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A Parent Handbook of Reading and Writing Activities for Continued Literacy Development in the Home

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A PARENT HANDBOOK OF READING AND
WRITING ACTIVITIES FOR CONTINUED LITERACY
DEVELOPMENT IN THE HOME

A Project Report
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Education
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by
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ABSTRACT

A PARENT HANDBOOK OF READING AND
WRITING ACTIVITIES FOR CONTINUED LITERACY
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This project provides a handbook of reading and writing activities and strategies for parents of first grade students to use with their children in the home environment. Included is a review of research which: (1) discusses the importance of reading aloud to children at home and school, (2) examines how a child's early literacy experiences in the home affect overall reading achievement, (3) explains ways to increase communication between parents and teachers regarding a child's literacy development, and (4) describes activities to connect school and home literacy experiences.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

When educators take time to explain to families their classroom routines and the expectations that they have for home reading, they enable parents to provide daily support in their child's literacy development (Finnegan, 1997). Parents want the best educational experiences possible for their children, but are not always sure on the appropriate steps to take in order to achieve their goal. By providing parents with support and literacy materials to use in the home that complement the reading instruction received in the school-setting, educators and parents can work together to give all children the best education possible.

Communication between home and school is another essential element that is necessary in order to see continued growth in a child's educational development. Gunning (2002) states that "There should be an ongoing dialog between the parents and the school to inform the parents of the student's progress, enlist the parents' help, and answer questions" (p. 533). Effective communication between home and school can be done verbally, in written form, or a combination of the two. The key is that communication needs to be consistent, not sporadic. In many cases parents speak with their child's teacher just a few times during the year such as at the beginning of a new school year, at conferences, or if a concern or problem arises. To see gains in a child's educational development, especially in reading, parents and teachers need to communicate regularly. In addition to verbal and written communication on a weekly basis, family nights and workshops that focus on reading instruction can be a tremendous

benefit to parents. By meeting with parents regularly to discuss their child's progress and by giving them resources and suggestions about how to use the materials, the bond between home and school is strengthened enabling the child to develop into a successful reader and learner.

Need/Rationale of the Project

With the State of Washington's Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) student expectations are extremely high. By using the Home Literacy Bag Project, families at Lincoln Elementary in Toppenish will be working on literacy activities that are aligned with the GLEs. Also, the skills and strategies presented in the Literacy Bags are important concepts that students will need to master in order to excel on the Reading WASL. With programs such as this one, students will continue to practice the skills and strategies that they need to be successful at home and school and continue to shine on the WASL. Lincoln Elementary's 2005 Reading WASL score was 60.9 and the 2006 Reading WASL score was 93.8.

In addition, under the Reading First Mandate, Lincoln Elementary is a Family Friendly School (FFS). FFS strive to create a stronger bond between home and school in order to help promote student learning and success. The Home Literacy Bag Program is yet another way to try to get parents involved in their child's education. The major goals of this program are to increase parents' knowledge of their child's literacy development and for parents to assist children with their learning.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide parents of first grade students in the Toppenish School District with a handbook of activities and strategies for reading and

writing, which they can use at home in order to continue their child's literacy development. The project includes a weekly parent-teacher communication journal in which parents and teachers discuss the child's literacy development. A reading log is also a component of the journal. On the log parents sign daily that they have read with their child for at least twenty minutes. The intent of the parent/teacher journal is to maintain an open line of communication on a weekly basis with parents in order for every child to receive the support and encouragement that they need at home and school in order to grow and develop into a life long reader.

The project includes literacy bags, to provide parents and their children with reading materials that they can work on together in order to continue to enhance their child's reading development. The project also includes two workshops for parents that will provide them with a variety of reading skills and strategies to use with the literacy bags to aid in their child's comprehension of the reading material.

Limitations of the Project

The three major components of the project, including the parent-teacher communication journal, the home literacy bags, and the workshops have not been implemented as part of the researcher's reading program at the present time. The three major components of the project mentioned above are currently only available in English, which could prevent some parents from participating. Because the lessons in the home literacy bags are designed to supplement the themes and concepts taught in the *Open Court Reading Program*, the only subjects integrated into the lessons include reading and writing at a first grade level.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this project these terms are defined as follows.

Backpack Program/Literacy Bags: A collection of reading and writing activities and materials to use at home to promote literacy development. The backpacks/bags might include books, tapes, reading/writing activities, puppets, response journals, and writing/drawing materials (Richgels & Wold, 1998).

Early Literacy Experiences: Experiences involving reading and writing tasks between parents and children from birth to entry into formal schooling (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

Family Reading Workshop: Comprehension sessions designed for adults. Each workshop session features a children's book representing a particular genre and an accompanying reading strategy appropriate to that book (Handel, 1992).

Genres: Different types of reading material such as fiction, non-fiction, and poetry (Alverman & Phelps, 2002).

High-Frequency Words: Also known as sight words are the most frequently occurring words that we read such as can, which, where, should (Gunning, 2002).

Home Literacy Environment: (1) Experiences in the home in which children interact with adults in writing and reading situations; (2) In which children explore print on their own; (3) In which children observe adults modeling literate behaviors (Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998).

Home Response Journal: Written communication between parents and educators about a student's literacy development and progress (Shockley, 1994).

Identifying Print-Concepts: Basic understanding of written language including:

Understanding that words can be written down and read.

Recognizing a letter, a word, and a sentence.

Understanding that printed words are composed of letters.

Understanding that words are composed of sounds.

Understanding that letters represent sounds.

Being able to point to separate words in print and match these with words that are being read by oneself or another.

Understanding the difference between uppercase and lowercase letters.

Understanding the function of punctuation marks.

Reading from left to right.

Reading from top to bottom.

Locating the front and back of a book.

Recognizing the function of the cover and title page.

Recognizing the function of print and pictures. (Gunning, 2002, p. 184)

Independent Reading: When adults and children read material by themselves (Louizides, 1993).

Literacy Event: Any reading, writing, or discussion activity that takes place either individually or within a group (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

Oral Language Skills: Oral language skills include a child's receptive vocabulary, listening comprehension, and ability to recognize individual phonemes/sounds (Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998).

Reading Aloud: When parents and teachers read and discuss quality literature aloud with children (Reutzel & Cooter, 1996).

Socioeconomic Status (SES): The income level of a family in relation to other families in the United States. In research articles income levels are referred to as low, middle, and high (Purcell-Gates, L’Allier, & Smith, 1995).

Story Elements: The setting, characters, plot, problem, and solution of a story (Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998).

Teaching of Literacy Concepts: Direct instruction of how to read and write (Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, Daley, 1998).

Written Language Skills: Written language skills include a child’s ability to identify individual letters, his/her knowledge of print concepts, and ability to spell and decode words (Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998).

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to create a handbook of activities and strategies that focused on reading and writing for parents to use at home with their children in order to encourage continued reading development outside of school. The review of literature: (1) discusses the importance of reading aloud to children at home and school, (2) examines how a child's early literacy experiences in the home affect overall reading achievement, (3) explains ways to increase communication between parents and teachers relating to a child's literacy development, and (4) describes activities to connect school and home literacy experiences.

The Importance of Reading Aloud to Children

Trelease (1985) stated the following:

Why read aloud to children? Answered simply, the initial reasons are the same reasons you talk to a child: to reassure, to entertain, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, and to inspire. A secondary reason, and of great importance in an age of rising illiteracy, is the established fact that regular reading aloud strengthens children's reading, writing, and speaking skills. (pp. 1-2)

The way in which parents and caregivers interact with children involving literature will have a major role in their overall reading development, especially within the first few years of schooling. The reading aloud of quality literature to children at any age level by parents and educators enhances children's reading development in numerous ways. Routman (1994) stated, "Reading aloud is seen as the single most influential factor

in young children's success in learning to read. Additionally, reading aloud improves listening skills, builds vocabulary, aids reading comprehension, and has a positive impact on students' attitudes toward reading" (p. 32). According to Trelease (1985), children gain knowledge about writing elements such as content, grammar, word choice, and conventions through hearing repeated readings of their favorite stories. Through read alouds, children are exposed to printed language and have the ability to comprehend ideas, concepts, and events that are important to them. Reading aloud allows children to enjoy and appreciate literature, which in turn helps to develop a lifelong love of reading. Reading aloud also helps to create stronger emotional bonds between the child and adult especially when reading is based on the child's interests and done in a cozy place without interruptions (Reutzel and Cooter, 1996).

Neuman (1999) stated:

As children are read to, they acquire an enormous amount of topical knowledge. They learn that words can create imaginary worlds beyond the immediate here and now. They learn that written language has its own rhythms and conventions. And through these activities, children learn the values and the conceptual tools associated with reading. (p. 286)

According to Alvermann and Phelps (2002), the best way to share a love of books is by reading aloud. When adults promote reading especially by selecting books from a variety of genres and subject areas they are more likely to spark a child's interest. Also, when children find reading materials that they enjoy they are more likely to engage in independent reading.

Research has shown that there is a correlation between reading aloud and reading

independently for pleasure. In a study conducted by Louizides (1993), parents of 269 students, preschool through third grade in Cranford, New Jersey were given a questionnaire regarding how often parents and children read aloud together and how often both parents and children read independently. Approximately, 91 questionnaires were returned which represented 200 children ranging in age from 3 months to 17 years since parents were asked to include all children that lived in their home. The results of the study concluded that 165 children were read to either by one or both parents on a daily basis. Sixty-one percent of the parents began reading to their children by the time they were one year old. The type of material read to the children was predominately fiction and was most commonly checked out at the local library or purchased at a bookstore. On an independent level approximately 87 percent of parents said that they read daily, whereas 75 percent of their children were also found to have read daily in the leisure time. Overall, the researcher demonstrated that the reading aloud relationship between parents and children has a positive affect on the likelihood that as children get older they themselves will become independent readers.

