Community Literacy

Rationale, Research and Recommendations
For
Battle Creek, Michigan

December 15, 2003

Report produced on behalf of the United Way of Greater Battle Creek in conjunction with the Battle Creek Literacy Planning Group and funded under an "Expert In Residence" grant from W.K Kellogg Foundation by:

2410 Newport Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Ph: 734-623-4952
E-mail: jaconnor@umich.edu;
jcrubicon@aol.com
www.comnet.org/collaboratorycs

Prepared by The Collaboratory

Community Literacy
Rationale, Research and Recommendations
Battle Creek, Michigan

Table of Contents

Introduction: What does the Research Say?

Why Do We Need Community Literacy?

Recent results of the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) follow long-standing patterns, which reveal that students' reading proficiency has remained widely varying [1]. Although 63% of fourth graders in the United States demonstrate *basic-performance* in reading, less than one-third achieve proficient levels. More importantly, fully one-third of students lack fundamental knowledge and basic skills in reading by the end of fourth grade. Moreover, long-standing trends and the most recent NAEP results show that children from minority ethnic/racial groups (African American and Hispanic) and children living in poverty achieve substantially lower scores overall than do their majority and more affluent peers (29 and 28 points respectively). Less than half of these children exhibit basic-performance in reading. In Battle Creek, we see wide variability across schools and neighborhoods in Michigan 4th grade MEAP reading scores, which reflect nation-wide trends (See Figure 1). In one high poverty neighborhood, 90% of children met or exceeded state standards for reading whereas in another, only 46% met state standards. The goal of community literacy is to bring literacy levels in all neighborhoods to high levels.

What Contributes to Variability in Literacy?

Children living in poverty, children from some minority ethnic groups, and some children for whom English is a second language begin school with substantially weaker language and early literacy skills, on average, than do their more affluent majority peers [2-4]. Research suggests that language and literacy skills have important and reciprocal influences on children's reading development [4, 5]. Children who begin school with weaker language and early reading skills are less likely to experience academic success over the course of their school career [4, 6-9]. Moreover, recent research indicates that the effect of instruction in reading depends on these early language and literacy skills[10-13]. Thus, children's language and early reading levels contribute to their school achievement and may moderate the effects of poverty and race/ethnicity [11, 14].
Too often education reforms, designed to improve students' reading achievement, focus on distal (secondary) sources of influence, such as vouchers, charter schools, and class size, and not on proximal sources of influence, like family home literacy environment, parenting practices, preschool opportunities and classroom practices [15]. Yet more proximal variables appear to have relatively greater effect on children's reading development than do distal variables [11, 14].
Research reveals multiple points of impact, which include: (1) increasing child school-readiness by supporting effective parenting and stronger home learning environments; (2) offering more effective preschool and daycare learning experiences; (3) promoting use of effective classroom practices; (5) improving teacher education – both pre- and post-service for preschool and elementary school teachers; (6) allocating resources where they are needed. Underlying all of these is the clear need for effective school-community-parent partnerships.

How Children Learn to Read

Many children fail to reach proficient levels of reading because they do not receive the amount and type of instruction they need when they need it [11, 12, 16]. Research indicates that, unlike spoken language, for many children, reading must be taught directly and explicitly [17, 18].

Research over the past decades has revealed important insights into this process [9, 10, 17, 19] and the fundamental role skilled reading plays in literacy writ large. The basic process of reading includes mapping the language we speak onto written text and grasping the underlying meaning. Excellent readers do this fluently [20-22]. Yet without a complete grasp of how the sounds we speak map onto the letters we see, and how the words and sentences comprised of these letters then map onto the language we speak, children may not learn to read. This metalinguistic knowledge is learned primarily when explicitly taught [23]. There is some evidence that some parents may be making these metalinguistic concepts more salient for their children through storybook reading as well as through the word and letter games they play with their children [24]. Other children gain the concepts in kindergarten or first grade when explicitly taught [25]. Children without adequate metalinguistic awareness have great difficulty learning to read [16]. Thus, the basic skills of decoding – understanding letter-sound correspondence, phonological awareness, and strategies to decode unfamiliar words – form the foundation for literacy development.

Fluent reading and reading comprehension are also important aspects of successful reading. New findings on the foundations of reading reveal that, especially for young children, oral language and early literacy are intricately woven. There is evidence, however, that the associations between oral language and early reading may be fairly specific [26]; certain skills, such as letter/word identification, vocabulary, and phonological awareness, appear to predict later decoding skills [27]; but others, such as complex language and the ability to tell and understand stories, predict later reading comprehension [28-30]. Complex oral language tasks (including narrative tasks), which predict reading comprehension, appear to be somewhat distinct from the essentially word level measures (such as phonological awareness, letter/word identification, and vocabulary) that predict decoding. These tasks assess mastery of more mature morphosyntactic forms, language comprehension, and pragmatic use of literate language. For example, to do well on a pretend storybook reading task, children must be familiar with the kinds of discourse that Western society associates with storybook reading, such as the more mature grammar and distinct prosody and structure of storybook language. These complex linguistic and pragmatic abilities may be very important skills for emerging readers to master because they appear to provide a foundation for developing reading comprehension skills. Watson [31] suggests, “Oral language may have a broad-based influence on the acquisition of competence that is necessary to succeed in the institutions of a literate culture. It gives children an understanding of how to recruit their knowledge in ways that are relevant to text-based understanding (p. 52)” Further, if one considers the definition of reading comprehension offered by the RAND Reading Study Group [8], then complex language skills and pragmatic mastery of literate communication may provide the foundation for developing reading comprehension skills. Just as with phonological awareness, these metalinguistic skills must be mapped onto written text – the child learns that combinations of words and morphemes in sentences and paragraphs carry the meaning of ideas, and comprehension of these ideas are enhanced by an explicit understanding of the rule-based patterns of story organization and grammar.

However, children enter school varying greatly in their oral language and early reading skills – including their vocabulary, phonological and metalinguistic awareness, use of narrative structures and complex grammar, and their notion of what the acts of reading and writing should mean; they also vary substantially in their letter and word recognitions skills [3, 4, 32-34]. Thus, even before children begin kindergarten, the seeds of reading success have been sown. Thus, as we seek to improve literacy levels throughout the Battle Creek community, research on the sources

of influence on children's literacy development before they begin school, as well as once they start school, are revealing.

