Child & Youth
Network

Achieving the Best for London's Children, Youth and Families

Supporting Children's Literacy in Community Settings

A Literature Review

by

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for

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Preface:

Achieving the Best for London's Children, Youth and Families

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London's vision for children and youth is "Happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative responsible adults tomorrow." While most children and youth have the opportunity to grow up happy and healthy, some face economic, socio-cultural, education and physical challenges that put them at risk. As a commitment to do more for the residents of London, the Child and Youth Network-comprised of over 130 local agencies and organizations – developed a Child and Youth Agenda to 2015, which is designed to achieve London's vision for children and youth. The agenda sets out four main priorities:

1. End Poverty: reduce the proportion of London families who are living I poverty by 25% in five years and 50% in 10 years;
2. Make Literacy a Way of Life: lead the province in child, youth and family literacy;
3. Lead the Nation in Increasing Healthy Eating and Healthy Physical Activity: create environments, neighbourhoods and opportunities that promote and support daily physical activity and healthy eating; and
4. Create a Family Centred Service System: make it easier to London's children, youth and families to participate fully in their neighbourhoods and communities and to find and receive the services they need.

In order to make literacy a way of life for the London community, the Child and Youth Network has developed a three-year plan to improve literacy for children, youth and families. The Literacy Action Plan involves the implementation of activities and

deliverables that will: promote literacy to the whole community; take a neighbourhood approach to literacy, promote literacy from birth and improve family literacy.

An initial and key step in the implementation of the Literacy Action Plan is to conduct a literature review and analysis of emergent and family literacy practices, programs and initiatives for babies, children and youth of all ages and their families, the demonstration of successful neighbourhood community development initiatives (especially with respect to literacy), and the recommendation of best practices, programs, projects, initiatives and models found in other communities that are suitable and well aligned with activities and initiatives outlined in the Child and Youth (CYN) Literacy Action Plan for use by the CYN's Literacy Implementation Team.

The following provides information that will help move the literacy priority in the Huron Heights Neighbourhood towards full implementation.

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Report Summary

Introduction

In the last thirty years a revolution in literacy education has taken place in Western countries. It is well understood that learning to read and write begins long before children go to school. In fact, learning to read and write happens alongside learning to talk. Literacy begins at birth and it continues as long as there are new texts making new demands on readers and writers. Consider the learning curve experienced by many "digital immigrants" when a familiar work process goes online. Literacy experts now say that we never stop learning literacy.

Literacy is considered necessary to success in later life, but ideas about what it means to be literate have changed and expanded dramatically since the late nineteenth century and they continue to change and expand. The reading and writing of print remain central to the discussion, but reading and writing are no longer the only literacies considered necessary for success in life.

> Print literacy is the reading and writing of some form of print for communicative purposes inherent in people's lives. (Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, & Degener, 2004, p. 26)

> Literacy is no longer defined as the ability to read. Rather, the concept encompasses written communication, comprehension, the capacity to analyze text critically, and the skills needed to understand communications technologies, video, television, and new media, as well as the ability to use a wide range of information to function in daily life. Literacy skills in society today are increasingly complex and sophisticated, with implications for economic and cultural survival and access to job opportunities and the earning power necessary to support oneself, family, and community. (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2005; Province of Prince Edward Island, 1999.

Literacy policy makers, project coordinators and practitioners look to research literature to guide decisions about how to employ limited resources in ways that

can make life better for families and communities. They ask: What kinds of literacy programming and initiatives can promote literacy as a way of life?

There are no easy answers to such questions. Everyday life is complex. What makes a difference here makes no difference there. What worked then may not work today, but it might work tomorrow. The link between research and practice is not as straightforward as we would like it to be. This literature review nevertheless draws on research and professional literature to offer some "good enough" responses to the following questions posed by the City of London's Child Youth Network.

- What models of literacy currently influence literacy education in formal and informal settings? How do current models of literacy define literacy?

- How should beginning reading and writing be learned and taught?

- What are the implications of literacy models for program planning decisions, in particular for the promotion of literacy as a way of life?

- What are the recommendations for best practices commonly recognized as being most effective for the delivery of programs, services, practices and initiatives in formal and informal settings?

- What are some recommended ways to increase literacy awareness at the neighbourhood level?