The Effect of Early Literacy Experiences on Overall Reading Development

Early literacy experiences can be described as experiences involving the reading and writing activities that take place between parents and children from the time they are born until their entry into formal schooling (Purcell-Gates, 1996). A large amount of research has been collected through the years regarding the relationship between early literacy experiences and the development of literacy skills in school, especially in kindergarten and first grade. According to Gunning (2002), the home literacy environment of a child is an important factor in the child's literacy development in

school. Gunning goes on to identify five key factors that can be established in the home literacy environment that can greatly help develop a child's literacy skills by the time they enter formal schooling which include:

Parental reading habits. Children are more likely to value reading if they see their parents reading.

Reading to children by adults. Reading to children is one of the most valuable things that parents can do. Reading to children develops language and literacy skills and builds a closer relationship between parent and child.

Availability of reading and writing materials. Just having literacy materials available fosters their use.

Parental expectations. By expressing high expectations and providing help, parents foster enhanced achievement.

Stimulating verbal interactions. Discussions, explanations, dinnertime conversations, and reading to children and discussing what has been read all contribute to children's language and conceptual development. (pp. 59-60)

Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, and Daley's (1998) study of how children develop oral and written language skills showed how early literacy experiences impact later reading achievement, particularly by the end of first grade. The participants for this study included parents and children from a middle-class community in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. The children included in the study were 110 kindergarteners and 58 first graders. The majority of the children were Caucasian, and English was the primary language spoken in each home. The research team's purpose was to investigate the relationship between storybook reading and the teaching of literacy concepts by parents

to children. The researchers also looked at the effect that storybook reading and the teaching of literacy concepts had on the development of oral and written language skills and word reading.

To assess the relationship between storybook reading and the teaching of literacy concepts, Senechal et al. (1998) had the parents who were participating in the study fill out a questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire covered five key elements, which included: (1) how often parents read stories to their children during a week, (2) how many times children asked to be read to, (3) how often families visited the public library together, (4) how many children's books that families owned, and (5) how old their children were when they first started reading to them. The second part of the questionnaire asked parents to rate how often they instructed their children to read and print words during an average week on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very often and 1 being never. To assess parents' knowledge of children's literature the researchers had the parents identify from a list titles and authors of children's books that they were familiar with.

To assess the children's oral-language skills, both the kindergarten and first grade students participating in the study were given tasks that measured their phonological awareness, listening comprehension, and vocabulary. To assess the children's written-language skills, both the kindergarten and first grade students were given tasks that measured their ability to identify print concepts, use invented spelling, decode unknown words, and their knowledge of the alphabet. Also, for first grade students a reading vocabulary test was given to assess their ability to read words at the end of the school year.

Based on the questionnaires filled out by participating parents, Senechal, et al. (1998) concluded that most parents began reading stories to their children at the age of nine months. Each child had approximately 60 to 80 children's books in their home. Parents reported that they read stories usually by the child's request and worked with their children on how to read and write words several times during a weekly period. Based on the oral and written language tasks the majority of the kindergarten and first grade students scored high on alphabet knowledge and identifying print concepts, but lacked in their ability to spell and decode unknown words.

Overall, through the questionnaires and oral and written language tasks results on the children, Senechal, et al. (1998) discovered two distinct ways in which parents and their children interacted with literacy. When parents read aloud to their children and discussed story elements such as setting, character, plot, conflict, solution, the researchers saw an increase in oral language development. Whereas, when parents discussed literacy concepts during their read aloud time, such as identifying and practicing writing letters and basic sight words, the researchers saw an increase in written language development. There were no instances where the researchers saw an increase in both oral and written language development. It was either one or the other. To show an increase in both oral and written language development parents and teachers need to provide ample time during read alouds for discussion concerning both story elements and literacy concepts.

In order to enhance oral language development, Wray, Bloom, and Hall (1989) have identified four important conditions that adults can provide children with in order to develop fluent language use:

Adults can provide access to an environment where talk has high status.

Adults can provide access to competent users of language.

Adults can provide opportunities to engage in talk.

Adults can provide responses, which acknowledge the child as a competent user of language. (p. 39)

Prior to formal schooling, children are exposed to a vast number of literacy events, either through observation or by their involvement in them. "Before schooling children are able to participate in literacy used for the purpose of living. As literacy continues to emerge so their involvement increases" (Hall, 1987, p. 88). This indicates that the more opportunities children have to practice working on their oral and written language skills while reading aloud with parents will result in an increase in oral and written language development upon their entry into formal schooling (Hall, 1987).

Purcell-Gates' (1996) study of how young children learn to read and write in the home setting before their entry into kindergarten is yet another example of how early literacy experiences impact later reading development and achievement. The participants for this study included 20 low-income families that represented many different cultures, including African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian. To investigate the impact that home literacy experiences had on later reading development, each family had a child that ranged in age from four to six years old. English was again the primary language spoken in each home. The researcher observed the children and their families within their home setting three to four times per week over the duration of one year to see how and to what extent literacy concepts were taught before entering public school. The main focus was on the development of reading and writing skills.

To assess reading and writing development in the home, Purcell-Gates (1996) first

step was to document every action that involved literacy, including all of the reading, writing, and discussion activities that took place by every family member and how long each event lasted. She also documented the amount and types of printed materials found in the home. To assess the children's written language skills, the children participating in the study were given tasks that measured their ability to identify print concepts, to retell events that happened in their lives both orally and in written form, and to identify their knowledge of the alphabet (letters and sounds). In the alphabet tasks, children had to demonstrate their ability to spell several high-frequency words used in the English language and write their names and any other words that they knew.

Based on the observations made by Purcell-Gates (1996), the majority of the families averaged one literacy event per hour of observation. The time that each literacy event lasted was approximately forty-five minutes. Most families used print for leisure purposes such as reading books, magazines, newspapers, and television guides. Print was also used to read labels, recipes, and directions when shopping, cooking, and cleaning. When parents and children engaged in literacy events together, the activities primarily consisted of storybook reading, identifying letters of the alphabet, and practice writing the child's first name. Based on the results from the children's written language tasks, the majority of the children struggled in their ability to identify print concepts and in their actual writing abilities.

Overall, Purcell-Gates (1996) concluded that as children entered school, the amount of time that parents spent teaching literacy concepts such as reading and writing increased. Most of the children involved in the study had older siblings who were already of school age. The researcher noticed that the parents would engage in literacy

events in the evenings after school with the older children by helping them mainly with their reading and spelling homework.

Besides looking at the early literacy experiences involving reading and writing between parents and children, research has also focused on family status characteristics such as the socioeconomic and education levels of parents, regarding their effect on a child's literacy development (Baker, Sonnenschein, Serpell, Scher, Fernandez-Fein, and Munsterman, 1996).

In the study conducted by Baker et al., (1996) there were significant differences in the home literacy experiences between low income and middle-income families. Families in both economic groups reported engaging in several literacy events daily with their children, including storybook reading, discussions, and writing practice. However, their approach to teaching literacy concepts differed considerably. In the middle income families literacy was viewed as a source of entertainment. Literacy activities in the middle class families primarily consisted of parents and children reading aloud together or reading individually. Middle class families also played several educational games with their children. There were numerous literacy materials including books, magazines, comics, dictionaries, paper, pens, and pencils that were available anytime for independent use. In the low income families there were fewer literacy events and materials available to use. When low-income families described the literacy activities that they engaged in with their children, the activities primarily focused on teaching literacy skills. These parents used flash cards and pencil and paper to have their children identify and spell the letters in the alphabet and letters in their own names.

The researchers concluded that children growing up in homes where literacy was

primarily viewed as a source of entertainment performed better on school assessments of print, such as identifying letters and knowing the function of print, than children growing up in homes where literacy was viewed as work or the teaching of certain skills such as identifying letters.

In another study regarding family literacy before formal schooling, Purcell-Gates, L'Allier, and Smith (1995) researched the family literacy practices of twenty low-income families. Among the twenty families, twenty-four children, ranging from four to six years of age took part in the study. Considerable differences were discovered in the literacy practices of low-income families, and therefore the families were put into two distinct groups, low-literacy and high-literacy. Purcell-Gates et al. (1995) found that "on average high-literacy families engaged in eight times more literacy events per hour than did low-literacy families" (p. 576). Also, the way in which print was used differed between the low and high-literacy families. Literacy events in the high-literacy families focused on literacy learning (word identification, word spelling, and letter formation), storybook reading, and entertainment (reading for pleasure). Literacy events in low literacy families focused on daily living routines (writing shopping lists, reading recipes, and paying bills) and entertainment.

Purcell-Gates et al. (1995) concluded that while factors such as income and education levels may make it more difficult for parents to engage in meaningful literacy experiences and provide educational materials for their children, it is not impossible. All families in this study were from the same low economic status, but differed dramatically in ways they used and practiced literacy in the home setting. Society assumes that just because a child comes from a low-income home that the child will perform far behind the

middle and high-income children. Based on the study, within an income level, whether it is high, medium, or low, there will be considerable differences among children at each level in the literacy experiences they have had at home before their entry into school. The results of Purcell-Gates et al. (1995) study further conclude that the literacy skills a child possesses upon their entry into formal schooling are mainly shaped by the literacy practices that take place in the home setting not by families' income or education levels.