Increasing child school-readiness by supporting effective parenting and stronger home and school learning environments: Parent-Preschool Community Partnerships

Recent research suggests that high-quality early learning environments at home and in school help children build oral language and early literacy skills and strongly predict positive academic outcomes on a wide range of measures, from language and literacy to problem solving (Morrison et al., 2003). The role of early education in preparing children to take advantage of public school learning opportunities must be acknowledged within an effective community literacy initiative. The children enter their first-grade classrooms with six years of experience with adults and older children helping them learn about the world; the quality of these experiences has a strong impact on the degree to which they are prepared to absorb the material presented by their teachers once they begin formal school [35]. Research indicates that parents and caregivers who provide a wide variety of language and literacy materials and activities, such as book readings, conversations, and discussion of letters and word sounds, equip their children for success in the classroom. Further, parents who foster an encouraging, supportive environment for language and literacy discovery provide children with the motivation to value and to succeed at reading [4, 36].
Many children attend preschool, kindergarten, or other educational institutions, which affect the vocabulary and early reading skills they bring to school [37]. Preschool instruction has been shown to build both receptive and expressive vocabulary and has been especially effective in preparing at-risk children to succeed [4, 38]. Effective teachers make vocabulary meaningful and accessible to children by highlighting target words during book readings, fostering conversation about those words throughout the day, and creating activities in which children can interact with the props or other depictions of the words [39]. Significantly, children who lack such early word-learning experiences at home and/or at school may develop deficits that persist throughout school [40].
With regard to decoding, most parents and preschool curricula do not specifically address this complex skill. However, early home and school education lays an important foundation for the eventual mastery of this task. At a very basic level, parents and teachers who use rhymes and other word games can strengthen children's phonological awareness, helping them to attend to and manipulate the particular sounds in words [41]. Adults who build knowledge of letter names [42] help children to identify and label alphabetic symbols. Finally, discussing the role of print in communicating meaning prepares children to recognize that written words convey information in systematic ways. Together, these and other skills prepare children to connect the sounds and forms of letters of the alphabet, to distinguish these units from one another, and to appreciate the link to written symbols, all of which comprise the essential groundwork for children's subsequent grasp of decoding.

Exposure to high-quality early learning environments can be especially important for children at risk for reading or school failure, such as those from communities with large low-income or racial/ethnic-minority populations. A disproportionately large number of children from these environments enter school without the skills necessary for success (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Further, the gap between these students and their more prepared peers only widens over time [43]. A number of studies, such as those evaluating the Head Start program, the Perry Preschool project, and the Abecedarian curriculum, indicate that early academic interventions can attenuate many of the effects of these risk factors and foster significant cognitive and social development that is stable over time. Further, analyses of the financial costs

and benefits of such programs suggest that each dollar expended on early intervention is returned seven-fold [44, 45].

Not surprisingly, research indicates that children draw the greatest benefit from early schooling when teachers and parents are able to bridge the gap between the classroom and the home [38]. When all the important adults in children's lives share information, children receive a coordinated, seamless introduction to important concepts and practices in multiple settings; moreover, parents and teachers connect with one another to form a strong network that will support children's learning through the years. Community literacy efforts can nurture and provide ongoing support for these school-home links.

The importance of early learning at home and school, before children start school, encourage Community Literacy strategies that promote and integrate these two forums for education. Establishment of high-quality preschool and kindergarten programs, which are affordable for all children and families, in conjunction with parent support and education, may improve children's learning throughout their school career.

Further, focusing resources on pre-school teacher and parent training, so that educators in both realms of a child's life understand the logic and the logistics of research-based instruction and assessment, may lead to stronger child outcomes throughout their school career. Additionally, policy should strive to engage families and teachers as partners in the educational process. Little research has investigated strategies that will bridge the gap between home and school in this modern age. New circumstances, such as the increase in working and/or single parents, as well as the explosion in hi-tech information exchange, encourage revision of classic techniques such as the evening PTA meeting. By evaluating the strengths and needs of children's many educators and committing funds to the creation of carefully targeted home-school-community connection strategies, Battle Creek stakeholders can better ensure that children are provided effective and equitable opportunities to learn.

Once Children Start School – Focusing on Effective Instruction

Variability in Instruction

As Battle Creek MEAP scores reveal, there is wide variability both among and within neighborhood schools in student reading outcomes. Part of this variability is, most likely, related to the effectiveness of the reading instruction that students receive. One reason that instruction may not be effective for many children is that they do not receive enough of it. As early as the 1970s, studies revealed startling disparities in the amount of instruction children received throughout the school year, which had an effect on how much children learned [46, 47]. Although the lengths of the school day and year placed upper limits on the amount of time available for student learning, within each day, the efficient use of time varied greatly among classrooms. For example, a study of kindergarten and first grade classrooms within one school district [48] revealed that, overall, 50% of the school day in kindergarten and almost 20% in first grade was spent in non-academic activities (i.e., free time, transitions, lunch, and disruptions). In a separate study, 36% of first graders' days were spent in non-academic activities [49, 50]. In contrast, only 15% of the school day in China was spent in non-academic activities.

Not only are there cross-cultural differences, but there are differences between classrooms within the same school district [48, 51, 52]. For example, in one study, the amount of time spent in non-academic activities varied from as much as an hour and a half to as little as 40 minutes in first grade classrooms in a Midwestern city [48]. This translates to a staggering 6.4 hours per week or 230 hours per school year disparity in the amount of instruction children in the same school district received. These differences were consistent across subjects – teachers who spent more time in language arts also spent more time in math and science. And they were consistent from year to year – amounts of academic instruction time teachers provided in one year predicted the amount of instruction time teachers provided the next year. A number of factors contribute to the variability in the amount of instruction children receive. Teachers' skill managing the course of the school day and maintaining the engagement of their students is clearly one important factor [53].

Another reason reading instruction varies in efficacy may be the long-standing controversy regarding the best way to teach children how to read [54]. In essence, the debate has centered on the efficacy of Phonics or code-based instruction versus Whole Language or meaning-based instruction [17]. Code-based instruction focuses on explicit and systematic training in decoding including letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, phonics, and phonological awareness. Meaning-based instruction views learning to read as a more natural process [55] that requires consistent experience with meaningful text within a literature-rich environment [56]. Unfortunately, as Rayner, et al., [17] note, "… the continued dichotomy of reading philosophies produces fragmented instruction in classrooms rather than the integrated balance of skills and meaningful applications that research suggests are needed to produce successful readers" (p. 61). Evidence accumulating systematically over the past twenty years has documented that a combination of methods may better support children's developing literacy. Most children appear to develop stronger reading skills when provided explicit decoding instruction in combination with meaningful reading activities [17, 57, 58]. Consequently, there is a growing trend toward "balanced" instruction in early reading instruction [59, See also, 60, 61].

Yet, the promotion of balanced instruction leaves open the question of what might be the best combination of basic skills instruction and meaningful reading activities. An implicit and largely

untested assumption in much literacy research is that specific instructional practices will be equally effective for all children. This universalistic view can be found in the literature supporting meaning-based instruction,[56] as well as that promoting code-based instruction [62]. However, child Aptitude by Treatment Interaction research (ATI), first introduced in the 1970s, revealed that these interactions may be important [63]. Our research and others has revealed that the efficacy of instructional practices vary depending on the skill level of the student [10, 64]. For example, Foorman and her colleagues [12] found that children with weaker phonological awareness at the beginning of the school year demonstrated greater growth in decoding skills in classrooms using a code-based approach than did children with stronger phonological awareness. Juel and Minde-Cupp [65] found an analogous reading group by classroom type interaction. In their study, children who started first grade with weaker reading skills (i.e., low reading group) made more progress in classrooms where there was greater emphasis on word recognition instruction. In contrast, children with stronger reading skills at the beginning of first grade (i.e., middle or high group) achieved greater reading progress in the classroom where the teacher emphasized a literature-rich environment with less emphasis on code-based instruction. Additionally, the students in the classroom contribute to the learning environment in important ways [11, 14]. For example, children with stronger decoding skills tended to have more positive interactions with their first grade teacher [14].

Providing Individualized Instruction – Can It Be Done?

