts check out these websites:
www.aaronshep.com, www.readinglady.com, www.loiswalker.com,
www.storycart.com, www.lisablau.com, www.readers.org/readerstheater.htm

Reading or Storytelling Events

Storytelling events for parents and students can be focused around holidays or thematic units. Storytelling is a great opportunity to model for parents the power of a story and give suggestions on ways to read with children. Ask people in your community to share personal stories about how books and reading have touched their lives. Other ideas for reading events include:

- Family Literacy Night
- Literacy Fairs
- Literacy Workshops or Stations for Parents
- Fairy Tale Fun Night
- Meet a Character (i.e. Clifford) Reading Night
- Costume Party/Dress As Favorite Character
- Open Library and Computer Lab Night
- Pajama Party or Bedtime Stories
- Pastries for Parents, Doughnuts for Dads, Muffins for Moms

Sample Activities and Events: At Home

The following examples are mainly events or activities that your students could at home do with their families. Some projects may be adapted to take place at your site during tutoring, on family nights, or at other times in the evening.

Traveling Books

Traveling books are a great way to generate interest and involvement about your program in your community. They are written as a group. Have each child in the tutoring program contribute one page on a particular topic. After the books are completed, families and/or the community can view them. For example, your program could distribute copies of the students' books to waiting rooms in local doctors' and dentists' offices, beauty parlors, and other local businesses. Residents can read and sign their name and write responses to the book on the comment page.

Reading Hand-in-Hand

For this activity, parents and children trace and cut out their handprints on brightly colored paper. During a two-week period, families write the names of the books read together on the fingers. At the end of the two weeks, display the handprints hand-in-hand with parent and child's fingers linked together.

Stuffed Animal Journal

For this activity, you need a reading bag or writing backpack that contains a blank tablet or notebook, a journal, writing utensils, and a stuffed animal. This kit goes home with one student each night or each week. On the first page of the journal is a letter to the family, which explains that the student can record their adventures in the journal.

Writer's Briefcase

This activity can be completed at home. Students should rotate taking home a writer's briefcase each night or each week. To create a briefcase, fill a book bag or school box with writing supplies. For example, a kit might include paper, blank books, stapler and staples, crayons, markers, pens, pencils, stencils, envelopes, clipboard, scissors, pencil sharpener, paper clips, paper fasteners, a variety of stickers and gummed labels. Be sure to provide a letter for parents explaining the reading/writing process you use in your classroom, this briefcase can be taken home by a different child every night.

Book in a Bag

Students take home a book in a bag for home reading with family members. You can add a journal or a comment section for family members to record their thoughts. You may also include recommended reading lists, reading strategies, and other information for parents.

Family Stories

Family stories are tales in which the children or your students are the main characters. This family involvement project allows families a chance to recount a specific memory or anecdote about the child. These stories can be recorded on audiotape or videotape, written, illustrated, and or acted out. You can also create Memory Boxes to accompany the story.

Mom and Dad Book

For this project, have students bring photos or draw pictures of family members to create a book. Each student has one page in a cooperative book. Students can share stories about their families, which they can write or have dictated. When completed, this book could be kept in the classroom or be checked out by families.

Book bags for Migrant Students

Some programs or schools experience high mobility due to families that are migrant workers, which means that these students would be gone for a part of the year. Your program can support these learners by providing a book bag or backpack that might contain writing supplies, an inexpensive instant camera to document their travel, and books.

Chapter 3

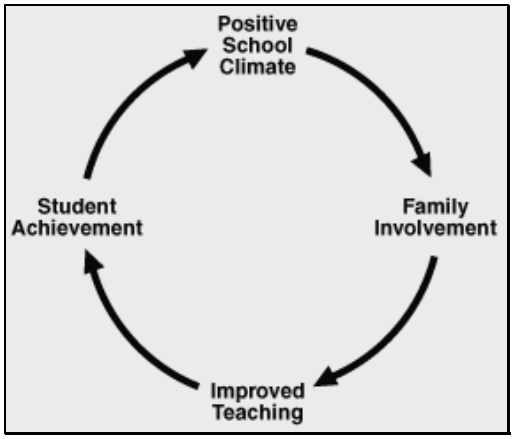
Supporting Family Involvement

This chapter provides information needed in order to create school climate and structures that support family involvement, which includes the following:

- School Climate
- Family Outreach
- Enhancing Communication

School Climate

A positive climate within a school or tutoring program welcomes and encourages family involvement. Family involvement improves teaching by generating a positive attitude among teachers and raising teacher self-esteem; teachers feel respected by families who are being served. This improved teaching then leads to greater academic achievement by students. Student success leads to a positive school climate. This circular, reciprocal relationship is illustrated at the right:



The overlapping of school and family can produce "family-like schools" and "school-like families." Family-like schools have an accepting, caring atmosphere and welcome families. These schools take into account the realities of family life and are equitable for all families, not just a few. They are able to recognize each child's individuality and special traits. Similarly, school-like families emphasize the importance of school, homework, and learning activities.

Traditionally, minority families are one population that participates infrequently in school activities. This lack of involvement should not be interpreted as disinterest in their children's education. Rather, many minority parents may not participate because they may not feel

comfortable in schools. Their prior experiences with schools, lack of knowledge about school policies and procedures, feelings of intimidation toward educators, and their perception of not being welcome at school contribute to noninvolvement. Parents who become involved at home and at school say that the school has a positive climate. Families who believe that schools are actively working to involve them say that the school is a good one. Finding out more information about the families served and their needs can help a program tailor the type of support and how it is provided. See *Tool 4: Family Information Worksheet.*

This section and illustration are based on Comuntzis-Page, G. (1996). *Critical issue: Creating the school climate and structures to support parent and family involvement.* Retrieved from http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa300.htm

Ideal School Climate

- The school atmosphere is conducive to involving parents and families in their children's education.
- School staff and volunteers understand the importance of a positive school climate in relation to family involvement.
- School staff and volunteers know how to create a positive school climate and are consistent in their approach.
- Family members feel welcome in the school. They know that they are valued and supported in their efforts to become more involved.
- Families are involved in their children's learning experiences at school.
- Families are involved in school activities and governance.