Ways to Increase Communication Between Parents and Teachers Regarding Literacy Development

Research has shown that there are several ways to increase communication between parents and teachers in order to see continued growth in a child's literacy development, including parent-teacher journaling programs, semi structured interviews between parents and teachers, and by inviting parents into the classroom to observe good teaching practices in action.

Lazar and Weinberg (1996) conducted a study to find out how parent-teacher communication could help children who were struggling with their literacy lessons in school. The participants for the study included 28 families who were involved in a summer literacy instruction program for children in first through sixth grade at The Reading-Language Arts Center in Glenside, Pennsylvania.

At the beginning of the program, teachers collected information about where the children were developmentally, in their reading and writing skills, through miscue analysis, retellings, response discussions, and writing samples. The teachers also interviewed the children and had them fill out questionnaires that assessed their attitudes toward literacy learning. Through their data collection, teachers were able to improve

literacy instruction, because they had a clearer picture of what skills and strategies needed to be taught to each student in order to see growth in their reading and writing development.

Teachers also contacted parents and set up interviews to discuss literacy experiences and practices that occurred in the home setting between parent and child. At the end of the interview, teachers asked parents to record any literacy activities that they saw their children engage in outside of the center such as reading a menu in a restaurant or making a shopping list before going to the grocery store. Also, parents were encouraged to voice any accomplishments, concerns, and suggestions that they had regarding their child's reading development. Parents were asked to write in a journal at least three times a week, and to bring the journal to the center when they made an entry so that the teacher could respond as quickly as possible. As a way to assess the journal project, parents and teachers were asked to provide their insight on what they gained from the whole experience at the end of the program's summer session.

Lazar and Weinberg (1996) concluded that parents thought the journals provided them with more insight on what their children were reading and learning about in school. Parents also felt that they had a better understanding of their child's strengths and weaknesses in the areas of reading and writing, and that they could provide their children with more support where it was needed as a result of the project.

Lazar and Weinberg (1996) further concluded that teachers found the parents' comments and concerns about their child's literacy development to be very helpful in planning instructional lessons, because they had a better understanding of what skills they needed to work on. Teachers also felt that they learned a lot about the child's home

literacy experiences, and could offer advice and strategies for the parents to try with their children based on the parents' comments and what they observed in the classroom.

Within the public education system, many teachers are starting journaling projects with parents, hoping to see an increase in communication to benefit literacy instruction in school and at home. Shockley (1994), a first grade teacher explained how she implemented home response journals at the beginning of the school year. She started by inviting parents to tell about their children. As correspondence continued, parents wrote about the books that they read with their children and provided information regarding how their child responded to print in the home setting. By reading and responding to the parents' journal entries, Shockley felt that she could make better use of her instructional time and provide each child with more support during reading and writing activities as a result of the journaling project.

Shockley (1994) states:

I was able to respond individually to issues regarding reading and writing development, sharing with parents my beliefs about literacy learning and ways to support that learning. Likewise, parents often informed me of their own strategies, beliefs, and insights. I learned to count on parents as co-teachers; there was now shared accountability and security in knowing each child had a one-to-one time with a more capable peer. (p. 501)

Finnegan (1997), a fourth grade teacher, explained how she implemented a parent journal at the beginning of the school year. She sent a letter home to parents explaining that the journal was a place to voice any questions or comments that they had about their child's progress or any other subject that they wished to discuss. Finnegan used one

journal to communicate to each student's family, therefore a schedule was made and placed in the binder so everyone knew when the journal was to be returned to school.

Overall, Finnegan (1997) found parent journals to be a very successful way to enhance communication between home and school. Although she does warn that creating a journaling program with parents can be a time consuming endeavor. Finnegan (1997) states "I think the parent journal has been a highly positive experience for me, my students, and their parents. I recommend it to all teachers who wish to improve home-school communication" (p. 269).

Besides journaling, a semi-structured interview with parents is another effective method for educators to use in order to openly communicate with families, regarding a child's literacy development. Baker et al. (1996) found semi structured interviews to be a great technique to use in order to involve parents in their child's literacy instruction, and give them support to extend literacy lessons into the home setting. Through parent-teacher interviews, Baker et al. (1996) discovered several barriers that prevent parents from participating in literacy activities at home with their children, including having sufficient educational materials, lack of knowledge about library resources that are available, material not being sent home in their primary language, and not understanding their child's homework. With the information gathered in the parent-teacher interview, educators have a clearer picture on the appropriate steps that need to be taken to supply families with literacy materials and resources that will help to continue literacy instruction beyond school.

Researchers also recommend inviting parents into the classroom to observe how the teacher models literacy instruction to the students. By watching good teaching

practices in action, parents will have a better understanding of how to engage in literacy activities at home with their child (Purcell-Gates et al., 1995; Baker et al., 1996). To develop a stronger connection between home and school when educators first sit down to talk to parents about a child's progress in reading, Baker et al. (1996) recommends sharing the skills and concepts that the student is mastering and the literacy activities that are being done in the classroom that help promote these skills and concepts. Likewise, Tomlinson (1996), suggests, in addition to relaying concerns or problems to parents, that teachers should also keep parents informed about upcoming class or school events, volunteer opportunities, and activities that parents can do at home to support classroom activities in order to provide additional ways for parents and teachers to communicate. When teachers frequently share a student's progress with parents, supply educational resources, and offer support when needed, parents feel more comfortable and will want to continue to have an ongoing relationship with their child's teacher.

Connecting Home and School Literacy Experiences

According to Allington (2001), there are two key factors that contribute to having a successful literacy development, including easy access to reading materials and the fact that the more you read, the more proficient you become in both reading and writing. Unfortunately, many families are unable to provide their children with quality reading materials and other educational resources to use at home. This section will introduce activities and suggestions for educators to share with families in order to enhance the literacy development of every child.

Fredericks and Rasinski (1990) suggest six simple ideas for supporting school-reading programs within the home setting:

Encourage parents to work with their children in keeping a family journal.

Encourage parents to make audio or videotapes of their children's reading.

Encourage parents to obtain wordless picture books. Children can write or dictate original stories to accompany the pictures in the books.

Send home activities for parents and children to complete with certain books they may be reading at home.

Send home holiday reading and writing packets to sustain the reading program through holiday vacations.

Invite parents to share book talks with your class. (p. 424)

When educators provide frequent opportunities for parents to participate in a variety of school functions, such as workshops, open houses, family nights, and musical performances, they have provided the first step toward getting parents to feel comfortable and welcome in their child's school. "The chance to associate with other parents and with staff at such events can provide a gateway to involvement with activities more closely tied to the educational mission of the school" (Tomlinson, 1996, p. 5).

There are many programs that have been developed through the years designed to promote family involvement and literacy development.

Richgels and Wold (1998) described the *Three for the Road* backpack program at Palos East Elementary School in Palos Heights, Illinois. The purpose of the program was to use quality children's literature at different ability levels that involved reading and writing activities for parents and children to use at home in order to promote continued literacy development. Each backpack created contained three leveled books (easiest, in-between, and most challenging) that centered around one genre such as a fantasy or

adventure pack. Also included in the backpack were suggestions for response activities, hand puppets, a journal, and writing materials.

For teachers interested in creating their own backpack program, Richgels and Wold (1998) provided the steps needed for a successful program. The first step is to *select books* that have a high interest level for both children and adults and that will be sure to spark a conversation between the parent and child. Step number two requires *categorizing books* by genre and ability level. Each pack should contain an easy, in-between, and challenging book in order to interest learners at a variety of reading levels. The third step is to *prepare support materials* that relate to the books in each pack. Suggested materials include a letter to parents explaining the program, a checklist of supplies included, activities for families to do together based on the stories used, a response journal, hand puppets, and writing/drawing materials. Step number four requires *developing a schedule* for students to take the backpacks home and also scheduling time for children to share their backpack experiences with their peers in the classroom.

Once the backpacks are completed Richgels and Wold (1998) suggest that teachers describe, in detail, the program to students before implementing it. In the *Three for the Road* program, teachers gave a brief book talk about each of the three books in the pack that they would be using. They described the materials in the pack and demonstrated how to use them. The teachers also showed students how to pick a book at their ability level, and used think-alouds to model reading strategies such as what to do when you come to an unfamiliar word. Once the teachers had demonstrated how the packs were to be used, they were rotated among students to take home and share with their families. As a result of participating in the program, many families expressed that the guidelines, as

well as the various reading and writing materials, truly helped to support meaningful literacy experiences between them and their children.

Barbour (1998/1999) also describes a program that was created to provide families with books and activities that could be read and done together at home in a relaxed fashion. Three early childhood teachers in San Antonio, Texas designed the *Home Literacy Bag* program with the intent of offering appropriate high-quality literature and interactive activities designed for extending children's literacy achievement. On average, each bag created contained four children's books that were designed around a theme such as rainbows or shapes; at least two activities were also included that extended the theme. Children were given a literacy bag on Mondays, and were told that they could keep the bag for one week. Before the children could receive a new bag, the one that they previously had needed to be returned.