The implication of these results is that by understanding each student's strengths and weaknesses and mapping them to specific amounts and types of instruction, classroom instruction can be more effective. The challenge, of course, is that individualizing instruction inserts a level of complexity into designing and implementing effective classroom instruction, especially if teachers' classrooms include many students with very different skill levels, cultures, and languages. A recent series of studies [58, 66, 67] examined common elements of schools that "beat-the-odds" with important insights for individualizing instruction. Beat-the-odds schools were schools that demonstrated strong student growth on important literacy outcomes even though the students attending these schools lived in high poverty families and neighborhoods. These studies consistently identified four characteristics of schools that effectively supported reading outcomes for children at risk for academic failure. These indicators included: (1) time on task and individualized instruction; (2) ongoing use of child assessment to guide classroom practice; (3) use of small groups for instruction; and (4) effective teachers.

Time on Task and Individualized Instruction

Across studies [66-68], a consistent finding was that the more time children spent learning to read, the faster their reading skills grew. Efforts toward individualized instruction were also a hallmark of effective teachers and schools. Wharton-McDonald and collegues [67] noted that the effective teachers used "some mixture of direct skills instruction and 'authentic' whole-language-type activities" (p. 111). If time on task is coupled with individualized instruction approaches, then the chances of a particular child experiencing effective instruction increases. In fact, Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, and their colleagues [67] observed that the most effective teachers in their study "provided individualized instruction and review for student who needed it" (p. 114).

Ongoing use of Child Assessment to Guide Classroom Practice

In schools that beat-the-odds [58], children achieved greater growth in literacy skills in the schools that incorporated some form of systematic internal assessment of students' progress. Individualized instruction can best be implemented if there is a good grasp of children's strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, externally administered test results are typically not delivered in a timely fashion nor frequently enough to be used to guide instructional practices. Further, many teachers have negative beliefs about testing and have limited training and experience designing and administering assessments that might be useful in guiding practice [69]. Professional development can provide training in assessment and psychometrics designed to promote teachers' understanding and appropriate use of assessment. Teachers can learn how to monitor their students' literacy development using initial and ongoing assessment results, Indeed, the MLPP (Michigan Literacy Progress Profile) was designed with this in mind.

Use of Small Groups for Instruction

One of the most difficult aspects of individualized instruction is implementation. One method for providing individualized instruction is through the use of small groups based on children's abilities. In effective schools, researchers observed that a common element among accomplished teachers was the use of small-group instruction based on specific learning goals [58, 67]. Thus, small groups combined with monitoring students' progress may be one effective method of providing individualized instruction.

Effective Teachers

> Teachers who obtained high achievement were masterful classroom managers. These teachers managed not only student behavior – preventing misbehavior before it could occur – but time, activities, student interactions, and outside resource people as well. Their management efforts clearly involved both planned and impromptu decisions… The high-achievement teachers were consistently well prepared. They knew what they wanted to teach, their lessons were well planned, and they always had their materials ready and close at hand" [67, p. 120].

Further, effective teachers followed predictable patterns of activities but remained flexible and would pursue other topics that were relevant. And they would provide mini-lessons when needed. In other words, effective teachers were able to provide substantial amounts of time in relevant activities. Moreover, they were able to use ongoing assessment to monitor students' progress and were able to tailor instruction to children's needs through flexible small group instruction and mini-lessons. "The most effective teachers… managed, on average, to engage virtually all of their students in the work of the classroom (p. 158)" [58, p. 158]. Less effective teachers "struggled to complete morning routines and begin instruction… explaining that their morning was 'chaotic' often attributing this to some unexpected change in routine (p. 120)" [67, p. 120]. Unfortunately within these studies, only about one-half of the teachers in schools that beat the odds were identified as effective. The percentage was lower, about 30%, within less effective schools.

As we think about community-school partnerships, the responsibility for providing effective instruction falls mainly on schools. However, support for schools and teachers throughout the community for new initiatives, keeping an open mind as new teaching strategies are learned and implemented will be important. Moreover, support through community tutoring

and summer school programs will facilitate the move toward more individualized instruction with the goal of all students becoming proficient readers, writers, and learners.

Effective School-Community-Parent Partnerships and Allocating Resources Where They are Needed

Children living in poverty are less likely to experience early home and preschool environments that nourish their literacy development. Furthermore, they are more likely to attend schools where teachers are less qualified and instruction is less effective [14]. The relation between socioeconomic status (SES) and school quality is documented across grades [2, 70]. For example, research that examines the effect of preschool experiences on students' outcomes reveals an SES effect. Children whose mothers have more years of education tend to be enrolled in higher quality preschool programs [37]. Children living in high poverty neighborhoods are less likely to have highly qualified classroom teachers [71]. One probable explanation is that the funding-system within most states tends to promote alignment of family, community, and school resources. School districts with weaker tax-bases (property and income tax) tend to have under-resourced schools. The neighborhood social capital available to schools is also important to consider [72]. Thus the resources that the community brings to schools can have an important effect on student outcomes [73-75]. Efforts at improving literacy using a community systems approach may prove very effective [76].

Moreover, the current career path for teachers appears to be one of movement toward more affluent school districts and more highly-skilled students [14, 77, 78]. Thus, as teachers become more qualified to teach, they are more likely to leave low-income, under-funded, and failing schools and move to districts where they can earn higher salaries, have better facilities, and teach more motivated students.

However, "combat pay" solutions (i.e., paying teachers in low-income districts more) may prove ineffective because incentive pay policies can have unintended consequences [79]. Furthermore, the notion of "combat pay" implies that students may not be teachable, which is a dangerous assumption. Changing distal variables is unlikely to increase the number of high quality schools [80]. More effective ways to encourage teachers to stay in failing schools, include impacting proximal, rather than distal, sources of influence.

Classroom environment and students' school-readiness are proximal variables and both exert a greater effect on students' outcomes, in our research, than do teacher qualifications and parent SES [14]. Investing resources in effective preschool and family interventions can contribute to a classroom environment where students arrive ready to learn. This creates a more positive working atmosphere for teachers. Additionally, providing teachers with support and professional development that supports effective classroom practices will operate to improve teachers' working conditions, success with their students, and incentives to stay in more challenging schools [78]. Job satisfaction is an important factor is predicting teacher retention [81]. In this way, the system pulls resources (qualified and effective teachers) in the desired direction (toward the students that need them the most) rather than forcing resources to re-distribute [82]. Good examples of effective teaching in low-income schools include programs developed by Littky [83] and in schools that beat-the-odds [58, 67]. In each case, it is satisfaction with effective teaching and making a difference in students' lives, rather than salary, that keep teachers in the schools.

How can we take this information and create a meaningful and effective Community Literacy plan?

"Solutions and Outcomes are Everything"

In the next section – "Best Practices" – we present an overarching structure to the process, based on the research we have just reviewed, and then present other community initiatives that have successfully forged community literacy initiatives. One key part of any effective literacy initiative is an unrelenting focus on outcomes – always asking, are neighborhood literacy levels increasing according to objective measures? Simply focusing on providing particular kinds of service for certain numbers of children will not effect the change Battle Creek envisions.

References

1. NAEP. *The nation's report card: Reading highlights.* Washington DC: NCES; 2003. NCES 2004-452.

2. Jencks C, Phillips M. *The Black-White test score gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute; 1998.

3. Entwisle DR, Alexander KL, Olson LS. *Children, schools, and inequality*. Boulder CO: Westview Press; 1997.

4. Snow CE, Burns MS, Griffin P, eds. *Preventing reading difficulties in young children.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 1998. Council NR, ed.