Adapted from Comuntzis-Page, G. (1996). *Critical issue: Creating the school climate and structures to support parent and family involvement.* Retrieved from http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa300.htm

Action Options to Establishing Positive School Climate

There are several things that tutoring programs can do to contribute to establishing a positive school climate for those involved. Your tutoring program can take the following options to help establish and maintain a positive school climate that encourages family involvement:

- Develop a plan to promote family-educator partnerships. See *Tool 5: Family-School Compact.* Write a school policy statement that delineates ways to ensure a positive school climate for family involvement. This statement can explain the duties, rights, and responsibilities are for the school staff, volunteers, parents and students.
- Devise a questionnaire or survey to assess family perspectives and participation about school. See *Tool 6: Family Opinion Worksheet* and *Tool 7: Family-School Partnership Assessment.*
- Recognize the skills needed to work effectively with families and provide professional development opportunities focusing on family involvement.
- Help parents increase their knowledge of child development and support them in their parenting skills.
- Encourage many different types of family involvement and develop strategies for increasing this involvement.
- Break down barriers and establish trust by reaching out to families through home visits, having meetings in less formal and intimidating settings, and using written communication that all parents can understand. Communicate regularly with families

in a variety of ways to keep them informed about their children's progress and school activities.

- Make families feel welcome in the school by providing opportunities for parents to visit the school, observe classes, and give feedback. Consider creating a parent center for parents to use while at school.
- Accommodate parents' work schedules and time constraints when developing parent-involvement opportunities.
- Make sure that program and school staff is accessible to parents and families.
- Learn about the various ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic backgrounds of the students served and know how to communicate with diverse families; reach out to families whose first language is not English.
- Engage parents in decision-making practices of advisory groups, school reform committees, and other school restructuring efforts.

OBSTACLES IN DEVELOPING SUPPORTIVE CLIMATES

- **Inconsistencies in individual interactions** between families and school personnel in various situations can undermine a positive school climate.
- **Cultural differences also can bring** about **mixed or wrong messages** affecting how families feel when they participate.
- Some **parents are reluctant** to engage in their children's education and may never perceive schools as friendly, accepting places.
- Parents may feel **confused about typical school procedures** and **intimidated by the school staff**.
- Others parents may believe that school provides hope for their children's future but are **uncertain how to become involved.**
- School staff may have **difficulty relinquishing their decision-making power.** Although they may give the appearance of encouraging parent involvement, they prefer to remain in total control of making all decisions. May also be suspicious of parent motives for involvement.

Adapted from Comuntzis-Page, G. (1996). Critical issue: Creating the school climate and structures to support parent and family involvement. Retrieved September 1, 2003 from http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa300.htm

Family Outreach

In order to best support children, schools, families, and communities must work together. Relationships between families and schools can improve if families are directly involved in the ongoing work of the schools. There are several things that literacy programs can do to create partnerships among educators and parents. Your program may consider developing the following opportunities:

- **A reading room** where parents can find reading materials on childcare and education.
- **A check-out library** of good books that parents can read to their children at home.
- **A "homework hotline"** that parents and children can call for assistance.
- **A system for "publishing" books** that children write, and displaying them in small libraries or special collections.

- **A home book program** that will provide books for children and families to create a permanent collection at home.
- **A program** to assure that children have **writing materials** in their homes.
- **Childcare** for younger children when parents attend workshops or meetings.
- **Workshops** on a variety of subjects, i.e. on book making so that parents can enjoy making books at home with their children.
- **A parent center** or a room for parents at the school that is staffed by volunteers. The center can provide information on the school, resources for parents, as well as a location for a various activities.
- **A home visitor program** that consists of staff or volunteers who visit homes to help families understand what they can do to encourage their children's success in school.

➲ KEYS TO WORKING WITH FAMILIES

- Conduct effective conferences.
- Work with parents when the student has a problem.
- Communicate frequently with parents about student progress.
- Help parents understand class goals, strategies, and assessment methods.

This section is from Fountas, I.C. & Pinnell, G.S. (1997). *Coordinator's guide to help America read: A handbook for volunteers.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann and is adapted from Comuntzis-Page, G. (1996). *Critical issue: Creating the school climate and structures to support parent and family involvement.* Retrieved from http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa300.htm

➲ STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS

Parents are the first teachers and leaders of their families. Share this information with the parents and caregivers of the students you serve. Parents can take the following steps to help their children learn:

- **Schedule daily homework time**. Establish a time each day for your child to be engaged in academic work. Review it regularly. Provide a quiet, well-lighted place for study. Cut off TVs and radios. Also, discourage phone calls during work time. Encourage your child's efforts and be available for questions. Spend time discussing what she has learned. While schools have the responsibility of assigning meaningful work, students have the responsibility to complete it. Time spent on academic work at home is directly related to achievement.
- **Read together**. Read with your child and let them see you and older children read. Take your child to the library to get a library card and help them find books on their interests and hobbies. Studies show that when parents read to their children or listen to them read on a regular basis, achievement improves. Taking the time to read with children is the most successful way to encourage kids to read and is critical to a child's education.
- **Use TV wisely.** Establish a TV watching budget and help your child choose programs for viewing. Select programs to watch together and discuss. Parents need to use TV wisely by both limiting the amount of viewing and helping children select educational programs. When chosen carefully, some television programs can help increase interest in learning.

- **Keep in touch with the school**. Don't leave it up to the school to let you know how and what your child is doing. Stay aware of what your children are learning, what their assignments are, and how they are doing. Make a point of visiting the school and talking with the teachers. If you can't visit, schedule a phone call. Don't wait until there is a problem. Research on the performance of students has shown that parents who are consistently informed about their children's progress can contribute to higher achievement. The partnership between parents and teachers is key to creating a climate at home and at school conducive to learning.
- **Offer praise and encouragement**. Encourage your child to put in the time and effort to complete assignments, to work hard. Encourage him to persevere. Cultivate a warm and supporting home atmosphere while also setting and enforcing standards for schoolwork. Parents play a dominant role in influencing a child's confidence and motivation to become a successful learner. Parents should encourage children to complete assignments as well as introduce them to enrichment programs and outside experiences that enhance their self-confidence and broaden their interests.
- **Talk to your child**. Know who your child's friends are and keep tabs on their whereabouts. Support your child in school and extracurricular activities. Keep them involved in family activities. Continue to set and enforce rules. Stress their importance as a role model to younger siblings. Children and parents can learn a lot about each other just by talking. Parents should communicate their values openly with their teenager. By talking about the importance of values such as honesty, self-reliance, and responsibility, parents are helping their children make good decisions.

From *Connecting families and schools to help our children succeed.* (1994). Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/02-1994/parent.html

➲ TIPS TO GIVE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- Be sure your children see you read and write everyday.
- Provide a quiet area for children to read or study.
- Create a writing area for your child such an actual desk or containers for writing supplies. Stock the area with writing materials (different pencils, markers, pens, etc.) and with various papers (stationery, lined paper, blank books, etc.).
- Read to your children.
- Provide a variety of reading material in the home.
- Take children to the library on a regular basis.
- Promote school attendance and discourage absenteeism.
- Monitor television viewing.
- Encourage your child's efforts in school.
- Keep in touch with your child's teachers.
- Volunteer at your child's school or at school activities and events.