Before implementing the *Home Literacy Bag* program, each teacher sent a letter to parents describing the program and a contract that had to be signed by the parent, child, and teacher. In the contract, parents promised to read regularly with their child, the child promised to treat the bags with care, and the teacher promised to manage the program and get students excited about reading. At the end of the program the teachers sent a 10-question survey home to parents that asked information about their experiences with the *Home Literacy Bags*. Out of the 97 surveys sent, 33 were returned. All of the surveys that were received were very positive. Parents were excited about the program, and realized the importance of reading and completing educational activities with their children (Barbour, 1998/1999).

In another literacy program entitled *A Partnership for Family Reading*, Handel

(1992) explained how the Montclair State College and the Newark, New Jersey public school system teamed up to develop a program that would support the literacy development of children, and strengthen the literacy skills of adults as well. As part of the program parents attended informal workshops where they received quality children's literature and learned comprehension strategies (making predictions, generating questions, and relating to personal experiences) to teach to their children. After the parents were introduced to a new reading strategy (one per workshop) they practiced the strategy in small groups and then borrowed books to take home and read with their children.

Through interviews and survey data provided by parents, Handel (1992) received tremendous support regarding the *Partnership Family Reading* program. Many parents expressed that the program helped them to develop a regular reading relationship with their child. Parents also commented that the quality of their reading experiences with their children had improved as a result of the comprehension strategies that they learned through the program's workshops.

Summary

Reading aloud to children can improve their literacy development in a variety of ways. Reading aloud helps to build fluency, decoding, vocabulary, listening, and speaking skills. Research has demonstrated that reading aloud can increase a child's oral language development and reading and listening comprehension through the discussion of story elements such as main characters, setting, plot, and problem/solution. Written language is developed when adults have children work on identifying and writing letters and words and by focusing on writing elements such as content, grammar, and

conventions. Research has also demonstrated that during read alouds, time to discuss both story elements and literacy concepts needs to be given in order to see an increase in both oral and written language development.

Finding ways to increase communication between school and home has always been a challenging task for many teachers. Research has proven that home response journals can be a very beneficial way to increase communication between teachers and parents. Through journaling parents have a better understanding about what areas their children are struggling in at school, and as a result they can offer additional support to help enhance their children's literacy development. In return, teachers learn a lot about their students' home literacy experiences, and by frequently communicating with parents, they can tailor their instruction to better meet the needs of each student.

Although many parents would like to help support the literacy instruction that their children receive at school in the home setting, they are unable to because of their lack of money and resources. Research in the past few years has helped to provide educators with many suggestions for supplying families with educational resources and activities that build on literacy lessons taught in school. One of the most popular suggestions is backpack programs, which provide quality children's books at a variety of reading levels and numerous reading and writing activities for parents and children to share together at home.

By keeping an open line of communication between home and school, and by providing parents with quality literature, educational supplies, and developmental learning strategies to use with their children, teachers will be able to promote continued reading development with all families with whom they come in contact.

Chapter Three

Design of Project

The purpose of this project was to provide families with rich quality children's literature that parallels the reading instruction taught in school and also to create a stronger bond of communication between parents and teachers.

The researcher of this project noticed that several students over the past few years have mentioned that they were unable to do their reading homework, because they did not have any reading materials at home. The researcher was interested in developing activities based on picture books that related to the themes studied in reading for students to take home and do with their families in order for them to complete their required homework each evening.

In order to develop the project, a great amount of research was reviewed from journal articles obtained through an Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) search, conducted at the Central Washington University (CWU) Library. Descriptors such as "reading aloud", "early literacy experiences on overall reading achievement", "communication between parents and teachers", and "activities to connect home and school" were used to search for the appropriate balance of research, theory, and practice. In the journals *Childhood Education* and *The Reading Teacher* several articles were published in which the authors had created their own materials based on picture books for students to use in the home setting. The researcher adapted components from the following programs including Home Literacy Bags, Three for the Road Backpacks, and the Partnership Family Reading Program in order to create activities for families to use at home in the Toppenish, Washington area.

Beside providing families with quality children's literature and activities to use in the home setting, another goal of this project was to create a stronger bond between home and school. A vast amount of research was reviewed primarily through journal articles by conducting an ERIC search at the CWU Library on ways to increase communication between parents and teachers regarding literacy development. The most popular suggestion for keeping on-going communication with parents was through journaling with them. The authors of the journal articles reviewed predominately were teachers who had started journaling projects with parents. In the *Reading Teacher* articles, the benefits for journaling with parents were discussed as well as the methods and materials used. Again, the researcher adapted the components of journaling programs described by teachers Finnegan (1997) and Shockley (1994) to create a journal to best meet the needs of families in the Toppenish area.

Chapter Four

The Project

The purpose of this project was to provide parents of first grade students in the Toppenish School District with a handbook of reading activities that parallel the *Open Court Reading Program* that is taught in the district. The materials designed in the program are intended for children and their families to use in the home so that the child's literacy development can continue outside of the school setting.

Parent-Teacher Workshops

The first component of this project is the parent/teacher workshops. In the first workshop the teacher will explain how the *Parent-Teacher Communication Journal* and *Home Literacy Bags* will work. The teacher will model the comprehension strategies that will be included in the *Home Literacy Bags*. After the comprehension strategies are modeled, parents will pair up and practice the strategies with each other using the *Open Court* leveled library books.

In the second workshop, the teacher will describe and show examples of the comprehension skills that will be included in the *Home Literacy Bags*. Then parents will have time to explore the *Home Literacy Bags* and browse through the activities. Each workshop will last approximately an hour and a half.

At the end of each workshop, parents will fill out a survey to provide the teacher with feedback on how the workshops went. Research reviewed supports the use of using workshops as a means to educate parents on how to support their child's literacy development at home. It is the author's goal that parents will continue to use the skills and strategies that they learned in the workshops with their children long after the *Home*

Literacy Bag program has ended.

Parent-Teacher Communication Journal

The next component of this project is the Parent-Teacher Communication Journal. The weekly journal consists of two parts. The first part is the Read and Respond sheet. On this sheet the parent writes the child's name, the date, and their signature confirming that they read with their child for at least twenty minutes. On the I Thought section of the sheet are the child's comments about the book. This can be written by the child or the parent. The Read and Respond form is a required homework component for grades kindergarten through fifth in the author's school.

The second part of the weekly journal is a place for parents and teachers to correspond with each other regarding the child's education, particularly their reading development. If the author thinks that the comments written in the journal need further attention, then direct contact will be made with the parent. The idea to create the journal stems based on research reviewed by the author on how to improve home-school communication. Journaling seemed like a great way to develop and keep an on-going relationship with students' parents. A letter describing both the Read and Respond form and the Parent-Teacher Communication Journal will be sent to parents before the programs are implemented.

Home Literacy Bags

The third and final component of this project is the Home Literacy Bags. The Home Literacy Bags were designed to provide reading materials based on the reading instruction taught in the school for families to use in the home setting. All of the instructions and materials are in the literacy bags, so all parents have to do is open the

bag and get started. Each Home Literacy Bag contains children's literature from the *Open Court* leveled classroom library. The leveled classroom library contains six books for each of the ten themes presented in the first grade reading program. Every teacher in the author's school has a leveled classroom library for their grade level. Within the very structured reading block there is no time to incorporate these reading materials, so the author thought that it would be a good idea to lend them to students and their families to read at home.

Each Home Literacy Bag also contains activities that focus on the comprehensions skills and strategies taught in the *Open Court* reading program. Comprehension strategies that are addressed in the activities include predicting, activating prior knowledge, asking questions, and summarizing. Comprehension skills that are addressed in the activities include classifying/categorizing, drawing conclusions, main idea/details, cause/effect, compare/contrast, and sequencing. Each lesson in the Home Literacy Bag includes the *Open Court* unit it is to be used with, and the comprehension skills and strategies that are addressed in the activity.

The materials for the activity, as well as detailed reading procedures and step-by-step instructions, are also included. On each lesson the reader will also find The Washington State Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) for reading that were met in the activities. Each week the students will be given a Home Literacy Bag to take home and complete with their parents. Students will not be given another bag until the previous one has been returned.

By providing families with reading activities that are very similar to those found in the child's reading curriculum, parents will have a deeper understanding of what skills

and concepts are taught in their child's school and know how to better help their children.

The idea to create the Home Literacy Bags stems from research the author reviewed about how to connect home and school literacy experiences. Backpack programs seemed to be a very popular and easy way to provide quality educational resources to all families.

A parent letter describing the Home Literacy Bags will be sent home before the program is implemented. Parents will also sign a "contract" that lists commitments that they will agree to abide by in order to help their child improve and strengthen their reading skills.

A Parent Handbook of
Reading and Writing
Activities For Continued
Literacy Development In
The Home

By Lisa Bangs
Toppenish School
District
Lincoln Elementary
1st Grade

Importance of Project

The intent of this project was to provide quality children's literature and educational activities similar to those received in the school setting for families to use at home. The workshops provided for parents on skills and strategies to use with children when reading aloud are helpful tools for constructing meaning that parents will use during their family reading time in the evenings. This project was also intended to create a stronger bond of communication between parents and teachers in order to better meet the needs of every child.