Scope of the Literature Review

The report presents findings from a review of English language literature on the topics of emergent literacy, family literacy, children's literacy and demonstration neighbourhoods. The literature was drawn from Canadian, American and UK sources. Research reports, policy documents and professional literature are discussed.

The report is organized into two parts. Part I is comprised of two chapters: Children's Literacy Development and Family Literacy. Part II is also comprised of two chapters: Promising Practices for Community Initiatives and a final chapter that includes recommendations and suggestions for criteria that funders could

use to evaluate proposals for a small grant initiative related to "literacy as a way of life."

The literature reviewed for Part I contains meta-analyses, synthesis articles, literature reviews and book chapters that gather research evidence in response to the questions:

- How does literacy develop?
- What kinds of services, programs and instructional strategies support literacy development?

The review distinguishes comprehensive community initiatives designed to promote literacy and literacy awareness from intervention programs designed to address specific literacy outcomes for individual learners. Both types of literature were reviewed. Scientifically-based studies (SBRR) of reading, qualitative case studies, anecdotal reports, action research studies and "best practice" statements for family literacy are critically discussed.

The literature reviewed for Part II includes policy reports, research articles and book chapters in the field of community practice. Numerous reports of community and neighbourhood change initiatives were surveyed; many of them were published by sponsoring organizations. Action research reports such as Cheryl Gorman's (2007) report on *Action for Neighbourhood Change* (ANC) were especially helpful, but reports on small scale projects such as Audrey Gardner's *Connecting Literacy to Community* and Suzanne Smythe's *Learning from the Weaving Literacy Project* provide insights not present in report on large multisite projects.

Given the practical focus of the questions that the review aimed to address, a lack of concrete details in most online resources was frustrating. Most reports provide information about the contexts in which initiatives were implemented, but many of them appear in the form of planning documents. They describe community assets, needs and plans, but say little about the implementation of the plans, or about the assessment process. The lack of detail makes it difficult to distinguish initiatives from one another, or to draw practical implications.

For this reason, documents that provide detailed responses to one or more of the above questions are more likely to be included in this report. I have not worked with a representative sample. Neither do the documents meet a common set of methodological criteria. I employed a generous definition for research in order to illuminate insights and practical information.

The literature discussed in Part II includes but is not limited to accounts of literacy initiatives. Potential literacy learning opportunities are often embedded in comprehensive community initiatives, but literacy goals are not explicitly stated in the reports. More often than literacy, health issues or social exclusion related to poverty were the chief topics discussed. However, embedded literacy learning opportunities are relevant to the goals of the review because they are examples of "literacy as a way of life." Literacy learning opportunities that are integrated within purposeful activities meet the criteria of authenticity and integration, both of which are linked to robust literacy learning for children and adult learners.

Limitations
The review may be too general.
Comprehensive literature reviews, by definition, examine copious amounts of information. The danger in summarizing such large quantities of information is that specific characteristics of individual initiatives can get lost in the process. I have aimed to respect the uniqueness of initiatives and acknowledge the complex and unpredictable nature of community change processes, but I have not always been successful. I therefore encourage readers to consult the actual reports provided by sponsors of initiatives, almost all of which are available via the Internet.

The literature tends to focus on success stories.
A limitation of the literature itself is its focus on success stories. A great deal can be learned by reflecting on difficulties and challenges, but few reports discuss difficulties or challenges in depth.

The review is not exhaustive.
The review of the literature does not claim to be an exhaustive one, but the data were sampled to the point of redundancy. That means that although new accounts of neighbourhood initiatives can still be found, the observations and insights contained in the new accounts shed no new light on the issues.

Summary of Key Findings

The Concluding Remarks section of each chapter lists key findings from that chapter and links those findings to the key findings of previous chapters. This section is organized around the questions stated in the Introduction.

What models of literacy currently influence literacy education in formal and informal settings? How do current models of literacy define literacy?

Many definitions of literacy are currently employed. The following definition is widely supported.

> Literacy is no longer defined as the ability to read. Rather, the concept encompasses written communication, comprehension, the capacity to analyze text critically, and the skills needed to understand communications technologies, video, television, and new media, as well as the ability to use a wide range of information to function in daily life. Literacy skills in society today are increasingly complex and sophisticated, with implications for economic and cultural survival and access to job opportunities and the earning power necessary to support oneself, family, and community (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2005; Province of Prince Edward Island, 1999 cited in Timmons et al., 2008, p. 94)

Most literacy researchers tend to locate their work within one of two competing perspectives: a cognitive-developmental perspective and a sociocultural / social practices perspective.