Adapted from *Family literacy: Tapping into the power of the family*, from *Benefits of parent and family involvement*, and from *It's all in the family: Planning high-quality family literacy events.*

🕮 Enhancing Communication with Families

The more that parents and teachers share relevant information with each other about students, the better equipped they will be to help those students become successful. This communication and collaboration creates a supportive learning environment for the children being served. This reciprocal communication about program news and events as well as the children's progress results in improved academic achievement. Effective communication with families means that the program welcomes and consistently supports families to support their children.

🗁 Benefits to Improving Communication

- **A feeling of community:** Families feel that they are part of the school/program's community, as they are kept aware of events and other important information.
- **Clear information:** Families learn about the curriculum, assessments, achievement levels, and reporting methods.
- **Parents receive information about how to support their children:** Parents have the information they need to help their children thrive and achieve. When families are happy, children tend to do better in school.
- **Relationships are developed:** When tutoring programs and families share information and strategies, everyone feels connected to the school community.
- **Positive outcomes:** School staff and volunteers realize the positive ways that parents contribute to student success.

🗁 TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

- Communicate clear expectations.
- Maintain frequent and positive communication.
- Convey that the school is a welcoming, caring place.
- Develop appropriate strategies for the community with which you are working.
- Get information into parents' hands.

➲ STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

- 🕮**Emphasize the importance of strong family involvement:** Devote staff meeting time to exploring ways to improve communication with families.
- 🕮**Use funds to compensate staff for time spent making home visits:** This strategy helps when trying to develop relationships with families and to communicate with them about ways to support their children.
- 🕮**Solicit financial support to improve telephone communication opportunities with families:** Many schools are still operating with only one or two phone lines, making it virtually impossible to reach teachers during the day.
- 🕮**Share school expectations**: Share the school's goals and policies about student expectations and school assessment procedures.
- 🕮**Make sure that all teachers have an e-mail address with easy and regular access:** This form of communication can link parents at work and at home.

- **As a faculty, develop a format for classroom newsletters:** Basic information about classes and opportunities for parent support can be included and sent home on a weekly or twice monthly basis. Students can do some of the reporting, which can be directly linked to writing goals.
- **Have several mechanisms for gathering opinions from parents, students, and teachers:** Have a suggestion box in the hall, a tear-off suggestion form in the newsletter, a questionnaire at student-teacher conferences, a random sample phone-call effort, focus groups, or an annual satisfaction survey.
- **Communicate frequently about the school's achievement data:** Share the school's achievement data and offer parents suggestions about ways they can help their children succeed.
- **Send information to both parents:** In the case where a child doesn't live with both parents, it's important to keep each parent informed about the child's progress and about school activities.
- **Update signs around the school:** Be sure that notices asking parents to check in at the office include a warm welcome in all languages represented at the school. Students can create the signs as part of their language arts curriculum.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING LEARNING AT HOME

- **Make parent support at home a priority:** At the beginning of the school year, hold discussions about parent support at home. This can be done at events such as open houses, back-to school nights, in school newsletters, at parent meetings, and during parent-teacher conferences.
- **Encourage parents:** Ask parents to spend at least 30 minutes a day working with their children, reading all student work and newsletters, and providing an adequate workspace.
- **Offer suggestions to parents:** Suggest informal ways to strengthen children's reading and math skills by playing games like cribbage, Scrabble, or rummy. Suggest ways they can help children make connections between schoolwork and the world. In addition, give parents guidelines to follow as they assist their children with school projects. Provide them with reading level book lists, which often public libraries have already prepared.
- **Have family reading or involvement nights at school:** Offer practical and fun ideas on how to work with their children at home. See *Sample FIN Fliers* in *Appendix B*.
- **Ask parents for input on homework assignments:** Ask questions such as: Was this assignment appropriate for your child's ability level? Did your child have problems completing this homework? Do you have any questions or concerns about your child's homework?
- **Develop learning activities for families to use in the car or send home an activity pack during school vacations:** Families spend a great deal of time going to or from places together. Offer parents suggestions on ways to make outings fun learning experiences. See *Sample Letter Home* in *Appendix B*.
- **Send home a newsletter:** Include expectations for students and suggestions for parent involvement during the upcoming grading period. Make sure that

you also provide newsletters in the languages spoken in your community. See *Sample Newsletters* in *Appendix B*.

- **Have a library of games that students can check out:** Encourage them to play with a family member at home. Games that reinforce literacy and math skills will also provide opportunities for interaction among family members.
- **Help families celebrate successes:** Offer parents suggestions about ways they can praise their children and celebrate their academic achievements.
- **Establish a homework hotline:** Offer parents a homework hotline that they can call to identify assignments, due dates, and ways to get help with homework questions.

This section is based on material from Davis, D. (2000). *Supporting parent, family, and community involvement in your* from http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/family.pdf

Appendix A

Contains additional resources to assist in the development of family literacy and involvement activities and events.

🗁Tool 1: Needs Assessment: Initial Planning Checklist

This tool can be used to help determine your program's needs and what family involvement and literacy activities and events can help accomplish your goals. Before you begin, assemble a planning committee and go through the following steps and questions:

Assessment Stage:

☐ **Needs Assessment:**
What do families need to support their children's literacy development and success in schools? Reflect on the following:

- How do we know what families need and want?
- Have we talked with the school staff to find out their ideas?
- Have we found a way to survey the parents?

☐ **Target Audience:**
Who do we want to reach with this Family Literacy/Involvement Event?

- All families?
- Specific families (i.e. Only Washington Reading Corps families or ELL families)?

☐ **Goal Setting:**
What are we hoping to accomplish with this project? Why are we doing all of this work?

- To involve families in the life of the school on a more ongoing basis?
- To emphasize the importance of reading to your children and to demonstrate and share with parents successful tips for reading with their children?
- To help parents access additional resources to support their own growth as well as the growth of their own children?
- To provide parents and children with ideas for fun, hands-on activities that they can do together?
- To showcase a particular school program that needs family support?

☐ **Assessment of School and Community Resources:**
What people, programs, and other organizations can we partner with to make family literacy project a success?

- Key community leaders, parents, teachers, community members?
- Members of the PTA or other parent groups?
- Other school programs such as Title I?
- Local organizations?

