

## Recommendations for Battle Creek to Consider

### 1. Form a School-Community-Parent Partnership

As the “Best Practices” report disclosed, in most of the successful community literacy programs, schools play a major role as they partner with other stakeholders in the community. Public Elementary School outcomes represent the consolidated results of the entire community literacy effort. The schools are not the sole responsible agent. A caution is in order, however. Occasionally, schools take responsibility for literacy only after children enter kindergarten. Research suggests that the pathways to school success start much earlier – in infancy. Thus any successful community literacy plan should take this into account.

### 2. Assess Community Resources and Connections

- a. Define literacy (See the Appendix for definitions used by other communities) AND community literacy. Measurable by outcome, e.g., “90% of children in each neighborhood will achieve MI state benchmarks, according to assessment results, at each grade.”
- b. Community Data (see appendix) gives powerful insight into present deployment of resources and efforts and provides the community with the objective data to ask: “What works...”
- c. Outcomes – results not resource focused. Resources are only valuable to the extent that they take us to solutions.

### 3. Focus Investments on Children first

In general, it is more effective to impact proximal rather than distal (secondary) sources of influence on children’s literacy. Moreover, early intervention prevents later failure offering a community investment pay-back of almost 7 fold.

- a. Invest in literacy interventions that directly touch the child
  - Home and parents
  - Teachers and classrooms
  - Summer programs
  - Preschool programs
  - Library programs
  - Museum programs
- b. Do not invest in resources that only indirectly reach children such as facilities, administration, and staff that do not work directly with children.

### 4. Family Involvement – Multi-generation strategies have proven effective. How are you planning to engage parents and caregivers?

## **5. Concentrate, systematically, on four points of influence**

Systemically, there are 4 points of influence, which will most effectively and efficiently affect children's literacy – For Battle Creek: Where is the greatest impact on dramatically improving literacy? What are the greatest areas of need in Battle Creek?

- a. Before children begin school
  - i. Parents and home literacy environment
  - ii. Early Child Care and Education opportunities
  - iii. Children's health and nutrition
- b. Implementing classroom practices that positively affect all children's literacy development. Based on the best research available:
  - i. Child Assessment – to guide practice and monitor progress
  - ii. Small groups, flexible ability grouping
  - iii. Balanced/Individualized instruction
- c. Teacher Education
  - i. This would include elementary and preschool teachers
  - ii. Scholarship opportunities
  - iii. Embedded professional development of best literacy practices
- d. Allocation of Resources
  - i. Make sure that the resources are demographically and geographically matched with children most in need
  - ii. Currently Battle Creek resources appear to be aligned BUT they vary widely in their effectiveness. As a community, Battle Creek will need to figure out why some of your resource investments are more effective than others.

## **6. Be very Intentional about Adult Literacy Efforts.**

Where are you now and where to you want to go? Include, also, ESL efforts.

## **7. Establish a Community Support Organization -- the Infrastructure to Accomplish These and Other Community-Wide Improvements**

A comprehensive, community-based approach to literacy—or any other social problem in your community—is going to require a supportive infrastructure to get the work done and make the effort last. This is especially true since we are talking about achieving outcomes across traditional boundaries. From our research on community literacy and on many other issues, we strongly recommend the creation of a “community support organization” to coordinate and sustain the community literacy effort and then to serve other comprehensive efforts to address social problems in the community. How do you want to do this? (See: [www.comnet.org/collaboratorycs](http://www.comnet.org/collaboratorycs))

## **8. Prepare for the long haul**

## **Appendix One**

### **Community Literacy Definitions**

#### **“Community Literacy Activities**

Refers to literacy and literacy-related activities for parents/caregivers and children sponsored by local community organizations such as community libraries, community-based organizations (i.e. YMCA/YWCA, homeless shelters), church programs, service clubs (i.e. Rotary or Kiwanis Club), local businesses or business groups (i.e. Chamber of Commerce), youth clubs (i.e. 4-H Clubs, Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs, Scouts), art councils, museums and other public and private agencies.”

\*External Evaluation of the Reading Excellence Act in Illinois – School and Community Literacy Activities: Definition of Terms

<http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/BER/REA/Documents/PDF/Definit.pdf>

#### **“Theoretical Perspectives on Partnerships Overlapping Spheres of Influence**

A theoretical model of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1987, 2001) emphasizes that youngsters are best supported when families and schools have shared goals and when they work collaboratively. In addition, this model extends previous theories by including the community as an important arena of child and adolescent learning and development. Schools that base their work on the model of overlapping spheres of influence encourage families and communities to collaborate in various ways to support student learning. Educators holding this view might say, “I can do my job best if I work with families and communities toward shared goals for student success.”