The cognitive developmental perspective views literacy as a set of skills. It treats literacy as a set of skills that develop "inside the head" and in a similar way for everyone, regardless of their ability, class, gender, or cultural background.

The social practices perspective has its roots in anthropological and sociological studies. It treats literacy as a cultural tool and stresses the importance of social context and purpose. Researchers claim that there are different ways of being literate and that literacy practices vary across domains such as home, school, online environment, neighbourhood program and so on.

New Literacy Studies research draws our attention to the important role played by technology in the literate lives of young people – an increasingly older people

too. This review focuses on print literacy, but recommends further attention to New Literacy Studies as its practices are congruent with "literacy in daily life" goals.

How should reading and writing be learned and taught? What are the implications of literacy models for program planning decisions, in particular for the promotion of literacy as a way of life?

There is strong evidence that learning to read and write print requires specific kinds of knowledge including:

- Knowledge about books and print,
- A rich vocabulary
- Phonological and phonemic awareness (the ability to hear the individual sounds in a word).

School literacy curricula are designed to build on emergent literacy knowledge that children acquire during the preschool years. Schools expect that such understandings will be acquired before children begin formal schooling. Intentional systematic literacy instruction is now a component of the Ontario Kindergarten Program.

Most learners require some explicit instruction to become skilled readers and writers, but there is no consensus about the best way to acquire the understandings and linguistic awareness needed for reading and writing print.

No single teaching approach is recommended for all learners.

Evidence supports the goal of promoting "literacy as a way of life."
This evidence indicates that reading and writing should be taught in the context of activities carried out for authentic purposes. That is, literacy should be developed as a resource for daily living; by the same token daily living should provide authentic opportunities to practice and develop one's literacy.

There is evidence from adult literacy research that a collaborative, learner-centred approach to literacy instruction combined with authentic purposes and materials supports literacy development and promotes literacy as a way of life.

Research and theoretical writing in the field of New Literacy Studies suggests that new technologies and digital culture are profoundly influencing the ways

people communicate outside of formal educational settings. Educational practices lag behind the research and behind the out-of-school practices of children and youth.

What are the recommendations for best practices commonly recognized as being most effective for the delivery of programs, services, practices and initiatives in formal and informal settings?

Empirical research conducted by cognitive *and* social practice researchers supports the adoption of authenticity and collaboration (known in the community literature as an integrated, participatory approach).

Authenticity and collaboration make promising, guiding principles for planning literacy programs in formal and informal settings. For community literacy initiatives authenticity can be understood to include the idea of integrating literacy skills learning activities in everyday life situations.

In order to be of practical assistance to planners and practitioners, the term *research-based practices* needs to be defined broadly to include experiential accounts, but all evidence should be critically assessed. Research-informed action studies have potential to support planning, implementation, assessment and evaluation. Best practice" and "good practice" statements are more useful because they draw on a variety of data sources including practitioners' and participants' accounts and principles drawn up by family literacy practitioners.

Statements of "good practice" and "best practice" are resources for developing funding criteria. They are not carved in stone. They are starting points for critical conversations among stakeholders. The statements of good practice for literacy programs are congruent with recognized principles of good community practice although the technical vocabularies differ. Several best practice frameworks are listed in the full report and employed in the following overarching strategies recommended for promoting literacy as a way of life in communities.

>   (1) Support language and literacy programs that address an identified
>   community need.
>
>   a. Ensure that programs promote authentic literacy activities and
>   use authentic materials. Ensure that program plans are guided
>   by recognized good practice principles such as the Centre for
>   Family Literacy's *Good Practice Statements* or the Action for
>   Family Literacy's *A Guide to Best Practices*.

b. Ensure that initiatives are guided by recognized principles of community practice such as those discussed in Chapter Three.

Successful initiatives:
- are Innovative,
- are sustainable,
- are inclusive,
- build capacity for residents and organizations,
- are collaborative,
- explicitly address power imbalances,
- create opportunities for learning and reflection

(2) Support initiatives that aim to weave literacy into change activities. Projects would begin with an identified community need, but would also embed opportunities for focused language and/or literacy use.