This checklist is based on material from *A planning checklist* from Fremont Public Association and from Douglas, R., Henry, N., & Martin, N. (2003, summer). *It's all in the family: Planning high-quality family literacy events.*

Tool 2: Event Planning Checklist

This tool can be used to help plan family involvement and literacy activities and events. Your planning committee should meet and work together to address the following areas:

Planning Stage:

☐ **Planning Meetings:**
Who needs to be a part of the planning process, and what do we need to do at these meetings?

- Invite interested parents, teachers, bilingual staff, Title I reading specialist, volunteer coordinator, librarian, principal, and any other community partners to the planning meetings.
- Set and/or review project goals.
- Clarify target audience or recipients.
- Brainstorm and discuss possible strategies for achieving goals and reaching audience.
- Generate list of additional resources, possible themes, and activities.
- Delegate things to be done to specific people.
- Set deadlines for getting things done.
- Schedule other meetings?

☐ **Define the Event and Create an Agenda:**
What is the theme or the main attraction of the event?

- Does it respond to real community needs and interest?
- How will it build literacy skills and family connections?
- How will you involve families in all stages of the planning process?
- What or how many activities will you offer?

☐ **Assign Responsibilities:**
Who will accomplish the following:

- Provide the literacy expertise and guidance?
- Locate supplies?
  - What supplies will each activity require?
  - Who will bring what?
  - Can local businesses or organizations make donations?
- Set up the space? Secure necessary space and equipment?
  - Where will the event take place?
  - Will you need audiovisual equipment?
  - How will you accommodate special needs (e.g., translators, accommodations for physical disabilities)?
- Greet and sign in participants?
- Lead activities?
- Provide refreshments?
- Stay and clean up?
- Create and Distribute Fliers or Invitations:

- Who will design and produce them?
- Are they culturally inclusive?
- Into how, any languages should they be translated?
- How many will you disseminate? How?
- Generate publicity
  - Who will write the press release?
  - What other outlets are there to increase publicity?
  - Can someone act as an event photographer?
  - If so, do you need photo releases?

☐ **Logistics:**
What needs to get done before the event?

- Dates and times scheduled?
- Space reserved (fill out the space reservation form)?
- Special presenters contacted?
- School staff involved?
- Agenda for event set?
- Food provided?
- Carpooling arrangement and or bus tickets provided?
- Fliers translated and distributed?
- Follow-up phone calls made to families with special needs?
- Books and other prizes donated or collected?
- Take-home literacy packets organized?
- Volunteers recruited and oriented?
- Space decorated?
- Activity booths, food tables, greeter/registration table organized and staffed?
- Photographers and/ or press invited?
- Copies of family surveys made and ready to be distributed?

This checklist is based on material from *A planning checklist* from Fremont Public Association and from Douglas, R., Henry, N., & Martin, N. (2003, summer). *It's all in the family: Planning high-quality family literacy events.*

Tool 3: Event Evaluation Checklist

This tool can be used to help plan a family involvement and literacy activities and events evaluation. Your planning committee should work together to determine how you will accomplish the following:

Evaluation Stage:

☐ **Plan event evaluation:**
How will you measure the success of the event?

- Will you distribute a survey?
- Who will design, collect, and compile it?
- Who will capture post-event reporting?
- Will there be a reflection/discussion at the end of the event?
- How will this event link with other activities to follow?

☐ **Wrap-up:**
What do you need to do after the event?

- Clean up?
- Give recognition and thanks to volunteers, partners, etc.?
- Follow up with children, parents, volunteers, and school staff to get feedback on the event?
- Document what was done and provide feedback for future event planners?

This checklist is based on material from *A planning checklist* from Fremont Public Association and from Douglas, R., Henry, N., & Martin, N. (2003, summer). *It's all in the family: Planning high-quality family literacy events.*

Tool 4: Family Information Worksheet

Directions:

Complete this assessment by surveying sources such as the school principal, school secretary, school district, Title I program, program coordinator, or site supervisor. Do not survey families for this information-it is available through the school or may have been compiled for grant applications.

1. Our program population:_____
2. How many at each grade: (how many more or less is this from last year?)
3. Student-tutor ratios:_____
4. Number of students from families where English is not the first language:_____
5. What percentage of our program's population is this? _____
6. Approximately how many single-parent families do we have?_____
7. What is our program's daily attendance average?_____
8. Approximate number of students who participate in after-school care:_____
9. What is our mobility rate? (i.e., percentage of students who do not return each year)_____
10. What is the ethnicity of our students?
11. What is the ethnicity of our staff? Of our volunteers?
12. Total number of staff? Of volunteers?_____
13. What is our turnover rate for staff and volunteers?_____

This tool is based on material from Davis, D. (2000). *Supporting parent, family, and community involvement in your school*. Retrieved from http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/family.pdf

🗁Tool 5: Sample **Family-School Compact**

Schools and families can work together to accept mutual responsibility for children's learning. They can take the initiative to develop family-school partnerships known as "compacts." By working together, exchanging information, sharing decision making, and collaborating in children's learning, everyone can contribute to the educational process. As a school community, we support family-school compacts and affirm the importance of family involvement in students' learning.

We commit to **including** families and community members in the daily life of the school by:

1. **Sharing responsibility** at school and at home to give students a better education and a good start in life.
   - 🕮Our school will be welcoming to parents, reach out to parents before problems arise, offer challenging courses, create safe and drug-free learning environments, include parents in school site decisions, organize tutoring and other opportunities for parents to help improve student learning, and (add your own activity)
   - 🕮Our parents will monitor student attendance, homework completion and television watching; become acquainted with teachers and administrators, when possible, volunteer in school and participate in school decision making, and (add your own activity).
2. Providing effective **two-way communication**, including reducing education jargon and breaking down language barriers.
3. **Building the capacity** for families to help children succeed in school and for school staff to work with families.
4. Improving family involvement efforts by **reviewing progress** annually and strengthening cooperative efforts.
5. (Add your own commitment)

President, Parents' Association

_____

Teacher/Faculty Representative

_____

Principal

_____

Student Representative*

_____

Superintendent*

_____

Community/ Business Partner*

_____

Mayor*

_____

**Optional members to include in Compact*

Based on *America goes back to school* (1995). Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/Family/BTS/pt12.html

Tool 6: Family Opinion Worksheet

Directions:

Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts and opinions about our tutoring program and how we can develop strong partnerships between families and our program. Thanks!