5. Whitehurst GJ, Lonigan CJ. Emergent literacy: Development from prereaders to readers. In: Neuman SB, Dickinson DK, eds. *Handbook of early literacy research.* New York: The Guilford Press; 2001:11-29.

6. Loban W. *Language development: Kindergarten through grade twelve*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English; 1976.

7. Snow CE. Literacy and language: Relationships during the preschool years. *Harvard Educational Review.* 1983;53:165-189.

8. Snow CE. *Reading for understanding.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Education and the Science and Technology Policy Institute; 2001.

9. Neuman SB, Dickinson DK. *Handbook of early literacy research*. New York: Guilford Press; 2001.

10. Connor CM, Morrison FJ, Katch EL. Beyond the Reading Wars: The effect of classroom instruction by child interactions on early reading. *Scientific Studies of Reading.* in press.

11. Morrison FJ, Bachman HJ, Connor CM. *Improving literacy in America: Lessons from research*: Yale University Press; in press.

12. Foorman BR, Francis DJ, Fletcher JM, Schatschneider C, Mehta P. The role of instruction in learning to read: Preventing reading failure in at risk children. *Journal of Educational Psychology.* 1998;90:37-55.

13. Juel C, Minden-Cupp C. Learning to read words: Linguistic units and instructional strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly.* 2000;35(4):498-492.

14. Connor CM, Son S-H, Morrison FJ, Hindman A. Teacher qualifications, classroom practices, and family characteristics: Complex effects on first graders' language and early reading. in review.

15. Cohen DK, Raudenbush SW, Ball DL. Resources, instruction, and research. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis.* 2003;25(2):119-142.

16. Vellutino FR, Scanlon DM, Sipay ER, et al. Cognitive profiles of difficult to remediate and readily remediated poor readers: Early intervention as a vehicle for distinguishing between cognitive and experiential deficits as basic causes of specific reading disability. *Journal of Educational Psychology.* 1996;88(4):601-638.

17. Rayner K, Foorman BR, Perfetti CA, Pesetsky D, Seidenberg MS. How psychological science informs the teaching of reading. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest.* 2001;2(2):31-74.

18. Langenberg DN. *National reading panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.* Washington DC: NICHD; December 2000. NIH Pub. No 00-4754.

19. Connor CM, Morrison FJ, Katch EL. Beyond the Reading Wars: exploring the effect of child - instruction interaction on growth in early reading. submitted.
20. Magliano J, Trabasso T, Graesser A. Stratigic Processing Durring Comprehension. *American Psychological Association.* December 1999;91(4):615-629.
21. Stanovich KE. Constructivism in Reading Education. *Journal of Special Education.* 1994;28(3):259-274.
22. Magliano J, Trabasso T, Graesser A. Strategic processing during comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology.* December 1999;91(4):615-629.
23. Schribner S, Cole M. Literacy without schooling. *Harvard Educational Review.* 1978;48(4):448-461.
24. Senechal M, LeFevre J-A, Thomas EM, Daley KE. Differential effects of home literacy experiences on the development of oral and written language. *Reading Research Quarterly.* 1998;33(1):96-116.
25. Bryant P, Maclean M, Bradley L. Rhyme, language, and children's reading. *Applied Psycholinguistics.* 1990;11:237-252.
26. Connor CM. *Preschool children and teachers talking together: The influence of child, family, teacher, and classroom characteristics on children's developing literacy* [Dissertation]. Ann Arbor: Educational Studies, University of Michigan; 2002.
27. Catts HW, Fey ME, Zhang X, Tomblin JB. Estimating the risk of future reading difficulties in kindergarten children: A research-based model and its clinical implementation. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools.* 2001;32:38-50.
28. Connor CM, Craig HK, Washington JA. Oral language predictors of reading achievement for African American students. Paper presented at: American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association; November 14-16, 2001; New Orleans.
29. Snow CE, Dickinson DK. Social sources of narrative skills at home and at school. *First Language.* 1990;10:87-103.
30. Rego LLB, Bryant PE. The connection between phonological, syntactic and semantic skills and children's reading and spelling. *European Journal of Psychology of Education.* 1993;8(3):235-246.
31. Watson R. Literacy and oral language: Implications for early literacy acquisition. In: Neuman SB, Dickinson DK, eds. *Handbook of early literacy research*. New York: The Guilford Press; 2001:43-53.
32. Morrison FJ, Connor CM. Understanding schooling effects on early literacy. *Journal of School Psychology.* 2002;40(6):493-500.
33. McClelland M, Kessenich, M., Morrison, F.J. Pathways to early literacy: The complex interplay of chlid, family and sociocultural factors. In: Reese HW, ed. *Advances in child developmental behavior*. New York: Academic Press; 2003.
34. Christian K, Morrison FJ, Bryant FB. Predicting kindergarten academic skills: Interactions among child care, maternal education, and family literacy environments. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly.* 1998;13(3):501-521.
35. Bowman BT, Donovan MS, Burns MS. *Eager to learn*. Washington DC: National Academy Press; 2001.
36. Morrow LM. *Literacy development in the early years*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon; 1997.
37. NICHD-ECCRN. Child-care structure - process - outcome: Direct and indirect effects of child-care quality on young children's development. *Psychological Science.* 2002;13(2):199-206.

38. Lonigan CJ, Whitehurst GJ. Relative efficacy of parent and teacher involvement in a shared book-reading intervention for preschool children from low income backgrounds. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly.* 1998;13(2):263-290.
39. Wasik BA, Bond MA. Beyond the pages of a book: Interactive book reading and language development in preschool classrooms. *Journal of Educational Psychology.* 2001;9(2):243-250.
40. Hart B, Risley TR. *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing; 1995.
41. Ehri LC, Nunes SR, Willows DM, Schuster BV, Yaghoub-Zadeh Z, Shanahan T. Phonemic awareness instruction helps children learn to read: Evidence form the National Reading Panel's meta-analysis. *Reading Research Quarterly.* 2001;36(3):250-287.
42. Roberts TA. Effects of alphabet-letter instruction on young children's word recognition. *Journal of Educational Psychology.* 2003;95(1):41-51.
43. Alexander KL, Entwisle DR, Horsey C. From first grade forward: Early foundations of high school dropout. *Sociology of Education.* 1997;70(2):87-107.
44. Barnett SW. Long-term effects of early childhood programs on cognitive and school outcomes. *Future of Children.* 1995;5(3):25-50.
45. Reynolds AJ, Temple JA, Robertson DL, Mann EA. Age 21 cost-benefit analysis of the Title I Chicago child-parent centers. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis.* Winter 2003;24(4):267-303.
46. Durkin D. A classroom-observation study of reading instruction in kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly.* 1987;2:275-300.
47. Brophy J. Teacher behavior and its effects. *Journal of Educational Psychology.* 1979;71(6):733-750.
48. Freese Kienstra M, Morrison FJ, Griffin E, Williams S. Classroom instruction in kindergarten and first grade: What happened in school today? in review. Located at: Classroom Instruction.
49. Stevenson HW, Stigler JW. *The learning gap*. New York: Summit Books; 1992.
50. Stevenson HW, Stigler JW. *The learning gap*.
51. Meyer LA, Linn RA, Hastings CN. Teacher stability from morning to afternoon and from year to year. *American Educational Research Journal.* 1991;28(4):825-847.
52. Pressley M, Wharton-McDonald R, Mistretta-Hapston J, Echevarria M. Literacy instruction in 10 fourth and fifth grade classrooms in upstate New York. *Scientific Studies of Reading.* 1998;2(2):159-194.
53. Brophy JE, Good TL. Teacher behavior and student achievement. In: Wittrock MC, ed. *Handbook of research on teaching*. 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan; 1986.
54. Ravich D. It is time to stop the war. In: Loveless T, ed. *The great curriculum debate: How should we teach reading and math*. Washington DC: Brookings Institutional Press; 2001.
55. Goodman K. Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. In: Singer H, Ruddell RB, eds. *Theoretical models and processes of reading*. Newark DE: International Reading Association; 1970:259-272.
56. Dahl KL, Freppon PA. A comparision of innercity children's interpretations of reading and writing instruction in the early grades in skills-based and whole language classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly.* 1995;30(1):50-74.