How To Use Table of Contents

All components of this project are intended to begin at the start of each school year. The items that are listed on the Table of Contents that follows should be used in the order in which they are presented. The workshops should be implemented first, because they set the foundation for the entire project. Within the workshops, all of the other components of the project are described in great detail. The Read and Respond Form should be implemented next because it is a homework requirement, followed by the Parent Teacher Communication Journal in order to start building a relationship with families. The last component that should be implemented is the Home Literacy Bags. If possible, it would be best to begin all of these components within the same time period, preferably within the first month of a new school year, in order to help maintain a structured classroom environment, as well as to establish routines and procedures.

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Workshop Session One

Welcome: 10 minutes

- Introductions (parents and teacher).
- Discuss the agenda for the session one workshop.
- Snacks are served.

New Programs are Described: 25 minutes

- Introduce Read and Respond Form/Parent-Teacher Communication Journal.
- Introduce Home Literacy Bags: Explain that the activities presented in the bags are possible suggestions on how to discuss the story with your child.
- Explain what the Washington State Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) are and their purpose.

Teacher Read Aloud: 15 minutes

- The teacher will read aloud a story from the *Open Court* leveled library to parents. As the teacher reads, he/she will model the following comprehension strategies: predicting, activating prior knowledge, asking questions, and summarizing.
- The teacher will point out that the comprehension strategies listed above are the strategies that parents will use with their children when they receive the Home Literacy Bags.

Parents Practice Reading Aloud: 30 minutes

- Each parent will be partnered up with another parent, they will take turns reading aloud the same book that the teacher just modeled. As the parents read the story they will practice using the comprehension strategies that were also

modeled. Each parent will have fifteen minutes to read the story and practice the strategies.

Survey and Questions: 10 minutes

- The teacher will answer any questions that parents may have at this time.
- The teacher will ask that parents fill out a short survey on how the workshop session went so improvements can be made for the next workshop.

Workshop Session Two

Welcome: 15 minutes

- Discuss the agenda for the session two workshop.
- Snacks are served.

Review of New Programs: 20 minutes

- Review how the *Read and Respond* form and the *Parent-Teacher Communication Journal* will work. Show examples of both. Examples were also shown in session one when the programs were first introduced.
- Review how the *Home Literacy Bags* will work. Explain that the activities presented in the bags are possible suggestions of how to discuss the story with your child.
- Explain the *Parent-Teacher Contract*. Allow parents time to read and sign the contract.
- Answer any questions that parents have at this time.

Comprehension Skills: 45 minutes

- The teacher will describe and show examples of the comprehension skills that will be included in the *Home Literacy Bags*. Comprehension skills include classifying/categorizing, drawing conclusions, main idea/details, cause/effect, compare/contrast, and sequencing. (To show examples, the teacher will pull activities from the *Home Literacy Bags* that demonstrate each skill.)
- Allow parents time to browse through the bags that have been assembled. Point out to parents that the comprehension skills mentioned above are the skills that they will work on with their children. The skills “lesson” is always presented in

the activity section of the *Home Literacy Bag*.

Survey and Questions: 10 minutes

- The teacher will answer any questions that parents may have at this time.
- The teacher will ask that parents fill out a short survey on how the workshop session went so improvements can be made for future workshops.

Comprehension Skills

The information provided below defines each Comprehension Skill and describes them in more detail.

1. **Classifying/Categorizing:** These skills are used to group items in different ways.

One item may fit into more than one group. This skill often makes it easier to remember and understand information. For example, in the unit *Our Neighborhood at Work*, a female dentist could be placed in a group with other doctors, but she could also be put in the same group as a pilot if that pilot is a woman.

2. **Drawing Conclusions:** Sometimes writers do not always tell us everything that we need to know about a story. Instead they give us **clues** to figure out or draw a conclusion about, why things happen or why characters behave a certain way. Drawing conclusions helps readers use their prior knowledge of concepts or text to lead them to a deeper understanding of the story. For example, if we were reading a story and saw a picture of a girl sitting on the ground holding her knee and crying based on the picture clues we might conclude that the little girl skinned her knee.

3. **Main Idea/Details:** A main idea of a selection is the one big idea that the author wants the reader to know. Details are examples that help to explain the main idea. Having children identify the main idea and details is a helpful skill to use to summarize and figure out the author's key points within a story. For example, in the unit *Our Neighborhood at Work*, the key idea in the story *Firefighters* is that firefighters have many things to do. Details listed in the story include that

firefighters answer phones, keep track of each run, monitor the radio, greet visitors, and take classes.

4. **Cause/Effect:** A **cause** is why something happened and the **effect** is what happened. Having children identify cause and effect relationships helps readers understand why or how events happen and allows them to see the whole story. It also can help them to anticipate what will happen next in a selection. For example in the story *How's the Weather?* in our *Weather* unit, the **cause** is that at night the sky is clear and there is a light breeze, the **effect** of this would be that tomorrow the weather would be cooler.
5. **Compare/Contrast:** **Comparing** means to tell how two or more things are alike or the same. **Contrasting** means to tell how two or more things are different. Having children **compare** and **contrast** allows readers to deepen their understanding of a text by noticing similarities and differences between things such as stories, characters, and events. For example in the story *Listen to the Rain* in our *Weather* unit students are asked to compare and contrast the different sounds rain makes.
6. **Sequencing:** The order in which events happen in a story is known as the **sequence**. Having children retell the details of a story in the correct sequence can help a reader keep track of story events and understand how one event is related to another.

Open Court Reading. (2002). *Our neighborhood at work*. Columbus, Ohio: SRA/McGraw-Hill Company.

Open Court Reading. (2002). *Weather*. Columbus, Ohio: SRA/McGraw-Hill Company.

Workshop Survey

1. Was the workshop beneficial to you? Please write any comments or suggestions that you may have on how to improve future workshops.

2. Was the length of the workshop:

_____ too short _____ appropriate _____ too long

3. Did the speaker present the material in a clear concise manner? Do you have any suggestions for the speaker?

4. Do you have any comments or concerns about the new programs that are being implemented (*Home Literacy Bags & Parent-Teacher Communication Journals?*)

5. What other topics would you like to see presented in future workshops?

6. Questions or Comments?

Thank you for attending this workshop and for taking time to complete the survey!

Your comments are greatly appreciated!

Dear Parents,

Today is the first day that your child will be bringing home the Read and Respond Form and the Parent-Teacher Communication Journal. To review, the Read and Respond Form is a required homework component in grades kindergarten through fifth. Each evening your child needs to read for twenty minutes. Please write the date and your signature verifying that you read with your child for at least twenty minutes. Then after the words *I thought* have your child write their comments about the story.

The Parent-Teacher Communication Journal is a place for you to write about anything that you would like to share with me. The journal will be a private on-going dialogue between you the parent, and me the teacher. If I feel the material written about in the journal needs further attention, I will contact you immediately to set up an appointment. Please send the journal to school with your child by Friday each week, and I will respond by Monday of the following week. I look forward to corresponding with you about your child's progress in school.

This is my first year journaling with parents. If you have any suggestions or comments about how to improve the journaling process, I would really appreciate your feedback. It is my goal to keep an open line of communication between home and school in order to best meet your child's needs. Thank you for your participation in the journaling project.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Bangs

Read and Respond

Name: _____

I have read for 20 minutes at home today. I read some of the time silently and the rest of the time out loud.

Date: _____ Parent Signature: _____

I thought _____

Date: _____ Parent Signature: _____

I thought _____

Date: _____ Parent Signature: _____

I thought _____

Date: _____ Parent Signature: _____

I thought _____

Date: _____ Parent Signature: _____

I thought _____

Leer y Responder

Nombre: _____

He leído 20 minutos en casa hoy. Lei parte del tiempo en silencio y el resto lei en voz alta

a:

Fecha: _____ Oyente: _____

Fecha: _____ Oyente: _____

Fecha: _____ Oyente: _____

Fecha: _____ Oyente: _____

Fecha: _____ Oyente: _____

Parent-Teacher Communication Journal

Please feel free to write about any success stories, questions, concerns, or comments that you have on this page. Please turn in your journal entry by Friday each week and I will respond by Monday of the following week.

Week of:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Dear Parents,

Today is the first day that your child will be bringing home the Home Literacy Bags. To review, a literacy bag, containing all needed materials, will be sent home with your child on Monday each week as long as the previous bag has been returned.

To begin, a good place to start would be to read the book with your child and use the before, during, and after reading questioning techniques that are listed on the lesson plan. As you read together, your child will be predicting, activating prior knowledge, asking questions, and summarizing, which are all strategies that good readers use to help them better understand the story that they are reading.

After you have read the story with your child, complete the activity that is located near the bottom of the lesson plan. All of the activities provided in the literacy bags are linked to the comprehension skills that are taught in the *Open Court* reading program. As you participate in the activities with your child, many skills will be addressed including classifying/categorizing, drawing conclusions, main idea/details, cause/effect, compare/contrast, and sequencing. All of the skills presented are designed to help your child construct meaning of the text that they are reading.

As this is my first year of using this program, I would really appreciate any suggestions or comments that you have on improving this program. Thank you very much for participating in the Home Literacy Bag Project.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Bangs

Parent-Teacher Contract

As a teacher, my primary goal is to provide your child with the necessary skills and strategies that he/she can use now and in the future to be a successful reader. I want all of my students to develop a lifelong love of reading, but I cannot do this without your help. I believe parents and teachers are partners in the child's education. To see tremendous growth in your child's reading development, we need to work together as a team. Please read the following statements and make a commitment to help your child improve and strengthen their reading skills.