1. In general, what are three ways our tutoring program is doing a very good job?

2. What are three ways you think we could make improvements?

3. Does your family usually feel "up-to-date" and well informed about events and special dates?
   Often (weekly or monthly) **Sometimes (once or twice)** **Never**

4. Does someone in your family volunteer with our program?
   Often (weekly or monthly) **Sometimes (once or twice)** **Never**

5. Have you received enough information to help with homework or other projects?
   Always **Most of the time** **Usually** **Sometimes** **Never**

6. Are there opportunities for the adults in your family to offer their opinions by serving on school committees or in other ways that seem important? If no, why?
   Yes **No**

7. What advice do you have for program and/or school staff on how to get more families involved?

Your name (optional)_____phone_____

This tool is based on material from Davis, D. (2000). *Supporting parent, family, and community involvement in your school.* Retrieved from http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/family.pdf

🗁Tool 7: Family-School Partnerships Self-Assessment

Directions:

Carefully examine the scoring rubric below before rating your school on the six types of involvement. As you review each item, please circle the response that comes closest to describing your school. A score of 4 or 5 indicates that the activity or approach is strong and prominent. A score of 1, 2, or 3 indicates that the activity is not yet part of the school's program, or needs improvement. The results provide information on the strength of current practices of partnership, and insights about possible future directions or needed improvements in your school's partnership program.

Scoring Rubric:

1 – Not Occurring: Strategy does not happen at our school.

2 – Rarely: Occurs in only one or two classes. Receives isolated use or little time. Clearly not emphasized in this school's parental involvement plan.

3 – Occasionally: Occurs in some classes. Receives minimal or modest time or emphasis across grades. Not a prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

4 – Frequently: Occurs in many but not all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

5 – Extensively: Occurs in most or all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A highly prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

PARENTING:					
Goal: *Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.*					
Our School:	**Rating**				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child development.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides information, training, and assistance to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths and talents	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools to understand families.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Provides families with information/training on developing home conditions or environments that support learning.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population	1	2	3	4	5
Other types of activities:	1	2	3	4	5

COMMUNICATIONS:					
Goal: *Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.*					
Our School:	**Rating**				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Reviews the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Develops communication for parents, who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Establishes clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once a year.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Conducts an annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs and reactions to school programs, and their satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Conducts an orientation for new parents.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Sends home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and achievement levels and report cards.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Develops school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Trains teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of contributions of parents and ways to build ties between school and home.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Provides written communication in the language of the parents.	1	2	3	4	5
Other types of activities:	1	2	3	4	5

LEARNING AT HOME:					
Goal: *Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.*					
Our School:	**Rating**				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.	1	2	3	4	5
Provides ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Assists families in helping students set academic goals, select courses, and programs.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.	1	2	3	4	5
Other types of activities:	1	2	3	4	5

DECISION MAKING:					
Goal: *Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.*					
Our School:	**Rating**				
	Not Occurring	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Extensively
1. Has active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Includes parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Has parents represented on district level advisory council and committees.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Involves parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the planning, review, and improvement of programs.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Involves parents in revising the school/ district curricula.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Includes parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and other groups in the school.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Develops formal networks to link all families with their parent representatives.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Includes students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas, and report back to them.	1	2	3	4	5

These tools are from Davis, D. (2000). *Supporting parent, family, and community involvement in your school.* Retrieved from http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/family.pdf

Appendix B

Contains examples of advertisements, newsletters, and letters from family literacy and involvement activities and events by various Washington Reading Corps sites.

Sample Tutoring Program Newsletter

Olympic View Elementary
"Creating Minds that Think and Hearts that Care"

Cougar Tracks

WASHINGTON READING CORPS

Volume 1, Issue 2 | 2626 SW 327th Federal Way, WA 98023 | 27 February 2003

February Highlights

Just because February is over doesn't mean you have to forget all the great celebrations that take place this month. Take the opportunity year round to read about Martin Luther King, Jr and other figures of the civil rights movement, the history of our Presidents and the culture that brought in the Chinese New Year this month.

Dates to Remember

March 3rd—
Dr. Seuss Read-in!
March 7th – No school
March 10th – No school
March 14th – No school
March 27th & 28th-
Student Led Conferences

Check out the WRC & Olympic View on the Web!

www.governor.wa.gov/reading
http://www.fwsd.wednet.edu/ov/

Olympic View's Kindergarten Students

One wonderful morning a kindergarten student that I work with decided he was going to write his name. He did a great job and he was so proud of it that as soon as I walked into the room he came up to show me what he had done. He was convinced that he had never written his name on his own; I knew though, that he had but hadn't ever written it so well by himself. He was so pleased with the product that he told me, "This makes me want to write my name everyday!" Normally when Rian is very happy with himself he stands tall, puts his hands on his hips, and pushes out his chest. Of course he did this, and he was so proud of his name that he looked at it and smiled for quite a while before he had to erase it. He tried just as hard the rest of the time I worked with him that day. Currently Rian writes his name everyday and very well, and I think that him seeing the fruits of his work has encouraged him to work hard everyday.
-Contributed by Andrea Dodson

We Recommend...

- *Holes*, by Louis Sachar
- *Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days*, by Stephen Mane
- *The Watsons Go to Birmingham–1963*, by Christopher Paul Curtis

Volunteer Highlights

Since January, we have had the luck to have another Decatur High school student join the volunteers here at Olympic View. Jackie Fisher, a 10th grade student, is a wonderful addition and is really enjoying working with one of our 4th graders. Continuing to tutor reading to some of our 6th grade students is Darcy Webb, an employee of Sylvan Learning. Mrs. Webb has been volunteering since October with a number of Ms. Speakes' and Ms. White's students. Another volunteer, Kim Taylor, is from Capital One. She has had the opportunity to work with many of our 1st graders in the rooms of Mrs. Pierovich and Mrs. Gbenro. She has recently begun tutoring some of our 5th grade students. Kim is also going back to school to get her teacher certification. Thank you volunteers!

OLYMPIC VIEW ELEMENTARY

Sharon Riddell: AmeriCorps supervisor
Sarah Hertsted: AmeriCorps*VISTA
Andrea Dodson: AmeriCorps Reading Corps

Phone: 253.945.3539 or 253.945.3500
Fax: 253.945.3535
Email: shertsted@fwsd.wednet.edu

Capital One

They are supporters of student lives, family lives and the community's life here at Olympic View Elementary.

Learn more about them online!
http://www.capitalone.com/about/corpinfo/

Family Reading Tips

- Encourage your children in their reading efforts, but do not do the work for him or her.
- Work on vocabulary—go over new words before beginning a book and review them throughout the story.
- Use the strategy of asking you child to rate the book as another way of having them summarize what they read.
- Having your children reread a favorite book is a great way to not only build up confidence in reading but increase their reading speed.
- Make predictions about the story you are reading with you children—it can build interest and excitement about the story!