57. Guthrie JT, Schafer WD, Huang C-w. Benefits of opportunity to read and balanced instruction on the NAEP. *Journal of Educational Research.* 2001;94(3):145-162.
58. Taylor BM, Pearson DP, Clark K, Walpole S. Effective schools and accomplished teachers: lessons about primary-grade reading instruction in low-income schools. *The Elementary School Journal.* 2000;101(2):121-165.
59. Hiebert EH, Raphael TE. *Early reading instruction*. New York: Harcourt Brace; 1998.
60. Cunningham P, Hall D. The four blocks: A balanced framework for literacy in primary classrooms. In: Harris KR, Graham S, Deshler D, eds. *Teaching every child every day: Learning in diverse schools and classrooms*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books; 1998.
61. Pressley M. *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching*. New York: Guilford; 1998.
62. National Reading Panel. *Teaching children to read: An evidence-Based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.* Washington DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Service
National Institutes of Health
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; April 2000. NIH Pub. No. 00-4769.
63. Sternberg RJ. Matching abilities, instruction, and assessment: Reawakening the sleeping giant of ATI. In: Dennis I, ed. *Human abilities: Their nature and measurement*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum; 1996:167-181.
64. Connor CM, Morrison FJ, Petrella JN. Effective reading comprehension instruction: understanding child by instruction interactions. in review.
65. Juel C, Minden-Cupp C. Learning to read words: Linguistic units and instructional strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly.* 2000;35(4):458-492.
66. Westat. *The longitudinal evaluation of school change and performance in Title 1 schools: Final report.* Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education; 2001. 2001-20.
67. Wharton-McDonald R, Pressley M, Hampston JM. Literacy instruction in nine first-grade classrooms: Teacher characteristics and student achievement. *The Elementary School Journal.* 1998;99(2):101-128.
68. Taylor BM, Pearson DP, eds. *Teaching reading: Effective schools, accomplished teachers*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum; 2002.
69. Gellman E, Guarino A, Witte J. Attitudes Towards the Use of Tests and Test Scores. *Psychological Reports.* 2001;89:669-671.
70. Goldhaber DD, Brewer DJ. Does teacher certification matter? High school teacher certification status and student achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis.* 2000;22(2):129-146.
71. Connor CM, Raudenbush SW, Craig HK, Zwolan T. Age at implantation and communication methods effects on the receptive vocabulary growth of children using cochlear implants: the importance of early exposure to language. in review.
72. Sampson RJ, Raudenbush SW, Earls F. Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science.* 1997;277(August):918-924.
73. Leventhal T, Brooks-Gunn J. Moving on up: Neighborhood effects on children and families. In: Bornstein MH, Bradley RH, eds. *Socioeconomic status, parenting, and child development*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum; 2003.

74. Duncan GJ, Raudenbush SW. The well-being of children and families: Research and data needs. In: Thornton A, ed. *The well-being of children and families: Research and data needs*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press; 2001.
75. Duncan GJ, Raudenbush SW. Assessing the effects of context in studies of child and youth development. *Educational Psychologist.* 1999;34(1):29-41.
76. Connor JA. *Community visions, community solutions: A systems approach to problem-solving*: Wilder; 2002.
77. Haycock K. Good teaching matters: How well-qualified teachers can change the gap. *Thinking K-16.* 1998;3(2):3-14.
78. Johnson SM, Birkeland SE. Pursuing a "Sense of Success": New teachers explain their career decisions. *American Educational Research Journal.* 2003;40(3):581-617.
79. Adnett N. Reforming teachers' pay: incentive payments, collegiate ethos and UK policy. *Cambridge Journal of Economics.* 2003;27(1):145-157.
80. Brasington DM. The supply of public school quality. *Economics of Education Review.* 2003;22(4):367-377.
81. Stempien LR, Loeb RC. Differences in job satisfaction between general education and special education teachers - Implications for retention. *Remedial and Special Education.* 2002;23(5):258-127.
82. Samuelson PA. *Managerial economics*. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 1999.
83. Littky D. One kid at a time. Paper presented at: Nonprofit and Public Management Center presentation; October 24, 2003; Ann Arbor, MI.

Community Literacy Best Practices

Three case studies are provided as examples of what effective community literacy programs are doing in their communities. The communities discussed here have widely different approaches to community literacy but they remain consistent on a few areas. Four distinct but interconnected points of influence emerged from these successful community literacy programs: school resources, community resources, family involvement, and adaptability. Each community discussed in this section will be discussed based on these four recurrent themes:

1. Community resources/connections
2. School resources/connections
3. Family involvement – both in community and school
4. Adaptability

Extensive research into effective literacy interventions shows that these four factors influence significantly the literacy attainment of children. The home environment and the classroom environment are the direct links to the literacy development of children. For these environments to fully realize their full potential as foundations of literacy for children, they must both rely on the four themes as supports. The four themes also need to be interconnected in order to provide a balanced framework in which an effective community literacy program can operate.

Community Resources/Connections

Community resources provide supports for both the classroom and family environments. Most typically the connection between community resources and classroom and home environments are viewed as social services provided by the community to eliminate barriers to learning. While connections to these social services are important, community resources can used for much more than referrals.

According to McConnell and Rabe, community factors can be classified in three ways: "(1) community-wide attitudes and values that influence the general context toward promoting early literacy, (2) formal community programs that enroll children, children and parents together, or parents only into programs where literacy is one of the primary objectives, and (3) informal community activities and resources that provide access points or materials to support families' efforts to promote early literacy development" (1999)[1]. The third classification can lead to identification of community resources often taken for granted as promising literacy promoters, such as museums, libraries and pediatricians.

School Resources/Connections

In the past, it has been assumed that adequate school resources ensure high quality schools. However, new trends in education reform, such as standards and accountability, focus on student outcomes and as the metric for school quality[2]. School resources include qualified teachers, facilities, literacy materials and school policies encouraging literacy-focused curriculum. However, how these resources are used to ensure student learning are important to consider. School resources are also related to home and community resources; children from more affluent homes are more likely to attend schools with good resources.[3]

Family Involvement

Family involvement influences what goes on in school and the home learning environment. As we have grouped community factors into three categories, so can we categorize parental involvement in the home into: "(1) activities, (2) materials, and (3) language development[1]. Parental involvement includes parents actively interacting with their children in literacy activities such as paired reading, making literacy materials readily available in the home, and parents promoting the importance of literacy through dialogue interactions. Parental involvement spurs children's interest in literacy in and outside the classroom.