Priority should be given to projects that weave together strategies to strengthen literacy as a way of life and address one of the other goals of a comprehensive community change project such as promotion of health and/or reduction of poverty.

a. Ensure that initiatives are guided by recognized principles of community practice such as those discussed in Chapter Three. Successful initiatives:
- are Innovative,
- are sustainable,
- are inclusive,
- build capacity for residents and organizations,
- are collaborative,
- explicitly address power imbalances,
- create opportunities for learning and reflection.

b. Provide guidance to help groups identify language and/or literacy learning opportunities in the proposed projects..

c. Nurture collaboration among literacy practitioners and other community organizations..

(3) Employ network strategies to develop awareness of literacy issues and opportunities and to celebrate literacy. Developing awareness of literacy issues should include developing awareness of the ways in

which digital culture makes new literacy demands on people. It is important to build awareness of digital literacy among potential funders because small grants typically won't stretch to purchase computers and other technological tools.

(4) For a program or service that already meets the criteria laid out in strategy (1) or (2), provide support that strengthens aspects of the program or service. Where necessary, provide support for infrastructure development and/or coordination within the organization and with other organizations.

For example: Promoting awareness of literacy in the community may require organizations to devote extra time and resources to outreach. Marketing literacy involves more than reaching out to the people served by other organizations. Literacy-focused organizations can promote literacy as a way of life to the staff of other organizations so that staff can look for literacy learning opportunities within the services they provide. This kind of activity needs to be ongoing.

What are some recommended ways to increase literacy awareness at the neighbourhood level?

Promoting literacy awareness is not just a matter of promoting awareness of literacy problems or needs. It is about encouraging people in diverse situations to spot the literacy opportunities or demands within their everyday routines.

Promoting "literacy as a way of life" is as much about spreading literacy awareness to people who take literacy for granted as it is about spreading the word to potential program participants.

Changing to a larger font for signage, or adopting a colour code for job postings and brochures were two easy ways that local residents in the Alberta project enabled poor readers to be more independent and to take advantage of whatever was being advertised.

Outreach and networking are core activities for community literacy organizations (Readers are referred to the pages 86-89 of the full report for a list of strategies that literacy practitioners have successfully used to build networks.

Outreach strategies have been deployed informally for many years, but recently there has been a more concerted effort under the umbrella term, social marketing.

In *Marketing Ourselves* (Community Literacy of Ontario, 2008, p. 8) Karen Farrar describes two recently developed strands of marketing: relationship marketing and social marketing.

Farrar writes that not-for-profit agencies and services can adopt marketing principles to market what they do even though they are giving away their services and programs for free. The table below provides rough translations of marketing terms in the social marketing arena.

Business marketing	Relationship / Social marketing
Product	Programs & services
Price	Buy-in
Promotion	Getting the word out
Place	Location

Social marketing is usually carried out with clients and potential clients. Relationship marketing is carried out usually with volunteers, funders and community partners.

The goal of relationship marketing with volunteers, funders and community partners and the goal of social marketing with clients the same: positive social change.

Some principles of marketing that apply to community practice are:

- Build a budget line for marketing.

- Don't sell the product; solve the customer's problem.

  E.g. Identify a community need first, then think about ways that literacy opportunities are embedded.

- Reflect on who you are and what you do.

- Who do you want to buy in? Target marketing to specific segments of your market.

- Pay attention to people's wants as well as needs.
  Make your program exactly what your target wants.

- Aim to articulate features of your "product" as benefits.

- Develop strategies and tactics to reach your market. (the marketing mix.

The above social marketing strategies are offered with one caveat. On a practical level social marketing appears to be aligned with the principles of participatory practice, it does position service providers and residents on opposite sides of a divide. "Buy in" implies that the marketer is controlling the agenda. Planners should consider the potential consequences of focusing on "buy on" as opposed to participation. In other words, social marketing reflects a "power over" rather than a "power with" approach.

Concluding Remarks

> Rebecca. "I knew a lot about literacy but next to nothing about community development or even the concept of community capacity building. Now I am beginning to see the connection. I provide information and raise awareness, and the community makes the changes. (Literacy Specialist quoted in Day et al., 2005)

In *What Really Matters to Struggling Readers,* Richard Allington (2001) writes that we are getting better and better at teaching children how to read, but we are losing ground when it comes to "raising readers." It seems that effective literacy instruction is necessary, but not sufficient to raise a reader. More to the point, what looks like effective literacy instruction in the short term sometimes turns out to be quite inefficient in the long term -- unless the learner finds reasons to use what's been learned. The old adage, u*se it or lose it*, applies to literacy.