#### **Six Types of Involvement**

In practice, the shared interests, responsibilities, and investments of schools, families, and communities are reflected in activities that support student development and success. Partnership activities take a variety of forms to match the particular needs, goals, and interests of students and families, and to use the resources of the community. Because there are so many possible partnership activities, we will not try to list them all. Instead, we focus on a framework of six types of involvement, which organizes partnership practices. This framework is helpful not only for discussing and studying partnerships, but also for guiding educators, parents and others to develop comprehensive partnership programs.

Based on results of research conducted in preschool, elementary, middle and high schools, Epstein (1995) developed a framework of six types of involvement to organize how researchers and educators think about and implement partnership activities. The six types of involvement, Type 1-Parenting; Type 2-Communicating; Type 3-Volunteering; Type 4-Learning at Home; Type 5-Decision Making; and Type 6-Collaborating With the Community, represent the six categories of partnerships that support student development

and academic success. The six types are not a hierarchy where one type is more or less important. Rather, all six types are essential for strong, diverse, and balanced partnership programs that enable all families to find ways to be productively involved at school and in their children's education at home and in the community.

#### Type 6-Collaborating with the Community

Local businesses and community groups, agencies, and individuals may provide many kinds of support and services to schools, students, and their families. Schools, too, can give back to their communities by conducting various service activities. We refer to these connections as Type 6-Collaborating with the Community practices. Activities involve reciprocal support, shared information, and useful programs and services among business and community representatives, families, students and educators (Sanders, in press). Families may receive information on community-based health, cultural, and social support programs. Schools may establish a community service-hub where students and families come for "one-stop shopping" for counseling, job training, education and parenting information provided by resources in the community. Families, students and the schools also may contribute to the community in environmental protection programs, such as recycling efforts. Students and families may conduct programs for community members or provide other services, such as student-senior citizen buddy or coaching programs. Also businesses may choose to donate time, money, or employee volunteer hours to support the high school."

\*Simon, B.S & Epstein, J.L. (2001). School, Family and Community Partnerships: Linking Theory to Practices. In D.B. Hiatt-Michael (Ed.), *Promising Practices for Family Involvement in Schools* (pp.1-24). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

#### "Key Elements of Collaborations in Support of Family Literacy

##### Level 2

The community collaboration level (Level 2) has a broad service-area responsibility and orientation. The initiation and administrative aspects of this type of collaboration may begin with Level 2. Through the collaboration members gain identification and focus by designing a new cooperative project for a targeted population in which they have a vested interest. Members must develop shared goals to benefit the participant group. Directors or managers are challenged to maintain the integrity of their own city or county agencies or organizations while allowing for the necessary negotiation with other agencies. This may entail an individual agency giving up some power or authority in order to develop a successful project. A balance has to be struck between implementing local community policies and practices and being responsive to those with concerns in the hierarchy above. Collegial leadership helps even out power disparities caused by unequal resources. A key factor in successful communication here is the ability of the agency representative (if that person is not the director) to accurately report the actions or activities of the collaboration so that informed decisions can be made by the agency director."

\*Nickse, R.S. & Quezada, S. (1994). Collaborations: A Key to Success in Family Literacy Programs. In D.K. Dickinson (Ed.), *Bridges to Literacy: Children, Families, and Schools* (pp. 211-235). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers

” We are seeking input from the field on the topic, What is Family Literacy?

The term, "family literacy," was coined by Denny Taylor to describe the meanings and uses of literacy in families. Taylor, D. (1983) *Family Literacy: Young children learning to read and write*. Exeter, N.H.: Heinemann.

The term now often describes programs that promote literacy development in families. Though such programs were not new in the late 80s, their growth and national prominence was enhanced by the development of the privately endowed National Center for Family Literacy and the federally funded Even Start Act.”

\*Transcript of a discussion with Dr. Meta Potts, Literacy FOCUS  
Family Literacy Discussion List

[http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-family/transcripts/transcript\\_01\\_04.html](http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-family/transcripts/transcript_01_04.html)

“Defining Family Literacy

The term “family literacy” does not have a clear definition. The complexity of the concept may keep it from ever having one definition that is embraced by all, but there are some basic tenets that can probably be agreed upon. The Family Literacy Commission has published a brochure that offers these ideas as a definition.

Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community. Sometimes, family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps adults and children “get things done.” These events might include using drawings or writing to share ideas; composing notes or letter to communicate messages; making lists; reading and following directions; or sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading and writing. Family literacy may be initiated purposefully by a parent or may occur spontaneously as parents and children go about the business of their daily lives. Family literacy activities may also reflect the ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage of the families involved (Morrow, Paratore, & Tracey, 1994).

Family literacy activities are also initiated in response to suggestions or requests from outside institutions or organizations. These are often intended to support the acquisition and development of school-like literacy behaviors of either parents, children, or both. Tasks may include family storybook reading or the completion of specific homework assignments.

Educators have become increasingly convinced of the promise of family literacy programs in promoting successful learning experiences for children and their families. Policy makers at all levels and from various agencies have been requested to join in the effort to create and support effective family literacy programs. The emphasis placed on collaboration and partnerships in support of family literacy is evident in the number and

diversity of organizations involved in implementing or investigating programs. They include adolescent, adult, and alternative educational centers; churches and clergy; corporations and industries; daycare centers; public and private preschools and elementary and secondary schools; federal, state/provincial, and local governments; hospitals and health care centers; human resource agencies; immigrant and refugee agencies; libraries; migrant education programs; professional associations; prisons; private foundations; universities and colleges; and welfare agencies. The efforts of such a variety of organizations and their potential for collaboration represent an invaluable strength in the continued study of family literacy. Only by examining many viewpoints in a field so complex and broad will we come to understand it fully.”

\*Morrow, L.M. (1995). Family Literacy: New Perspectives, New Practices. In L.M. Morrow (Ed.), *Family Literacy: Connections in Schools and Communities* (pp. 5-10). New Brunswick, NJ: International Reading Association.

### ***“2.6 Responding to mismatches (from the outside in): Family Literacy research and initiatives***

Family Literacy is one of the 'new' literacies that have been the focus of discussion, writing and research in the past decade. As a descriptive label it has emerged from a number of related, and at times overlapping terms, including Parent Literacy, Parent Involvement, Intergenerational Literacy, and Community Literacy. While writers like Taylor (1983) first used the term Family Literacy to describe the rich literacy practices that pervade home and community, frequently the use of the term has been applied to school based programs that do little more than introduce parents to school literacy practices and strategies for supporting these practices (Cairney, et al, 1995).

Like schools and classrooms, families can be understood as cultures in which participants (family members) construct particular ways of acting, believing and valuing through the interactions among family members. Thus, families construct particular views of literacy, and what it means to be literate. Research into family literacy practices across cultural groups has the potential to contribute a great deal to our understanding of educational disadvantage.

While there is great diversity in current family literacy programs and initiatives (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1989; Nickse, 1993; Cairney, et al, 1995), Morrow and Paratore (1993) suggest that most fall into one or another of three distinct categories: home-school partnership programs; intergenerational literacy programs; and ethnographic studies of family literacy. Such a simple classification system will no doubt mask great differences between programs (see Cairney et al, 1995), but is nevertheless useful in considering previous research in this area. “

\*Cairney, T.H. & Ruge J. (n.p). Community Literacy Practices and Schooling: Towards Effective Support for Students.

[http://www.gu.edu.au/school/cls/clearinghouse/content\\_1998\\_community.html](http://www.gu.edu.au/school/cls/clearinghouse/content_1998_community.html)

### **“Community Literacy Development Project**

The goal of the Family and Community Literacy Development Project is to work with communities to build the capacity to plan, deliver and manage local literacy projects. The Family and Community Literacy Development Project also builds links among

community organizations in order to sustain and support further community literacy development.”

\*Community Literacy Development Project

<http://www.polarnet.ca/literacy/CLD.html>

“Community Literacy Project Nepal

The CLP Purpose is to

Enhance literacy practices, communication and access to information among men and women in local communities.

Our aim is

- To work with local organisations to support programmes designed to improve literacy, communication and access to information based on their different needs and aspirations.
- To help women and men in developing the different uses of reading, writing and numeracy that they need in their daily life.
- To enable national literacy agencies and NGOs to learn from our experience and to assist them in developing activities that 'bridge the gap' between the classroom learning and its wider social context.

The CLP approach is based on the idea that

- Literacy is something that is used and learned in the community, rather than just being an activity of the literacy class.
- Communication and access to information can be enhanced through oral, visual and literacy based practices.

\*Community Literacy Project Nepal

<http://www.clpn.org/introduction.html>

“Community literacy projects let diverse people come together to make a difference through writing, speaking up, and speaking with each other about shared and public concerns. The inquiry projects below have brought college students and faculty into dialogues with urban teens, community adults and parents, teachers, landlords, tenants, and healthcare providers.”