Adaptability

Our research shows that adaptive community literacy programs are the most effective because they take the community's unique resources, capabilities, and the needs into account in constructing the program that will work best for their community.

Below, we examine three different Community Literacy Projects from Arizona to Minneapolis. First we provide a brief overview of the project and then examine it more carefully around our four points of influence: Community resources/connections, School resources/connections, Family Involvement and Adaptability.

Funds of Knowledge for Teaching (FKT)[4]

Tucson, Arizona

"We use the term 'funds of knowledge' to refer to these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being."

FKT began as a research project by Dr. Luis Moll and his colleagues from the University of Arizona. Dr. Moll wanted to test his theory that the key to effective literacy instruction for bilingual children was held within home and community resources often overlooked by the schools. Dr. Moll and his team of researchers, including teachers, started their research by systematically interviewing Mexican-American students in barrios of Tucson, Arizona. The interviews conducted delved into such areas as family and job histories and personal stories and accounts. Based on these interviews, Dr. Moll and his colleagues discovered two very important things: (1) these families were knowledgeable in various subject areas such as agriculture, medicine, masonry, and economics and (2) the families were willing to share their knowledge with the researchers. These two points proved to be the vital connection between school, home and the community.

The researchers and teachers involved in this project worked together to devise instructional approaches to apply the funds of knowledge found within the homes to the classroom curriculum. A theme was selected based on the home interviews and research projects and

writing assignments were developed around these themes. Parents and community members were used as resources and brought into the classroom as support to the ongoing projects.

Funds of Knowledge for Teaching (FKT) is a comprehensive literacy program model that is inclusive of school, family and community. A qualitative approach is taken to survey the students' homes and extract themes that can then be applied to classroom curriculum. Teachers then meet as a group to discuss experience and funds of knowledge taken from their interviews. Based on these discussions, teachers identify common themes across households and communities and develop classroom exercises based on these themes. This application of home themes makes the classroom experience much more meaningful and applicable for the children. These themes also provide the key to parent and community involvement in the children's education.

This program fuses various elements from the field of anthropology such as identification of "community infrastructure, family economy, workforce participation and language planning." The cornerstone of this program is the utilization of parents' interests, knowledge and skills to create meaningful classroom lessons for students.

FKT has its roots in the Bureau of Applied Research and Anthropology (BARA) along with the University of Arizona's College of Education. The four main components of FKT are: 1) training teachers in methods of collecting data (ethno graphology), 2) reviewing and revising the lesson plans of the school curriculum, 3) Interpreting data collected by teachers and researchers pertaining to classroom pedagogy, and 4) synthesize the collective data of informal learning (home) and instructional learning (school) to develop the scope and sequence of the curriculum.

FKT was launched with a grant from the **W. K. Kellogg Foundation** that funded cost of development, training and documentation.

Points of Influence

Community Resources/Connections

Parents, as members and contributors to the community, are able to provide the necessary links to community resources. Based on the funds of knowledge collected from the interviews with the families, connections to community resources can also be teased out from that information. The family's funds of knowledge are connected to links within the community, such as through their places of employment, extended family connections and extracurricular activities. These connections can be engaged and utilized to frame the curriculum in a real world experience.

For instance, a teacher involved with the initial study with Dr. Luis Moll discovered the importance of community connections in applying her curriculum. A fund of knowledge she discovered from an interview of one of her student's homes was the knowledge of construction. The student's father was employed by a construction company and had working knowledge of what was involved with constructing buildings. She decided to structure her courses to incorporate construction as a theme. She developed a series of activities that used different concepts of construction. Children were asked to go to the library and choose books about

construction; writing assignments were assigned based on their readings. Parents and community members were invited to speak to the students about different aspects of construction, such as the names of the tools and machinery that is used and how they problem solve.

In this one example we see how two very important community resources were utilized: the library and community members. There are many different types of community resources that can be utilized to support the classroom curriculum used by teachers. Instructional units based on the a fund of knowledge of farming can utilize many community resources such as the library, a field trip to a local farm, interviewing a local farmer, visiting a farmer's market, and a museum. With each fund of knowledge, possibilities for the use of community resources and connections will emerge.

School Resources/Connections

School resources are key to the success of FKT. Although the funds of knowledge are extracted from the students' homes, teachers are integral to making the connections between those untapped funds of knowledge apply to classroom work. In FKT, teachers are trained as "ethnographers" in order to collect data from student households to discover the funds of knowledge available there. Teachers must deduce from the information collected in these interviews what common themes play out within all of the students' homes. These common themes can also be extrapolated from outside of one classroom when teachers meet as a group to share their interview results and help each other develop instructional units around the funds of knowledge.

The training of teachers as ethnographers adds to the professional development of the teacher. Teachers have the foundation in classroom techniques and standards. This component adds to strengthening the teachers' ability to deliver the necessary material to the children in a way that is most effective. Teachers are able to instruct the children in the topics and areas that are most appropriate for them using their standards. Instead of using cookie cutter-type curriculum, it is utilizing the preexisting framework of the school to give the children an opportunity to learn things that they could apply to themselves, their family and their community.

Family Involvement

FKT was established to defeat the misconception that parents are not a valuable source for advancing a child's educational journey. FKT views parents as an indispensable resource in molding the classroom curriculum. Parents are included in the classroom by having their funds of knowledge shape their children's curriculum. The value of this is two-fold: parents feel their involvement in the curriculum and therefore are more likely to participate in the children's school activities and they will be willing to dedicate time at home to foster concepts learned at school based on these funds of knowledge.

Because the family feels a connection to the curriculum, they will feel that they are valued in school activities. As was shown in the initial study, families were eager to share what they knew if they were given the chance. If the doors of the child's classroom are open to them to share their knowledge, they are more willing to actively participate in what is occurring inside the

class. They will share what they know and will open doors to new connections within the community.

This same concept applies to the family's involvement inside the home. Families will be more wiling to help the children with homework and outside class activities if they feel they have something to contribute and add to these activities. Parents will feel empowered to help their children and this empowerment will convey to the child the importance of the work they are being asked to complete for school.

Adaptability

FKT clearly came out of the need to apply what was occurring in this community and to bring it into the classroom for the children. Dr. Luis Moll felt that schools should "investigate and tap into 'hidden' home and community resources of their students." The first point of connection is made in the home and based on those connections, outside connections to the community are made to support the funds of knowledge identified. This program solidifies the importance of utilizing the main points of influence to create a well-balanced educational foundation for the children. Classroom content changes with the unique resources of the community and the families who reside in them.

Achievement Plus[5]

St. Paul, Minnesota

> **"Mission: Achievement Plus community schools are the foundation of a comprehensive urban education reform model that integrates the school community, families, and the resources of public and private organizations to ensure academic achievement for all students."**

Achievement Plus focuses on three main components:

1. Standards-based curriculum and instruction
2. Extended learning opportunities for students
3. Learning supports for students and families

Three elementary schools in St. Paul were established to implement the Achievement Plus program. Achievement Plus addresses the barriers to learning for children and their families and provides them with more opportunities to learn and grow. This program acts as a catalyst to remove the daily challenges children are faced with in and out of the classroom. Curriculum is centered on effective literacy strategies encompassed by programs such as The Literacy Initiative which allows for teachers and administrators to collaborate and strengthen their standards-based curriculum to improve literacy. Improvement of literacy skills is one of the primary focuses of Achievement Plus. The community plays an important role in the success of this program and students participating in it. They provide resources and staff to execute key programs such as the Extended Learning Program.