United States Presidents

W	R	F	J	Q	A	D	A	M	S	L	J	O	H	N	S	O	N	
N	Y	N	O	T	N	I	L	C	I	H	S	M	O	M	H	T	N	
O	N	E	O	R	N	O	M	N	W	E	A	O	O	A	S	Y	J	
S	F	V	R	S	D	N	C	M	G	I	O	Y	V	D	U	L	A	
R	R	A	E	X	I	O	A	D	C	G	L	W	E	I	B	E	D	
E	O	N	A	O	L	R	I	N	A	K	A	S	R	S	W	R	A	
F	O	B	G	N	A	L	R	R	A	S	I	S	O	O	G	N	M	
F	S	U	A	T	O	J	F	A	H	H	T	N	D	N	O	E	S	
E	E	R	N	O	R	I	R	I	H	N	C	R	L	S	Y	R	R	
J	V	E	C	P	E	O	N	K	A	B	U	U	I	E	G	O	E	
N	E	N	P	L	I	G	O	M	E	H	G	R	B	B	Y	M	T	
O	L	N	D	O	T	E	U	S	T	N	R	N	U	A	T	L	R	
S	T	O	U	O	L	R	R	R	E	A	N	S	I	A	N	L	A	
K	H	X	N	M	T	K	A	C	H	V	H	E	Y	D	A	I	C	
C	E	I	S	E	N	H	O	W	E	R	E	L	D	D	R	F	S	
A	R	N	N	O	S	N	H	O	J	A	O	L	A	Y	G	A	L	
J	D	N	A	L	E	V	E	L	C	R	K	T	T	A	F	T	H	

WASHINGTON	TAYLOR	CLEVELAND	TRUMAN
J ADAMS	FILLMORE	B HARRISON	EISENHOWER
JEFFERSON	PIERCE	MCKINLEY	KENNEDY
MADISON	BUCHANAN	T ROOSEVELT	L JOHNSON
MONROE	LINCOLN	TAFT	NIXON
J Q ADAMS	A JOHNSON	WILSON	FORD
JACKSON	GRANT	HARDING	CARTER
VAN BUREN	HAYES	COOLIDGE	REAGAN
W HARRISON	GARFIELD	HOOVER	G BUSH
TYLER	ARTHUR	F ROOSEVELT	CLINTON
POLK			G W BUSH

Copyright 2000 John R. Potter Johnts Word Search Puzzles
http://www.thepotters.com/puzzles.html

STUDENT CORNER

Erneshia Jack, a 3rd grade student, writes about her favorite book—*Ghost Town at Sundown.*

magic
Tree
house
It's funny
it gots my
last name
it gots
good pitures
it has good
charters
The illastrater
is mary pope osborne
ghosttown at sundown
erneshia Jack

Sample Bilingual Newsletter

CK Star Herald

January 2003 Volume I Edition 3 Page I

For Information, Please Contact:

Carissa McNerney
Publisher &
WRC*VISTA Volunteer Recruiter
~OR~
Leslie Dana
Site Supervisor

Chief Kamiakin Elementary
1110 S. 6th Street
School phone: (509) 837-6444
School fax: (509) 837-0456

WASHINGTON READING CORPS

Washington Reading Corps Mission Statement

The mission of the Washington Reading Corps is to improve reading abilities of K-6 students across Washington State. This is achieved through research-based tutoring of struggling readers and effective collaboration among schools, families, community members, national service, businesses and state partners.

Contents:

Contact Information.....1
WRC Mission Statement.....1
WRC Happenings.....1
CK...Starts Before-School Program.....1
WRC Student of the Month.....2
WRC Tutor of the Month.....2
Star Student Corner.....2
Special Thank You's.....2

Washington Reading Corps Happenings

***Welcome back to school on January 6, 2003!!
**A Cocoa Club Extravaganza is scheduled for January 17, 2003. Regularly attending students are welcome to arrive for some great literacy games and awesome prizes!
**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is on Monday, January 20th. Think about the importance of this day as you are out of school.
**Camp Kamiakin is starting on January 28th! This is another before-school reading program. All WRC students are encouraged to sign up for this program. It will be a lot of fun while the students improve their reading skills. Sign up can take place during the Cocoa Club Extravaganza or by speaking to one of the WRC members.*

Chief Kamiakin Elementary WRC Program Starts Before-School Program

Chief Kamiakin Elementary and the Washington Reading Corps program implemented a before-school reading program called "The Cocoa Club". The Cocoa Club was started October 22, 2002 and it runs through January 17th, 2003. It begins at 8:00 AM every Tuesday through Friday and runs until 8:25. During this time, 23 WRC students can either bring a book or grab one off a shelf, and then find a comfortable spot to read. The WRC tutors are available, and roam the room - reading with and helping the students. If the WRC students have good attendance and show up every day for a week, they receive hot cocoa on Friday. The Valley Market, Food Pavilion, and Rite Aid support this incentive through their donations of hot cocoa, cups, and more. On Fridays, the students are also able to participate in a special reading related activity with their peers. Different prizes are awarded for other accomplishments, such as being on time, reading quietly, and having great attendance for longer than one week. One 5th Grade WRC student says, "I like the Cocoa Club because I get to read more and get hot cocoa when it is cold out." One student's mother came up to the WRC members and thanked us profusely for giving her son this opportunity. She added, "This is so good! My son is starting to ask a lot of questions about his reading, and he *likes* to read now!" Even the local newspaper, The Daily Sun, has jumped in on the action. In their article on the program, they stated, "There's not much better reward...[than] getting extra help [with] reading and warming themselves from the inside out with a favorite cold weather beverage." No doubt about it, Chief Kamiakin's before-school program is a hit!

CK Estrella Herald

Enero 2003 Volumen I Edición 3

Para información, por favor llame:

Carissa McNerney
Publisista &
Reclutadora de Voluntarios WRC*VISTA
~0~
Leslie Dana
Supervisora Local

Escuela Chief Kamiakin
1110 S. 6th Street
Teléfono de la Escuela: (509) 837-6444
Fax de la Escuela: (509) 837-0456

WASHINGTON READING CORPS

La Declaración de la Misión del Washington Reading Corps

La Misión del Washington Reading Corps es de mejorar las abilidades de la lectura de los estudiantes del kinder al sexto grado a traves de todo el Estado de Washington. Esto se logra por medio de investigaciónes_basadas en como instruir a estudiantes que tienen dificultad en la lectura y con una colaboración efectiva entre las escualas, familias, miembros en la comunidad, servicio nacional, negocios y consorcios del estado.