\*<http://english.cmu.edu/research/inquiry/two.html>

## **Appendix Two**

### **Resources for More Information**

The following section provides the reader with resources to find more information on some of the topics discussed in this report.

#### **Community/Family Literacy – General Information**

##### **Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO)**

CLO is based out of Ontario, Canada and is in service to support the network of literacy providers that exists there. Their website is full of useful information and resources about community-based literacy initiatives.

For more information, see: [www.nald.ca/clo.htm](http://www.nald.ca/clo.htm).

##### **National Center for Family Literacy**

The NCFL's website provides a wide variety of information about family literacy, from what family literacy is to different policies promoting/affecting family literacy initiatives.

For more information, see: [www.famlit.org](http://www.famlit.org).

##### **National Institute for Literacy**

This website is a hub for a lot of different literacy information. It is a governmental organization that is administered by the Secretaries of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. NIFL's website has information on policies, research and statistics.

For more information, see: [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov).

##### **Characteristics of Effective Family Literacy Programs in Michigan**

This 1996 report provides an important overview of family literacy programs operating in Michigan.

For more information, see: <http://www.literacyonline.org/products/ncal/pdf/TR9607.pdf>.

##### **National Governors Association Center for Best Practices**

The NGA website has an interesting article on what family literacy is and how it can be incorporated into existing educational programs.

For more information, see:

[http://www.nga.org/center/divisions/1,1188,C\\_ISSUE\\_BRIEF^D\\_4629,00.html](http://www.nga.org/center/divisions/1,1188,C_ISSUE_BRIEF^D_4629,00.html)

## **Community Resources/Connections**

### **The Family Literacy Action Group of Alberta**

This organization has written a detailed document on how to engage community partners in the development of a family literacy program.

For more information, see: [www.nald.ca/CLR/partner/cover.htm](http://www.nald.ca/CLR/partner/cover.htm). The document is titled “*Building Strong and Effective Community Partnerships: A Manual for Family Literacy Workers.*”

### **Coalition for Community Schools**

This website provides in-depth information on what community schools are and how they incorporate families, communities and the school system to create effective learning environments.

For more information, see: [www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org)

## **School Resources/Connections**

### **Community Literacy Practices and Schooling: Towards Effective Support for Students**

While this research project was conducted in Australia, the themes and topics discussed around the connection between home, school and the community are universal. Please note *Chapter 6: Literacy At School.*

For more information, see:

[www.gu.edu.au/school/cls/clearinghouse/content\\_1998\\_community.html](http://www.gu.edu.au/school/cls/clearinghouse/content_1998_community.html).

## **Family Involvement**

### **The U.S. Department of Education**

The Education Department has extremely useful website of archived documents on educational topic. One of the most useful documents for the purposes of family involvement in literacy practices can be found on their website.

For more information, see: [www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/index.html). The webpage is titled “*Family Involvement in Children’s Education: Successful Local Approaches.*”

### **Research Digest: Parent Involvement and Early Literacy**

This brief research piece demonstrates what an important role parental involvement plays in the success in early literacy attainment in kindergartners. The whole article is full of important information and outside research on parental involvement.

For more information, see:

[www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/digest/literacy.html](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/digest/literacy.html).

### **The National Institute for Literacy**

The publication section of this website has very helpful advice guides for parents on how to support reading activities in the home. The *A Child Becomes A Reader: Proven Ideas for Parents from Research* documents are broken into birth to preschool and kindergarten to third grade. There are other helpful publications in this section regarding literacy advice and instruction.

For more information, see: <http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/publications.html>

### **Adaptability**

#### **Community Literacy Project**

This community literacy project is from Nepal and does a wonderful job explaining the need to make community literacy projects adaptive to community needs and concerns voiced by residents.

For more information, see: [www.clpn.org](http://www.clpn.org). Sections discussing adaptability see:

[www.clpn.org/project.html](http://www.clpn.org/project.html) (*Project Activities*) and

[www.clpn.org/project/communittd.html](http://www.clpn.org/project/communittd.html) (*A Community Literacy Approach*).

### **Evaluation**

#### **Project Literacy Victoria**

This organization runs a non-profit adult literacy program in Canada. They have compiled a comprehensive outcome measurement document for community literacy programs.

For more information, see: [www.plv.bc.ca](http://www.plv.bc.ca). Go to the Resources section of the site to access the Adobe Acrobat document titled “*Outcome Measurement for a Community Literacy Program*” ([www.plv.bc.ca/outcome/ProgramOutcome.pdf](http://www.plv.bc.ca/outcome/ProgramOutcome.pdf))