One reason to promote literacy as a way of life, then, is that unless we promote literacy as a way of life, the energy we spend on literacy instruction will be

wasted. This is not the only reason, but it is one that concerns policy makers and funders.

Another reason to promote literacy as a way of life is that literacy as a way of life supports social inclusion and neighbourhood vitality. When literacy is woven into a web of support, the web becomes stronger and everyone benefits.

This report synthesizes research and makes recommendations for the promotion of "literacy as a way of life" in the context of a neighbourhood-based community change initiative. I concluded that if the goal is to build literacy awareness, one resident at a time, straightforward, research-to-practice instructional recommendations are unlikely to succeed. Like Rebecca, I know more about literacy than I do about community development, and like her, I have come to appreciate the important role community development principles can play in promoting literacy.

We must expand the scope of what counts as research and the scope of what counts as literacy.

We must take into account the complex and culturally-shaped nature of everyday life.

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Part I

Supporting Literacy in Children and Youth:

Education Literature

It is the best of times, it is the worst of times. . . . we are all going direct to heaven for our attention to children's early literacy, we are all going direct the other way because of what we are doing in the name of early literacy—in short, this is a period that worries me severely.

(Teale, 2009)

While schools tend to treat reading as an individual accomplishment by expecting children to become independent readers who can solve the difficulties they encounter in texts without assistance, the children in my class recognized reading as a social practice that involves helping each other and working together.

(Compton-Lily, 2009)

Introduction

A generation ago, most parents expected children to begin learning to read and write in grade one. If children had not learned by the end of grade three parents began to worry. By the end of grade three children were expected to read and write well enough to cope with the full range of curriculum subjects. The saying went: First you learn to read; then you read to learn.

In the last thirty years a revolution in literacy education has taken place in Western countries. It is well understood that learning to read and write begins long before children go to school. In fact, learning to read and write happens alongside learning to talk. Literacy begins at birth and it continues as long as there are new texts making new demands on readers and writers. Consider the learning curve experienced by many "digital immigrants" when a familiar work process goes online. Literacy experts now say that we never stop learning literacy.

Ideas about the nature of literacy, how literacy develops, and how it should be taught are subjects of vigorous debate in and out of educational circles. Such ideas inform the work of policy makers and practitioners alike, even when they see themselves as being mostly interested in practicalities. Work with very young children, for example, appears to be intensely practical and in-the-moment, and yet it is also deeply informed by theories about literacy, about learning and about childhood, too.

What is Literacy?
The term *literacy* first appeared in print in 1883 (Gillen & Hall, 2003, p. 3). At that time educators talked about reading and writing rather than literacy and they talked about reading and writing as separate processes. It is only during the last twenty-five years that literacy has started to replace reading and writing in everyday conversation and the media.

The history of reading research is linked to the history of psychology which emerged as an academic discipline at the end of the nineteenth century. The early psychologists took an interest in reading, not for its own sake, but because reading provided a window through which they could study perception. The roots

of writing research are not in psychology, but in rhetoric and composition. It was not until the 1980s that reading and writing were taught together.

Literacy is considered necessary to success in later life, but ideas about what it means to be literate have changed and expanded dramatically since the late nineteenth century and they continue to change and expand. The reading and writing of print remain central to the discussion, but reading and writing are no longer the only literacies considered necessary for success in life.

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The history of print literacy teaching is marked by continuities and by change. At the beginning of the twentieth century politicians might have anticipated that literacy would preoccupy policy makers, but nobody would have anticipated that a major literacy challenge for people today would be "too much information."

Organization of Part I

Part I is comprised of two chapters.

Chapter One identifies the kinds of knowledge child and adult learners need to acquire as they learn to read and write print.

Two broad perspectives are described and their limitations are examined, each from the point of view of the other. Following Purcell-Gates et al. (2004, p. 84),

this report recommends viewing literacy through "a widened lens" that considers what each perspective contributes to our understanding and practice.

Chapter One does not include specialized information or recommendations for interventions designed to meet the needs of struggling readers and writers or students with identified educational exceptionalities. This is a limitation of the literature review. However, researchers and practitioners in the field of inclusive education are better qualified to discuss this specialized literature.