Achievement Plus is both responsive to and dependent upon schools, families and the community. This program runs through the community schools that have been established to implement it. The program was created with the students and their families' issues in mind and how those issues affect the way the children learn. The community's role in this program works both as a support for the school curriculum and after-school activities and as social service supports to the families that are in need of a variety of services. One of the main goals of Achievement Plus was to "work with community partners to help address basic needs for students and families."

Points of Influence

Community Resources/Connections
Achievement Plus has many different connections to the community which allows the program to maximize resources. The three Achievement Plus schools have Family Resource Centers which provide the connection to necessary community resources for families. These resource centers have links to educational and social services for families that are in need of these connections. Besides providing referrals to outside community resources, the Family Resource Centers also collaborate with community service providers to create services and programs such as drop-in childcare, family literacy nights and parenting classes.

Another program component of Achievement Plus that relies heavily on community involvement is the Extended Learning Program. The Extended Learning program was created to "provide a seamless transition from the school day's instruction to additional tutoring and academic instruction, as well as enrichment activities that let students engage in hands-on learning." The Extended Learning programs have established partnerships with the Saint Paul City Parks and Recreation Department and the YMCA. They have collaborated with many other community resources in order to provide the children with a myriad of hands-on experiences, such as planting a community garden, running an after school recycling corps and creating community quilts.

School Resources/Connections

Achievement Plus is completely based out of reformed public schools utilizing funds from both the private and public sectors. Achievement Plus was conceived as a program to be implemented in schools with definite connections to family and community.

Achievement Plus uses the America's Choice school design model from the National Center on Education and the Economy. This model is a research-based model designed to comply "in every respect with the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001." The goals of this model are to guarantee that children meet the state and local assessments and also that they be prepared for college. This school design stresses standards-based curriculum in order for the children to utilize the skills and concepts that are being taught in class and to apply these

lessons to the real world. This model also emphasizes the importance of drawing in family and community into the school.

One of the ways that Achievement Plus is ensuring that standards-based curriculum with a focus on literacy occurs in its schools is by operating a writing workshop in each one of its classrooms. A Summer Writing Institute was run for teachers to learn about incorporating writing workshops in their classes. Writing workshops are run in blocks which integrate reading and writing. The teacher instructs the children on an element of writing and they utilize what they learned based on reading assignments they complete. These assignments are designed to take the child through the whole process of writing, from an idea to a planning to a finished piece of writing.

Achievement Plus broadens this standards-based curriculum into their Extended Learning Programs. With the help of design coaches and literacy coordinators, the after school programs offered through the Extended Learning Program remains consistent with the standards-based curriculum to provide the children a continuous flow between school day activities and after school activities.

Achievement Plus prides itself on its qualified teachers and allows for ample opportunities for professional development. Teachers and administrators participate in an ongoing professional development program called Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence. This project's two goals are "(1) to transform, through training, the way the core skills of reading, writing, math and science are taught and (2) to provide in-depth, ongoing training effectively and efficiently to teachers and administrators throughout the district." This project is also modeled on the importance of standards-based approach to education instruction. This project also ensures that the teachers and administrators at each school are given materials to ensure that successful classroom instruction is achieved. An important undertaking that has resulted from the Project for Academic Excellence is The Literacy Initiative. Although Achievement Plus schools already focused on literacy throughout the whole curriculum, The Literacy Initiative is a new project that is delving into utilizing effective, research-based literacy instruction practices.

Family Involvement

One of the most important components of the Achievement Plus program is their goal to remove the learning barriers for both the family and the children. Achievement Plus understands that there are many barriers to family involvement with school activities. The Family Resource Center is one of the primary ways that Achievement Plus tries to remove those barriers. These resource centers evolve around assisting families overcome challenges and obstacles that interfere with children's learning. The resource centers are located on the school campus for easy accessibility. Not only do the resource centers provide referrals to social services, such as employment, health insurance and housing, but it also provides a larger array of services. The Family Resource Centers offers telephone and computer services for those families who do not have access to these. They also offer parenting classes to teach parents how to parent effectively. Another important offering that the Family Resource Center provides are Family Literacy Nights that are run on a monthly basis.

The services provided by the Family Resource Center are centered around assisting parents with their immediate needs so they can focus on becoming actively involved with their children's

educational needs. Achievement Plus strives to create and implement programs that draws in parents into the their child's school experience. Achievement Plus understands that "engaged parents are an important key to student success." This is why this program has utilized the UCLA Center for Mental Health in the School model to base their resource centers on.

Adaptability

As mentioned earlier, Saint Paul's Achievement Plus community schools are responsive to and dependent upon the community in which they exist. The Achievement Plus components are sensitive the changes in the student body, their families and the community resources that are available to them.

Evaluation

Achievement Plus understands the importance of evaluation in the program. They understand the overall health and sustainability of the program depends on incorporating an evaluation component into the program. In fiscal year 2001-2002, Achievement Plus spent almost 6% of their total program expenses toward evaluation activities. These evaluation efforts are used to fuel momentum for improvements in the program and identify the logical next steps.

Parents As Teachers (PAT)[6]

National Model, Local Program

> **"Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an international early childhood parent education and family support program serving families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten, usually age 5. The program is designed to enhance child development and school achievement through parent education accessible to all families. Recognizing that all families can benefit from support, Parents as Teachers families come in all configurations, from all socio-economic levels, and from rural, urban and suburban communities. The program is adaptable to fit community needs."**

Parents As Teachers (PAT) began in 1981 in four school districts in Missouri when it was evident that kindergartners were beginning their academic career at widely varying levels of school readiness. Using research that showed a relation between academic success and family involvement and research showing the importance of the first three years of life, PAT was developed to teach parents about their child's development so they could actively be involved in readying their children for the challenges of school.

Preliminary results from an independent evaluation showed the benefits of the PAT program to be very successful. This success was enough for the state to secure funding and begin implementing PAT in all of the school districts in the state. Soon afterward, various states followed suit and began PAT as part of their plan to address early childhood literacy needs.

PAT has a literacy focus that drives many of its activities. They understand the importance of learning literacy skills early on and how this plays a integral role in school readiness. Many of their core activities focus on literacy and what parents can do to ensure that their children are prepared when they enter school. Some aspects of literacy acquisition and early literacy behavior that they focus on is "symbolic development, spoken language, listening, written language, knowledge of print and books, and language sounds."

PAT relies heavily on research-based practices and approaches to developing their program and maintaining it relevant and effective. Based on this extensive research, they have developed a program that uses the following four approaches:

1. Personal visits – During these personal visits, parent educators teach parents about the development of their child, address any concerns that the parents have and show parents how to interact with their children in meaningful ways.
2. Group Meetings - These group meetings provide a forum for parents to convene and discuss parenting issues, build a support network and learn through each other's experiences.
3. Screening - Detection of developmental delays is the purpose of this screening component. Children go through a health, vision, and developmental screening in order to identify strengths and deficits.
4. Resource network- This network is in place to provide parents with a support system where they can be referred to services so they can remove the obstacles that are impeding these parents to be involved with their children's emerging literacy needs. They also use the resources in the community to support the PAT program by joining forces and optimizing their ability to serve the children and their families.