As partners with my child's teacher, I pledge to do the following:

1. I will read with my child for at least twenty minutes each evening, and sign off on the Read and Respond Form, that I read with my child.
2. I will write one journal entry per week in the Parent-Teacher Communication Journal to my child's teacher by Friday.
3. I will participate in the Home Literacy Bag Program with my child. Each week we will read the literature and complete the activities provided in the bag and return the materials by Monday.
4. I will participate in the parent/teacher literacy workshops that are provided by my child's teacher.
5. I will contact my child's teacher if I have any questions or concerns about my child's reading development.

Parent's Signature: _____ Teacher's Signature: _____

***One Afternoon* by Yumi Heo**

Use With Open Court *Our Neighborhood at Work* Unit

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Classify and Categorize

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and the end of the story.
- Children will be able to classify words into categories.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.
- 2.3: The student will expand comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas in literary and informational text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- Book: *One Afternoon* by Yumi Heo
- Paper
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.
- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What do you think this story will be about?**
 - * **Why do you think so?**
 - * **By looking at the cover of the book, can you identify what type of building the main character, Minhø lives in?**

During the story:

- During the story, stop periodically and ask your child questions such as:
 - * **Why does Minhø like to run errands with his mother?**
 - * **Do you like it when we run errands together?**
 - * **Where do you enjoy going?** * **Where do you dislike going?**

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * **After Minhø and his mother finish running their errands, why does it take them so long to get home?**
 - * **Why is Minhø relieved to be back at home?**

Activity:

- Explain to your child that writers put ideas that are similar together to help readers. Then, readers organize the information as they read. They classify or

“sort” and categorize the information so that it is easier to understand.

- Take out a sheet of paper and divide it into two equal columns.

Label the left column, “Places that provide goods.”

Label the right column, “Places that provide services.”

- Explain to your child that people who provide goods and services will be your categories for today. Describe that someone who provides goods **sells** something in return for money and that someone who provides a services **does something** (such as a maid cleaning a house) for money.
- Tell your child that your going to look through the book together and classify or sort the places that Minho and his mother went to run their errands into the goods and services categories.
- Together with your child go through the story and look for places that provide goods and services. Write the places that you find underneath the correct category.

Places in the story that provide goods include: Ice cream store, pet store, and supermarket.

Places in the story that provide services include: Laundromat, beauty salon, and shoe repair store.

***Mommy Works, Daddy Works* by Marika Pedersen and Mikele Hall**

Use With Open Court *Our Neighborhood at Work* Unit

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Classify and Categorize

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and the end of the story.
- Children will be able to classify words into categories.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.
- 2.3: The student will expand comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas in literary and informational text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- Book: *Mommy Works, Daddy Works* by Marika Pedersen and Mikele Hall
- Paper
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.
- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What do you think this story will be about?**
 - * **Why do you think so?**
 - * **Can you tell what jobs the moms and dads are doing on the cover of the book?**

During the Story:

- There are many jobs that are mentioned in the story and some of them are probably not familiar to our children. When you see a job mentioned that your not sure if your child understands stop and discuss it.

Some suggestions include: Homemaker, company president, architect, musician, salesperson, and fitness instructor.

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * **Were there any jobs in the story that you would like to have when you grow up? What are they?**
 - * **What jobs mentioned in the story would you not want to have? Why?**

Activity:

- Explain to your child that readers organize information as they read by classifying or “grouping” things into categories. By grouping things into categories information becomes easier to remember and understand.
- Take out a sheet of paper and divide it into two equal columns.

Label the left column, “Indoor Jobs.”

Label the right column, “Outdoor Jobs.”

- Explain to your child that together you are going to go through the book and classify or sort the jobs that are mentioned on each page into either the indoor jobs or outdoor jobs categories.
- Together with your child go through the story and look for indoor and outdoor jobs. Write the jobs that you find underneath the correct category.

Indoor jobs included in the story are: Police officer, dance teacher, writer, homemaker, company president, chef, architect, musician, pilot, salesperson, bus driver, and fitness instructor.

Outdoor jobs included in the story are: Police officer, construction worker, homemaker, letter carrier, and farmer.

***Career Day* by Anne Rockwell**

Use With Open Court *Our Neighborhood at Work* Unit

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Drawing Conclusions

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and the end of the story.
- Children will be able to draw conclusions about the text as they listen to it.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- *Career Day* by Anne Rockwell
- Paper
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.

- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What do you think this story will be about?**
 - * **Why do you think so?**
 - * **The title of the book is *Career Day*, what does that mean?**
 - * **Have you ever had a career day at your school?**

During the Story:

- There are many jobs that are mentioned in the story and some of them are probably not familiar to our children. When you see a job mentioned that your not sure if your child understands stop and discuss it.

Some suggestions include: Plays bass in an orchestra, paleontologist, veterinarian, drives a sanitation truck, and professor.

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask questions such as:
 - * **What career do you want to have when you grow up?**
 - * **Explain how career day works at Pablo's school? What happens?**

Activity:

- Tell your child that he/she is going to practice drawing conclusions. Explain that sometimes writers don't always tell readers everything they need to know and then readers have to use clues from the story to figure things out this is called drawing conclusions.
- Take out a sheet of paper and divide it into three equal columns.

Label the left column, “What I Wonder.”

Label the middle column, “Clues from Story.”

Label the right column, “Conclusion.”

- Explain to your child that using the jobs mentioned in the story that you are going to fill out the “What I Wonder” column and the “Clues from the Story” column and then they will have to tell you what to write for the “conclusion” or the name of the job described.

- **For What I Wonder write:** What job does Pablo’s father do?

For Clues from the Story write: He drives a big bulldozer and is helping to build a new library.

Conclusion: Child may respond that Pablo’s father is a construction worker.

- **For What I Wonder write:** What job does Sam’s father do?

For Clues from the Story write: He drives a big truck that picks up garbage.

Conclusion: Child may respond that Sam’s father is a garbage man.

- **For What I Wonder write:** What job does Kate’s father do?

For Clues from the Story write: He plays the bass in an orchestra.

Conclusion: Child may respond that Kate’s father is a musician.

- **For What I Wonder write:** What job does Michiko’s mother do?

For Clues from the Story write: She writes books and draws the pictures, too.

Conclusion: Child may respond that Michiko’s mother is a writer or author.

***Communities* by Gail Saunders-Smith**

Use With Open Court *Our Neighborhood at Work* Unit

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Main Idea and Details

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
- Given the main idea of the text, children will be able to list some details from the story that support the main idea.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- Book: *Communitites* by Gail Saunders-Smith
- Main Idea/Details Worksheet: What's the Main Idea?
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.

- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:

*** What do you think this story will be about?**

*** Why do you think so?**

*** What is a community?**

During the story:

- During the story, stop periodically and ask your child questions such as:
 - * Who do you know that is a _____? Fill in the blank with the name a job that is described in the book.**

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * What jobs do we have in our community that were described in the book?**
 - * Can you think of any jobs that we have in our community that were not mentioned in the story?**

Activity:

- Tell your child that your going to work on an activity that talks about main idea and details. Explain that a main idea is one big idea that the author wants the reader to know from reading the story and that details are examples that go with the main idea.
- Take the main idea/details worksheet; what's the main idea, out of the bag and read the directions with your child.

- **On the fish's spine write "There are many people in our community that help us."** Explain to your child that this is the main idea of the story.
- As you look through the book, ask your child to look for examples of people that help us and how they help us. Write down your child's responses on the other fish bones.

Your child may include the following people: Police officers keep us safe, doctors help us stay healthy, teachers help us learn, coaches teach us sports, veterinarians keep our pets healthy, dentists fix our teeth, fire fighters save our homes, mail carriers deliver mail to our houses, and construction workers build us homes, stores, and roads.

- Explain to your child that the people and jobs that he/she described are details or examples that help explain the main idea of the story, which is "there are many people in our community that help us."

Please note: Content on this page was redacted due to copyright concerns.

Name: _____

Date: _____

What's the Main Idea?

***Night Shift Daddy* by Eileen Spinelli**

Use With Open Court *Our Neighborhood at Work* Unit

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Drawing Conclusions

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and the end of the story.
- Children will be able to draw conclusions about the text as they listen to it.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.

Materials (in the bag):

- *Night Shift Daddy* by Eileen Spinelli
- Paper
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.

- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What do you think this story will be about?**
 - * **Why do you think so?**
 - * **Explain what a night shift is.**

During the Story:

- During the story, stop periodically and ask your child questions such as:
 - * **Why does the little girl stand at her window and watch her dad leave the house?**
 - * **From the clues in the story we can see that the little girl's dad is sweeping and he has a cart of cleaning supplies nearby, what do you suppose his job is?**

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What do the little girl and her dad do when he gets home from work in the morning?**
 - * **On the very last page of the story who do you think is looking out the window? Why?**
 - * **Would you want to have a job at night when most other people are asleep? Why or why not?**

Activity:

- Tell your child that he/she is going to practice drawing conclusions. Explain that sometimes writers don't always tell readers everything they need to know and then readers have to use clues from the story to figure things out this is called drawing conclusions.

- Take out a sheet of paper and divide it into three equal columns.

Label the left column, "What I Wonder."

Label the middle column, "Clues from Story."

Label the right column, "Conclusion."

- Explain to your child that you will fill in the "What I Wonder" column and the "Clues from the Story" column and then they will have to use the clues to figure out the "conclusion."

- **For What I Wonder write:** Why does the dad leave the house at night?