Finally, the chapter provides a short introduction to the field of New Literacy Studies. Research and theoretical writing in the field of New Literacy Studies suggests that new technologies and digital culture are profoundly influencing the ways people communicate, not only in schools, but especially outside of formal educational settings. Educational practices lag behind the research and behind the out-of-school practices of most children and youth.

A small body of scientifically-based reading and writing research (SBRR) currently informs ideas about best practices for instruction. However, research informed by a "widened lens" perspective indicates that skills acquired in instructional activities are maintained and used only when learners find authentic reasons to use them. A second finding relates to collaboration. In adult education settings collaborative approaches to program planning positively influenced outcomes for learners. The principles of authenticity and collaboration are taken up again in Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

Chapter Two focuses on family literacy.

Family literacy is an emerging field within Literacy Studies with roots in ethnographic studies of language use (e.g., Heath, 1983) and print literacy practices in family settings (e.g., Taylor, 1983) during the 1980s.

Family literacy is also a field of professional practice within adult education, early childhood education and care (ECEC), and public schooling. It is apt to look different in each of those contexts. Of course, family literacy is a field of practice for families, too. Stated simply, family literacy refers to literacy practices in family contexts.

Finally, family literacy is the focus of education and social policy. Family literacy policies are located at an intersection of school readiness policies, Early Child Development (ECD) policies and adult literacy policies. School readiness, adult literacy and family literacy policies all reflect human capital theory. At the societal level, high literacy levels are associated with economic well-being and improved

health (Perrin, 1998, quoted in Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 1-12). Family literacy supports that economic goal and aims to improve life chances for individual parents and children.

Policy makers, project coordinators and practitioners look to research literature to guide decisions about how to employ limited resources in ways that make life better for families and communities. They ask: What kinds of family literacy programming can promote literacy as a way of life? They also ask: How can we employ limited resources in ways that help program participants gain access to better lives? The nature of a "better life" is understood differently by different stakeholders. This chapter aims to address the questions from more than one viewpoint.

Since the late 1990s the scope of family literacy in research and practice, but not policy making, has expanded in two important ways.

First, the field now encompasses not only reading and writing, but also an array of communicative practices including digital literacy (see, for example, Rowsell, 2006) and numeracy, what some people call family math (see, for example, Action for Family Literacy Ontario's *Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices*. Chapter Two does not address numeracy issues, but recommends that the principles of authenticity and collaboration are as relevant to numeracy as they are to literacy.

Second, the range of research approaches has expanded to include evaluation studies and experimental designs as well as observational studies.

If family literacy is viewed through a New Literacy Studies lens it is possible to say with confidence that all families practice literacy as they go about their daily lives.

However, if family literacy is viewed through the narrower, more traditional definition of literacy (i.e., reading and writing print), then it is more accurate to say that most families who live in communities that use and depend on reading and writing will engage in reading and writing of one kind or another. Certainly the effects of globalization make it hard to imagine a community where some form of literacy, even in its narrow sense, is not valued, but family literacy is not universally valued or practised.

Family literacy research literature provides evidence that parents and other caregivers support children's literacy development in a variety of ways,

by encouraging them to "write" notes, messages, lists, and so forth (Taylor, 1983); reading print in the home and community such as signs, books, advertisements, religious materials, notes, grocery lists, and logos (Purcell-Gates, 1996); encouraging language development through discussion, and through riddles, rhymes, raps, and songs (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001); teaching, in developmentally appropriate ways, the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent (Senechal & Lefevre, 2002); supporting their young children's responses to popular culture texts (Lenters, 2007); and providing role models as readers and writers (Anderson, 1995). As well, young children use a range of symbols to construct and represent meaning (Kress, 1997; Marsh, 2006). (Anderson, Lenters, & McTavish, 2008, p. 63)

In summary, Chapter Two presents family literacy as a field of study, a field of policy making and a field of practice for parents and literacy practitioners. It examines issues pertaining to best practices for programs, specifically in an Ontario context, and briefly introduces principles of community development that can be applied to program planning.

Evidence that most people acquire literacy with support from some form of instruction is relevant to family literacy. It suggests that programs have much to offer families. The principles of authenticity and collaboration are also relevant. Effective family literacy programs integrate skills learning within authentic community activities.

The final section of Chapter Two looks forward to Part II. Although the technical vocabulary sometimes differs, promising practices for community development echo the principles of authenticity and collaboration introduced in Chapter One and further discussed in Chapter Two.