Points of Influence

Community Resources/Connections

One of the four approaches used by PAT, the Resource Network, refers exactly to how PAT is utilizing the community to implement their program. They are using resources found within the community to help parents become better parents. PAT wants to alleviate compounding issues that are taking parents' time away from their children by providing them with referrals to community resources to help them solve their problems. With the removal of these barriers, parents are better equipped to dedicate the time necessary to assist their children chance for success in school.

PAT programs also work closely with different community service providers to either support the PAT program directly or to collaborate to provide new services. Community resources can

be contracted by local PAT programs to deliver services essential to their operations, such as developmental, hearing, vision and general health screening by a local health service providers.

A review of PAT programs nationwide show us how they are teaming up with other community resources to develop programs for their communities' unique needs.

- Rexburg, Idaho
  The *Project Love, Language and Literacy* began with the collaboration of PAT with their local hospital, library, community leaders, and AmeriCorps volunteers. This project has nurses hand out contact release forms to parents in the delivery ward so they could be contacted by the PAT program. Parents who sign the release forms are then visited at home by an AmeriCorps volunteer who delivers a "Welcome Baby Packet" that includes information on community resources, videos on child issues, books and parenting tips.
- Petal, Mississippi
  The *Itty Bitty Bookworm Club* was started by the Petal School District Parents As Teachers program to encourage parents to begin reading to their children early on. Parents who join this club agree to read 1,000 books to their children before they begin kindergarten. For every book they read, they place one penny in a baby food jar. When they have filled up the food jar, they turn in the jar to the Itty Bitty Bookworm Club Store at the Parenting Center for a new book. Books are purchased with the donations of local civic clubs from within the community.
- Flemingsburg, Kentucky
  The *Baby Bucks* program was developed by the Licking Valley Community Action Program in order to stimulate parents to read to their children, encourage them to attend parent groups and recruit friends to participate in the PAT program. In this program, parents earn *Baby Bucks* every week based on activities they did with their children. For every five books in one week that they read to their children, parents earn one *baby buck*. If they attend a local play group, parents earn two *baby bucks*. These *baby bucks* are cashed in twice a year for a Wal-Mart gift card.

These examples show how community resources from local hospitals to community clubs to local business owners can be contacted in order to support the program's literacy and recruitment endeavors.

School Resources/Connections

The concept for PAT grew straight out of a need identified by educators and that focus has not been lost as PAT has grown nationally and internationally. Developmental and Education experts continue to work at the PAT National Center for continuous quality improvement of PAT programs.

Many school districts around the country have recognized the effectiveness of PAT programs and have implemented it as part of their school district programs. By having PAT installed as part of school district it facilitates the transition of parents and children in this program and school, it gives PAT accessibility to school resources and it gets consistent funding through the school district. PAT's connection with the school also facilities parents' willingness to participate with the program.

Family Involvement

As the title of the program implies, parents are heavily involved in this early childhood program. Parents are viewed as their children's primary and "most influential" teachers. The core values of the program are parent and child based and their different program components reflect this emphasis. Parents work closely with Parent Educators who teach them about their child's development and activities that promote literacy acquisition. The group meetings give parents more opportunities to learn about their child's development while creating a support system with other parents in the community.

This focus on parental involvement has proven to be highly effective. Research shows that parents involved in the PAT program are more likely to increase their involvement with their children's activities and experiences at school. Knowledge they gained during their participation in PAT incites these parents to continue this active involvement after they have completed their tenure in the PAT program. Their continued involvement continues to help their children attain academic success.

Adaptability

Parents As Teachers is a national model but is meant to be implemented on a community level based on the needs of that particular community. The Parents As Teachers National Center supports the local chapters but it does not dictate how local PAT programs are run. Each PAT community program follows the core values of PAT but it develops programs that are most needed by the children and parents in their community. The PAT National Center recognizes individual PAT programs on a quarterly basis that are developing new and innovative programs to fulfill the National Center's Quality Standards Initiative.

Evaluation

PAT values its emphasis on evaluation. PAT cites the *No Child Left Behind Act* as an impetus behind having a strong evaluation emphasis. As the PAT National Center website notes, "[the] *No Child Left Behind Act* puts a special focus on doing what works." And extensive research and evaluation studies shows how PAT is working effectively. Evaluation by government entities, school districts and private foundations have shown time and time again positive outcomes for both children and parents involved in PAT programs. Different evaluations conducted at various stages of program life show significant improvement in client participants as opposed to control groups. Continuous research and evaluation studies by the PAT National Center help to sustain and support local PAT programs

[1] McConnell, S.R. & Rabe, H.L.S. (1999). *Home and Community Factors that Promote Early Literacy Development for Preschool-aged Children.* www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/7286-05.html.

[2] Cohen DK, Raudenbush SW, Ball DL. Resources, instruction, and research. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis.* 2003;25(2):119-142.

[3] Connor CM, Son S-H, Morrison FJ, Hindman A. Teacher qualifications, classroom practices, and family characteristics: Complex effects on first graders' language and early reading. in review.

[4] For the Funds of Knowledge profile, sources include:

Taylor, D. (1997). *Many Families, Many Literacies: An International Declaration of Principles*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Publishing.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. (1994). *Funds of knowledge: A look at Luis Moll's research into hidden family resources*. CITYSCHOOLS, 1(1), 19-21. http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/cityschl/city1_1c.htm

U.S. Department of Education. (1995). Model Strategies in Bilingual Education: Professional Development. *Funds of Knowledge for Teaching*. http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ModStrat/pt3i.html

National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. (1994). *Funds of Knowledge: Learning from Language Minority Households*. http://www.cal.org/ericcll/digest/ncrcds01.html.

American Anthropological Association. *Funds of Knowledge for Teaching Project*. http://www.aaanet.org/committees/commissions/aec/fok.htm.

Moll, L., Amanti, C, Neff, D., & Gonzales, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.

[5] For the Achievement Plus profile, sources include:

Achievement Plus official website. http://www.achievementplus.org/index.php

Achievement Plus. (2001). *Annual Report 2001*. http://www.achievementplus.org/annual/APlus_Annual2001.pdf

Achievement Plus. (2002). *Annual Report 2002*. http://www.achievementplus.org/annual/APlus_Annual2002.pdf

Coalition for Community Schools. (n.d.). *Evaluations of Community Schools: Findings to Date*. http://www.communityschools.org/evaluation/eval4.html

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. (2003). *Annual Report 2003*. http://www.wilder.org/WilderAnnualReport2003.pdf

National Center on Education and the Economy. (n.d.). *America's Choice*. http://www.ncee.org/acsd/index.jsp?setProtocol=true

University of California, Los Angeles. (n.d.). *About Mental Health in the Schools*. http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/

[6] For the Parents As Teacher profile, sources include:

Parents As Teachers National Center official website. http://www.patnc.org/

Schacter, J. (1999). *Reading Programs that Work: A Review of Programs for Pre-Kindergarten to 4th Grade*. http://www.mff.org/publications/publications.taf?page=279

Parents as Teachers News. (2002). *Partners in Excellence: Ideas You Can Use*. http://www.patnc.org/Partners%20in%20Excellence%20Fall%20and%20Winter%202002%20II.pdf