For Clues from the Story write: He bundles up, carrying a bag of food and a thermal coffee cup as he waits at the bus stop.

Conclusion: Child may respond that the dad is going to work.

- **For What I Wonder write:** What is the dad's job?

For Clues from the Story write: He wears a uniform as he sweeps and he has a cart with cleaning supplies on it.

Conclusion: Child may respond that the dad is a janitor.

***My Town* by Rebecca Treays**

Use With Open Court *Our Neighborhood at Work* Unit

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Main Idea and Details

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
- Given the main idea of the text, children will be able to list some details from the story that support the main idea.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- Book: *My Town* by Rebecca Treays
- Paper
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.

- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as?
 - * **What do you think this story will be about?**
 - * **Why do you think so?**
 - * **Does our town have the same things in it as the little boy's town?**
 - * **What other things do we have in our town?**

During the Story:

- As you read the story, stop periodically and continue to compare how your town and the little boy's town are alike and different.
- As you read also check for understanding that your child knows what happens in all of the stores and businesses mentioned.

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * **If your town could only add one new store that was mentioned in the book, what would it be?**
 - * **What do you like best about living in _____? (In the blank, insert the name of your town.)**
 - * **What do you not like about living in _____? (In the blank, insert the name of your town.)**

Activity:

- Tell your child that your going to work on an activity that talks about main idea and details. Explain that a main idea is one big idea that the author wants the

reader to know from reading the story and that details are examples that go with the main idea.

- At the top of a sheet of paper write **“Main Idea: There are many places to work in the little boy’s town.”**
- Under the main idea write **“Details.”** Ask your child to list all of the businesses and places to work in the little boy’s town as you go back through the book together.
- Write down your child’s responses underneath “Details.”

Your child may include the following places: Hospital, train station, town hall, recreation center, Speed Bank, Grand Theater, school, hotel, Burger Bar, Jerry’s Juice Stop, Lo-Price Corner Store, swimming pool, Café Ole, dance club, Sunnyside, Pete’s Pet Store, Girlie Boutique, Superstore, Well’s Gifts, Figg’s Cakes, Pedd’s Boots, hot dog stand, ice cream stand, sidewalk café, and the cookie factory.

- Explain to your child that the people and jobs that he/she described are details or examples that help explain the main idea of the story, which is “there are many places to work in the little boy’s town.”

Twister* by Darleen Bailey Beard*Use With Open Court *Weather* Unit**

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing.

Comprehension Skill Used: Classify and Categorize

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and the end of the story.
- Children will be able to classify words into categories.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.
- 2.3: The student will expand comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas in literary and informational text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- Book: *Twister* by Darleen Bailey Beard
- Paper
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.
- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What do you think this story will be about?**
 - * **Why do you think so?**
 - * **The title of the book is *Twister*, what is a "twister"?**

During the Story:

- During the story, stop periodically and ask your child questions such as:
 - * **How do Lucille and Natt know that a tornado is coming?**
 - * **Where do the children go to stay safe?**
 - * **Why do they go there?**

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * **How do Lucille and Natt know that it is safe to leave the cellar?**
 - * **How do the children feel after the tornado is over?**
 - * **Describe how you felt during and/or after a big storm?**

Activity:

- Explain to your child that people, places, and things can be classified by putting them into groups. Discuss that readers classify and categorize information to help them understand and remember what they read.

- At the top of a sheet of paper write “**Category: TORNADOS.**” Explain to your child that the category you’re going to use today is tornados since that is what the story is about. Tell your child that your going to look through the book together and try to classify or sort words from the story that describe what happens during a tornado.
- Together with your child go through the story and look for words that describe a tornado. Write the words that you find underneath the category.

Words that describe a tornado in the story include: Heavy rain, dark clouds, lightning crackles, thunder shakes the windows, gully washer, hailstones, electricity goes out, strong, roaring, and twirling winds that destroy anything in their path.

***Snow is Falling* by Franklyn M. Branley**

Use With Open Court *Weather* Unit

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Cause and Effect

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
- Children will be able to identify cause and effect relationships related to weather, particularly snow.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- Book: *Snow is Falling* by Franklyn M. Branley
- Paper
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.

- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:

*** What do you think this story will be about?**

*** Why do you think so?**

*** What do you think you will learn about snow by reading *Snow is Falling*?**

During the story:

- After every few pages stop periodically and ask your child what they have learned about snow that they did not know before reading this book.
- When you see pictures of children playing in the snow stop and discuss what they are doing. Ask your child what activities he/she likes to do when it snows. Are there any new activities that they would like to try that were mentioned in the story?

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * How can snow be helpful to plants, animals, and people?**
 - * How can snow be harmful to plants, animals, and people?**

Activity:

- Explain to your child that he/she is going to practice identifying cause and effect relationships. Point out that a cause is why something happened and that an effect is what happened.
- Turn to pages 8 and 9 in the book. Reread these pages with your child.
- Then take out a sheet of paper and at the top write “**Cause:**” then skip a few lines

and write **“Effect:”** Next to the word **cause** write **“It is so cold that water vapor freezes in the air.”** Looking at pages 8 and 9 have your child identify the effect of what happens when water vapor freezes in the air. **Write your child’s response next to the word effect. (Your child may explain that snowflakes start to fall from the sky when water vapor freezes in the air).**

- Turn to page 14 in the book and reread this page with your child.
- Again, as you did before write “cause” and “effect” on the paper. **Next to the word cause write “Snow covers plants that stay in the ground all winter like a blanket.”** Ask your child to look at page 14 and identify the effect. **Write your child’s response next to the word effect. (Your child may explain that because the plants are covered the cold weather, wind, and ice cannot hurt them and that they are able to live through the winter).**
- Turn to page 17 and reread this page with your child.
- Again, as you did before write “cause” and “effect” on the paper. **Next to the word cause write, “A blanket of snow also covers the ground where animals such as mice and chipmunks live.”** Ask your child to look at page 17 and identify the effect. **Write your child’s response next to the word effect. (Your child may explain that the blanket of snow keeps the cold weather from reaching the animals and the animals can stay warm).**
- Turn to pages 24 and 25 and reread these pages with your child.
- Again, write “cause” and “effect” on the paper. **Next to the word cause write”** **Snow storms that pile the snow up high can make life difficult for people and animals.”** Ask your child to look at pages 24 and 25 and identify the effect.

Write your child's response next to the word effect. (Your child may explain that when the snow is piled high animals have trouble moving and finding food. In deep snow cars can get stuck and power lines can blow down, which makes life hard for people).

- Turn to page 26 and reread this page with your child.
- Write "cause" and "effect" on the paper. **Next to the word cause write "In the spring snow can melt too fast and there is more water than streams can carry."** Ask your child to look at page 26 and identify the effect. **Write your child's response next to the word effect. (Your child may explain that when there is more water than the streams can hold the streams overflow and houses, barns, and towns are flooded).**

Snowballs* by Lois Ehlert*Use With Open Court *Weather* Unit**

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Sequencing

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
- Children will be able to identify the sequence of events in the selection.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- Book: *Snowballs* by Lois Ehlert
- Index Cards
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.
- Browse through the first few pages of the story. Then ask your child questions

like these:

- * **What do you think this story will be about?**
- * **Why do you think so?**
- * **What do you think you will learn about weather by reading *Snowballs*?**

During the story:

- As you read every page stop and ask your child to tell you what items the children in the story are using to build their snow figures.
- After you read the page where the children make their snow dog, Spot, ask your child to tell you what they would make with snow and what items they would use to build their masterpiece.

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What things do the children build using snow?**
 - * **At the very end of the story, what happens to the things that the children have made?**
 - * **Why does this happen?**

Activity:

- Explain to your child that he/she is going to practice sequencing, which means putting the events, the things that happened in the story, in the order in which they happened.
- Explain to your child that sequencing helps a reader to keep track of events that happen in a story and also helps the reader understand how one event is related to

another.

- As you look through the book with your child, ask him/her to tell you what the children made out of the snow. As your child answers write each response on a separate index card.
- Then if the index cards are in the correct order mix them up and have your child put the cards in sequence as they happened in the story, looking through the book as you go.

A possible sequence is: Snow dad, snow mom, snow boy, snow girl, snow baby, snow cat, and snow dog.

- Then, go through the story again with your child and ask them to describe what is happening to each snow figure at the end of the story. Again, as your child answers write each response on a separate index card.
- Again, if the index cards are in the correct order mix them up and have your child put the cards in sequence as they happened, looking through the book as you go.
- **A possible sequence is:** Snow dad is shrinking, mom is mush, boy's a blob, girl is slush, baby's melting, the cat is getting small, and the dog is a puddle.

***Red Rubber Boot Day* by Mary Lyn Ray**

Use With Open Court *Weather* Unit

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Main Idea and Details

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
- Given the main idea of the text, children will be able to list some details from the story that support the main idea.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- Book: *Red Rubber Boot Day* by Mary Lyn Ray
- Paper
- Pencil

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.

- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What do you think this story will be about?**
 - * **Why do you think so?**
 - * **How do you think the boy in the story feels when it rains?**
 - * **Why do you think he feels this way?**

During the Story:

- After reading a couple pages, ask your child to list the activities that the little boy in the story likes to do when it rains outside.