Contentenido:

Información de Contactos.....1
Declaración de la Mision del WRC.....1
Pasando en WRC 1
CK…Empieza un Programa Antes de Clases…1
Estudiante del Mes del WRC 2
Tutor del Mes del WRC 2
El Rincón del Estudiante Estrella.....2
Gracias Especiales.....2

Pasando en el Washington Reading Corps

***¡¡Bienvenidos de regrezo a la Escuela el 6 de Enero del 2003!!**
***La Extravanganza del Club del Chocolate está programado para el dia 17 de Enero del 2003. ! Los estudiantes que partizipan en este club regularmente son bienvenidos para que partizipen en juegos de alfabetización y premios grandiosos!**
***El lunes 20 de Enero es el Dia de Martin Luther King Jr. Mientras estés fuera de la escuela, pienza en la importancia de este dia**
***El Campo Kamiakin espezará el 28 de Enero! Este es un programa de lectura antes de clases. Se les anima a todos los estudiantes del WRC a que se apunten para partizipar en este programa. Este programa será muy divertido y tambien los estudiantes mejoran sus abilidades en la lectura. Para apuntarze para este programa se puede apuntar durante La Extravanganza del Club del Chocolate o con hablarle a los miembros del WRC**

La Escuela Primaria Chief Kamiakin Empieza un Programa Antes de Clases

La escuela Primaria Chief Kamiakin y el programa del Washington Reading Corps implementan un programa antes de clases llamado el "Club de Chocolate". El "Club de Chocolate" empezo el 22 de Octubre del 2002 y se llevará acabo hasta el dia 17 de Enero del 2003. El programa es de martes a viernes de las 8:00 AM hasta las 8:25 AM. Durante este tiempo los estudiantes del WRC pueden traer un libro o tomar un libro del librero y buscar un rinconsito comodo para leer. Los tutores del WRC están disponibles, y andan en el cuarto-leyendo y ayudandole a los estudiantes. Si los estudiantes tienen muy buena participación y vienen cada dia de la cemana por la cemana, los viernes ellos reciven chocolate caliente. El Valley Market y Food Pavilion y Rite Aid apoyan estos insentivos con sus donaciones de chocolate, vasos, y mas. En los Viernes, los estudiantes tambien pueden partzipar en una actividad de lectura especial con los estudiantes de su mismo grado. Por los logros que los estudiantes obtienen como llegar a tiempo, leer silenciosamente, y tener una buena participacion por mas de una cemana, a ellos se les dan diferentes premios. Un estudiante del quinto grado dice, "A mi me gusta el Club Chocolate porque puedo leer mas y me dan chocolate calientito cuando esta frio afuera." Una mama de un estudiante del WRC nos dio unas profundas gracias por darle a su hijo esta oportunidad. Ella agrego, "¡Esto esta muy bien! My hijo está empezando a hacer muchas preguntas acerca de la lectura, y ahora le gusta leer!" Tambien el periodico local The Daily Sun, a brincado a la acción. En el articulo acerca del program ellos manisfestaron, "no hay mejor premio…[que] reciviendo ayuda extra [con] la lectura y entrando en calor ellos mismos de adentro hacia afuera con nuestro bebida favorita para el crima frio." ¡Sin nunguna duda, el programa antes de clases del Chief Kamiakin dio en el blanco!

January 2003

Page 2

The Washington Reading Corps Star Student of the Month is... David Galvez!

What grade are you in?
*5th
Who tutors you at Chief Kamiakin?
*Miss McNerney
What is your favorite book?
*Captain Underpants
What do you like to do for fun?
*Soccer
What is your favorite color?
*Red
Do you have any pets? If so, what are they?
*Yes, 3 dogs
What is your favorite food or meal?
*Pizza!
What do you like about reading?
*The good books! ☺

**Look for the Star Tutor and Star Student in every issue of the CK Star Herald.

The Washington Reading Corps Star Tutor of the Month Is... Lorena Tlatelpa!

When did you start tutoring at Chief Kamiakin?
*October 2002
Who do you tutor at Chief Kamiakin?
*Jose Quezadas
What is your job outside of tutoring?
*I do not have a job right now, but I'm a cosmetology student.
What is your favorite color?
*Black and blue
Do you have any pets? If so, what are they?
*No, I do not have any pets.
What are your hobbies?
*I like to play soccer, go out with my friends, and go shopping.
What is your favorite food or meal?
*Mexican food
What do you like about reading?
*I like to help students that need help on developing their reading skills. ☺

Star Student Corner

This month's question:
"What is your favorite book and why?"

*Mayra Madrigal: Bailey School Kids because they are good stories with adventure.

*Luciano Lamas: Goosebumps because I like horror.

*Cesar Osorio: Goosebumps because they are interesting.

*Justin Reyes: The New York Yankees because they are my favorite team.

*Elias Alvarez: The New York Yankees because they are the best!

*Daniel Almeida: Goosebumps because I like to read them a lot.

"I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."
~ Anne Frank

A Special Thank You To:
~Century 21 and Remax for their cash donations to support our WRC Program.
~Pizza Hut and Valley Lanes for donating free coupons for the students.
~The Valley Market for their ongoing support with the Cocoa Club.

Enero 2003

Pagina 2

El Estudiante Estrella del Mes del Washington Reading Corps es... David Galvez!

¿En que grado estas?
*Quinto
¿Quiénes son tus tutores en Chief Kamiakin?
*Señorita McNerney
¿Cuál es tu libro favorito?
*Captain Underpants
¿Qué es lo que te gusta hacer para divertirte?
*Soccer
¿ Cuál es tu color favorito?
*Rojo
¿Tienes alguna mascota? ¿Si sí, qué son?
*Si, 3 perros
¿Cuál es tu comida faborita?
*Pizza!
¿Qué es lo que te gusta acerca de la lectura?
*¡Los libros buenos! ☺

The Washington Reading Corps Star Tutor of the Month Is... Lorena Tlatelpa!

¿Cuando empezastes a tutor en Chief Kamiakin?
*Octubre del 2002
¿A quién le ayudas en Chief Kamiakin?
*Jose Quezadas
¿Cuál es tu trabajo fuera de tu tiempo de tutor?
*Yo no tengo trabajo ahorita, pero soy una estudiante de cosmetologia.
¿Cuál es tu color favorito?
*Negro y azul
¿Tienes alguna mascota? Si sí, que son?
*No, no tengo mascotas
¿Cuáles son tus manias (cosas que te gusta hacer)?
*Me gusta jugar soccer, salir con mis amigos/as, y ir de compras
¿Cuál es tu comida faborita?
*Comida Mexicana
¿Qué es lo que te gusta acerca de la lectura?
*Me gusta ayudarle a los estudiantes que

El Rincón del Estudiante Estrella

La pregunta del mes:
"¿Cual es tu libro favorito y porque?"