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What activities does the little boy in the story like to do when it rains?**
 - * **What is the little boy's favorite rainy day activity? Why is this his favorite?**
 - * **What is your favorite rainy day activity? Why is this your favorite activity?**

Activity:

- **At the top of a sheet of paper write "Main Idea: Activities that the little boy likes to do when it rains."** Explain to your child that this is the main idea of the story or what the story is mostly about.
- **Under the main idea write "Details."** Ask your child to list the activities that the little boy enjoys doing when it rains. Write down your child's responses

underneath “Details.” If your child had difficulty listing activities go back and browse through the book together to find the answers.

Your child may include the following activities: Get crayons and draw a picture, build block cities, read, play cars, build caves, make a party with dishes, run outside, and splash around in puddles wearing red rubber boots.

- Explain to your child that the activities that he/she described are details that help explain the main idea of the story, which is what the main character enjoys doing on rainy days.

Extension

What to do:

- **On another sheet of paper write “Main Idea: Activities that _____ (insert child’s name) likes to do on a rainy day.”**
- **Under the main idea again write “Details.”** Ask your child to list the activities that he/she enjoys doing when it rains as you write down his/her responses.
- Talk about how the activities that your child enjoys doing are like the main character’s rainy day activities.
- Talk about how the activities that your child enjoys doing are different than the main characters.

***Rain* by Manya Stojic & *Snow* by Kristin Ward**

Use with Open Court *Weather* Unit

Comprehension Strategies Used: Predicting, Activating Prior Knowledge, Asking Questions, and Summarizing

Comprehension Skill Used: Compare and Contrast

Objectives:

- Children will be able to broaden their comprehension skills by discussing and answering questions about the text at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
- Children will be able to compare and contrast different types of weather.

GLEs Reading:

- 1.1: The student uses word recognition skills and strategies to read and comprehend text.
- 2.1: The student demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension.
- 2.2: The student understands and applies knowledge of text components to comprehend text.
- 2.3: The student will expand comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas in literary and informational text.

Materials (included in the bag):

- Books: *Rain* by Manya Stojic & *Snow* by Kristin Ward
- Compare & Contrast Worksheet: Shoot for the Circles
- Pencil

(This lesson has two stories that go with it. Please start with the book *Rain* by Manya Stojic).

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author's name together.
- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What do you think this story will be about?**
 - * **Why do you think so?**
 - * **Tell me everything that you know about rain.**
 - * **How do you feel when it is raining outside?**

During the Story:

- During the story, stop periodically and ask your child questions such as:
 - * **Why are the animals so excited in the story?**
 - * **What are the animals warning their neighbors about?**

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * **How could the animals tell that the rain was coming?**
 - * **Why do all of the animals enjoy the rain so much?**

Activity:

- Explain to your child that he/she is going to compare and contrast rain and snow. Explain that when you compare you describe how two things are the same and that when you contrast you describe how two things are different.
- Take the compare and contrast worksheet; shoot for the circles out of the bag and

read the directions with your child.

- **On the line in the left circle, write the word “rain”.** Go back through the story with your child and have them tell you words in the story that just describe rain.

Write the words in the left circle underneath the word rain. Tell your child that if they come across a word that they think describes **rain and snow** to have you write those words in the **middle-overlapping circle**.

Words that describe rain in the story include: Lightning flashed, thunder boomed, raindrops splashed, the animals could smell the rain, and the rain made the rivers gush and gurgle with water. Then, because it rained green grass appeared, trees sprouted new leaves, mud puddles emerged, and fresh fruit developed and ripened.

(Now, please put aside the book *Rain* and the compare and contrast worksheet and take out the book *Snow* by Kristin Ward).

Before Reading:

- Before reading the story, look at the cover of the book with your child and read the title and author’s name together.
- With your child preview the book by looking at the first few pages. Then ask your child questions such as:
 - * **What do you think this story is about?**
 - * **Tell me everything that you know about snow.**
 - * **How do you feel when it is snowing outside?**

During the story:

- During the story, stop periodically and ask your child questions such as:
 - * **Describe two things that are special about snowflakes?**

- * **Describe some activities that you can do in the snow? Do you like to do any of the activities that are mentioned in the story?**

After Reading:

- Spend a few minutes discussing the story with your child.
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - * **How does snow get on the ground?**
 - * **When does snow get on the ground?**
 - * **What is the name of the truck that moves snow when there is a lot of it on the ground?**

Activity:

- Again, take out the compare and contrast worksheet. **On the line in the right circle write “snow”.** Go back through the story with your child and have them tell you words in the story that just describe snow. Write the words in the right circle underneath the word snow. Tell your child that if they come across a word that they think describes **rain and snow** to have you write those words in the **middle-overlapping circle.**

Words that describe snow in the story include: Snowflakes, white, frozen water, only snows when it's cold outside, snowplows move snow, you can build things with snow like snowmen and igloos, and you can go for a ride in the snow.

- **Now, go through both books and find things that are the same about rain and snow and put them in the middle overlapping circle.**

Words that describe both rain and snow include: fall from clouds in the sky, they are both cold and wet, raindrops and snowflakes are different shapes and sizes, it can rain

and snow a little or a lot, and you can see, hear, feel, and taste rain and snow.

Please note: Content on this page was redacted due to copyright concerns.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Shoot for the Circles

First Grade *Open Court* Leveled Library List

Unit 1: Let's Read

Bradby, Marie. (1995). *More Than Anything Else*.

Finchler, Judy. (1995). *Miss Malarkey Doesn't Live in Room 10*.

Hoban, Tana. (1983). *I Read Signs*.

Mathers, Petra. (2000). *A Cake for Herbie*.

Nikola, Lisa. (1997). *America: My Land, Your Land, Our Land*.

Winch, John. (1996). *The Old Woman Who Loved to Read*.

Unit 2: Animals

Dunphy, Madeleine. (1999). *Here is the African Savanna*.

Guarino, Deborah. (1989). *Is Your Mama a Llama?*

Kajikawa, Kimiko. (1999). *Sweet Dreams: How Animals Sleep*.

Munoz-Ryan, Pam. (1997). *A Pinky is a Baby Mouse and other Baby Animal Names*.

Winters, Kay. (1997). *Wolf Watch*.

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Chapter Five

Summary

The purpose of this project was to provide parents of first grade students in the Toppenish School District with a handbook of reading activities that parallel the *Open Court Reading Program* that is used in the district. The materials designed in the program are intended for children and their families to use in the home so that the child's literacy development can continue outside of the school setting. By providing families with quality children's literature and activities that focus on literacy development, it is hoped this will increase the likelihood that parents and their children will spend more time at home participating in literacy activities.

Besides providing families with quality children's literature and educational resources another major goal of this project is to create a stronger bond of communication between parents and teachers through the parent-teacher communication journal. The journal is designed to give parents a place to voice their successes, concerns, questions, and comments that they have about their child's education. Through this weekly on-going communication, parents will have a better understanding of what skills and concepts their child is struggling with so that way they can offer additional support to help enhance their child's literacy development, and teachers will be able to tailor their instruction to suit each child's individual needs. By developing an on-going partnership with parents, educators will have a better idea of how to meet the needs of their students and their families.

In order to explain the rationale, set-up, and routines for the parent-teacher communication journal and the home literacy bags workshops will be part of the

implementation process. Another goal of the workshops is to explain, demonstrate, and practice using the comprehension skills and strategies that are taught in the first grade *Open Court* reading curriculum, because the home literacy bag activities are designed around these skills and strategies. Educating parents on how to work with their children empowers them with the knowledge and skill that they need to create meaningful literacy experiences with their family.

Conclusions

The research reviewed in chapter two regarding the importance of reading aloud to children and the positive impact that it has on a child's literacy development is something that the author truly believes in and thinks is often overlooked. In the education system there never seems to be enough time to devote to daily read alouds, because the required curriculum and other programs that are implemented are very time consuming. In the home setting, many families are unable to provide their children with quality educational resources. It is the author's goal to provide families with quality children's literature and literacy activities that parallel the instruction taught in the classroom that they can work on at home as a family. Parents will have opportunities to attend workshops presented by their child's teacher where they will learn several comprehension skills and strategies that they can use with their children at home. Research demonstrated the importance of providing quality literature to families through literacy bag programs as a means to increase literacy development in the home setting.

Much research has also been conducted on how to increase communication between home and school. Researchers suggest that journaling with parents can be an easy and effective way to develop a partnership between home and school. Besides

providing parents with educational resources, the author plans to implement a weekly parent-teacher communication journal. The journal will be the primary method of communicating with parents regularly. As the need arises, the author also plans to communicate with parents through classroom letters, telephone calls, and individual conferences regarding their child's educational development.

Recommendations

One purpose of this project was to provide families with educational materials to use in the home setting that parallel the reading instruction taught in school through home literacy bags. The other major purpose of this project was to create a stronger bond of communication between parents and teachers through the parent-teacher communication journal. However, this project has not been implemented at the present time. The author plans to implement this project at the first grade level in the Toppenish School District.

Although this project was created to use at a first grade level with the *Open Court* reading program it could be adapted to use at any grade level. Educators at other grade levels could design lessons/literacy bags around the *Open Court* leveled library books for their students. Literacy bags could also be designed around quality children's literature instead of a specified reading program. Depending on the needs of families in their community, educators may also want to provide the materials to be sent home in a language other than English.

After this project has been implemented, this writer will make adjustments and changes as necessary. Feedback provided from parent surveys and journal entries will guide this writer in making changes to better suit the needs of all families.

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