*Mayra Madrigal: Bailey School Kids porque son buenas historias con aventuras.

*Luciano Lamas: Goosebumps porque me gusta el terror.

*Cesar Osorio: Goosebumps porque son interezantes.

*Justin Reyes: Los Yankees de Nueva York porque son mi equipo favorito.

*Elias Alvarez: ¡Los Yankees de Nueva York porque son los mejores!

*Daniel Almeida: Goosebumps porque me gustan mucho.

"Yo mantengo mis ideales, porque a pezar de todo, yo todavia pienzo que la gente de verdad son buenas de corazon."
~ Anne Frank

¡Gracias!

Thanks!

Unas Gracias Especiales a:

~Century 21 y Remax por su donacion de dinero y el apoyo al programa del WRC. ~Pizza Hut y Valley Lanes por donar cupones gratis para los estudiantes. ~The Valley Market por su apoyo continuo al Club de Chocolate.

Sample Flyer for English Speaking Families

Guess Who's Coming to Hawthorne..

Bring your family on
November 21st
6:30 – 8:00 pm

Sample Flyer for Non-English Speaking Families

• Libros Antes Hora de Acostarse • Libros Antes Hora de Acostarse •

Juntarse con Clifford

Y Sus Amigos

Que:

- Escuchar a historias
- Feria de libro
- Libros de gratuito
- Galletas y leche
- Entretenimiento
- Juegos

Cuando:
Noviembre 21, 2002 – 6:30-8:00pm

Donde:
Hawthorne Elementary School

• Libros Antes Hora de Acostarse • Libros Antes Hora de Acostarse •

• Libros Antes Hora de Acostarse • Libros Antes Hora de Acostarse •

Sample Letter Home

Lowell Elementary

Ted Friedenson, AmeriCorps VISTA
ted.friedenson@snocountywrc.org

5010 View Drive, Everett, WA 98203
(425) 339-4315

Dear Washington Reading Corps Families,

We have truly enjoyed working with your children in the first half of this school year. It's wonderful to see them grow as readers, improve their skills, and gain confidence.

We want you to enjoy your holiday time with your children, snuggle up with a good book, and enjoy the reading and word games that are inside this packet. With simple repetition and practice, and lots of loving attention, you will be amazed at how your child will improve in as little as 15 minutes a day. Enclosed you will find instructions for the activities and hints on what you can do to help your child learn to read.

We encourage you to:

- read with your child,
- enjoy the activities and games,
- bring the library card application to Everett Public Library on 2702 Hoyt Avenue or 9512 Evergreen Way and browse through the children's section,
- keep track of the activities your children do and the books they read and reward them for their progress (You can write this information on the back of this letter.)
- and most of all, have fun!

You are your child's first and most important teacher. Please spend time reading together, even a few times a week. It will be one of the most important gifts you can give. Thank you for all your efforts and enjoy! We look forward to seeing you and your children again in January.

Sincerely,

Mellena Coady, Ted Friedenson, David Lister

Mellena Coady, Ted Friedenson, and David Lister

P.S. All children who complete this packet and have it signed by their parent or guardian will receive a free book or a prize out of our grab box.

WASHINGTON READING CORPS

Community Partners: Albertson's Food & Drug • Alfy's • Andrews Horseheaven Ranch Boeing Blue Bills • Half-Priced Books • Hollywood Video • Izzy's Franchise Systems, Inc. Everett High School • Jazwieck's Golf & Train • McDonald's Restaurant Quizno's Safeway Food & Drug • Seattle University • Target Stores

Mellena Coady, AmeriCorps USA • Ted Friedenson, AmeriCorps VISTA • David Lister, AmeriCorps USA

References

America goes back to school (1995). Retrieved October 1, 2003 from http://www.ed.gov/Family/BTS/pt12.html

A planning checklist (n.d.). Fremont Public Association

Barriers to parent involvement: Roadblocks and detours. (n.d.) The National PTA.

Benefits of parent and family involvement. (n.d.). Retrieved September 1, 2003 from http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa11k37.htm

Comuntzis-Page, G. (1996). *Critical issue: Creating the school climate and structures to support parent and family involvement*. Retrieved September 1, 2003 from http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa300.htm

Connecting families and schools to help our children succeed. (1994). Retrieved October 10, 2003 from http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/02-1994/parent.html

Davis, D. (2000). *Supporting parent, family, and community involvement in your school.* Retrieved October 1, 2003 from http://www.nwrel.org/csrdp/family.pdf

Douglas, R., Henry, N., & Martin, N. (2003, summer). *It's all in the family: Planning high-quality family literacy events.* Retrieved October 1, 2003 from http://www.nwrel.org/learns/tutor/sum2003/sum2003.pdf

Family literacy services (2003). Retrieved October 1, 2003 from http://www.famlit.org/FamilyLIteracyServices/index.cfm

Fountas, I.C. & Pinnell, G.S. (1997). *Coordinator's guide to help America read: A handbook for volunteers.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Greenlee, G., Laws, H.P., Edwards, P., & Goldman, E. (1998, winter). *Family literacy: Tapping into the power of the family.* Retrieved September 5, 2003 from http://www.nwrel.org/learns/tutor/win1998/win1998.pdf

Handout 7: Research on family involvement (n.d.). Retrieved September 1, 2003 from http://www.nwrel.org/cfc/frc/pdf/Handout7.PDF

Handout 9: Suggestions for including families and the community in literacy activities. (n.d.). Retrieved October 1, 2003 from http://www.nwrel.org/cfc/frc/pdf/Handout9.PDF

Prescott, J.O. (January/February, 2003). The power of reader's theater. *Scholastic Instructor.* 22-27. Available online at: http://www.readers.org/readerstheater.htm

Talking points: Parent involvement. (2002). Retrieved September 5, 2003 from http://www.pta.org//ptawashington/legconf/talkingpoints/parent.asp

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all of the people who have provided resources and support during the development of Module IV, especially to the following:

Jessica Vavrus
Jennifer Fischer
Washington Reading Corps schools, site supervisors, key area coordinators, and AmeriCorps and VISTA members
Washington Service Corps Staff
Terry Leppien
Ann Cuoio
Allen Dietz
Fremont Public Organization
Seattle Public Schools
Family and Community Involvement VISTA members
Carissa McNerney
Federal Way Public Schools
Sarah Hertsted
Snohomish School District
Karalee Marshall
Ted Friedenson
NWREL
Page Ahead