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Chapter One

Children's Literacy Development

1.1   Introduction

This chapter examines published research and professional literature from the multidisciplinary field of literacy studies to address the following questions:

- What is literacy?
- How does literacy develop?
- What conditions and activities best support young children's literacy?

Ideas about the nature of literacy, how literacy develops, and how it should be nurtured and taught to young children are subjects of vigorous debate, not only in educational circles, but also in the popular media. The answers to these questions therefore inform the decisions of policy makers and practitioners alike. It is understandable that both groups would prefer to know "what works" and then to act on that information. However, studies that investigate "what works" are not of one kind. Studies are informed by beliefs about the nature of literacy and assumptions about the nature of evidence. This literature review defines both terms generously and argues that literacy and research should be viewed through a "widened lens" (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004, p. 84).

The particular relevance to multilingual literacy learners is taken up in section 1.4.1.

1.2   What is Literacy?

Until recently, defining literacy was easy. Literacy was reading and writing print. The term *literacy* first appeared in print in 1883 (Gillen & Hall, 2003, p. 3). At that time educators talked about reading and writing rather than *literacy*.

Until the mid 1980s, most Canadian elementary schools taught reading and writing as separate subjects. It is only during the last twenty-five years that the

term *literacy* has replaced reading and writing in everyday conversation and the popular media.

The early history of literacy research is primarily a history of reading research. It is linked to the emergence of psychology as an academic discipline at the end of the nineteenth century. Psychologists took an interest in reading, not for its own sake, but because the reading process provided a window through which to study perception.

Writing was not studied by psychologists until the late twentieth century. Much of the early research on writing was conducted by scholars in the fields of literature, rhetoric and composition (Gillen & Hall, 2003).
Ideas about the nature of literacy and how it develops have changed dramatically since the 1970s, especially in Western countries.

Starting in the 1970s, emergent literacy researchers showed educators that print literacy development begins long before the first formal literacy lessons take place at school.

More recently definitions of literacy have expanded to include a host of other communicative practices besides reading and writing, many of them associated with advances in information and communication technologies. Reading and writing are now described collectively as print literacy.

> Print literacy is the reading and writing of some form of print for communicative purposes inherent in people's lives. (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004, p. 26)

Print literacy remains central to discussions about literacy, but reading and writing are no longer the only literacies considered necessary for success in life.

> Literacy is no longer defined as the ability to read. Rather, the concept encompasses written communication, comprehension, the capacity to analyze text critically, and the skills needed to understand communications technologies, video, television, and new media, as well as the ability to use a wide range of information to function in daily life. Literacy skills in society today are increasingly complex and sophisticated, with implications for economic and cultural survival and access to job opportunities and the earning power necessary to support oneself, family, and community (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada,

2005; Province of Prince Edward Island, 1999, cited in Timmons et al., 2008, p. 94)

1.2.1   Changing Views of Literacy

The following table summarizes 70 years of thinking about literacy education in English-speaking countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand and Australia. The chart builds on an idea proposed by the Australian literacy researcher, Jan Turbill (2002). It is divided into seven time periods, or ages. The chart shows that the field of literacy education is marked by change and continuity. For example, ideas about the nature of reading have changed, but the idea that reading involves figuring out the rules for the writing system of the language represents continuity.

What are Multiliteracies? The term *multiliteracies* refers to "all media forms that combine iconic images, symbolic systems and conventions of presentation" (Lapp, Heath, & Langer, 2009, p. 3). Multiliteracies theory argues that everyone engages in multiliteracies as they go about their daily lives. Multiliteracies includes print literacy and recognizes that people use print literacy in multiliteracies contexts such as web site design and blogging. We must know how to write in the traditional sense to create a blog.

Seven Ages of Literacy	What is literacy? How is it taught?
The age of controlled vocabulary and basal readers 1940s – 1960s	Reading is recognizing words. Children memorize some words and figure out others using phonics rules. Writing is handwriting, spelling and grammar. Reading and writing are taught separately starting at grade one.
The age of phonics 1960s – 1970s	Reading is recognizing words. Children memorize some words and figure out others using phonics rules. Writing is handwriting, spelling and grammar. The focus of reading instruction is on matching sounds and symbols. Reading and writing are taught separately starting at grade one.
The age of Whole Language and the Reading	Reading is making sense of the printed word. Children are problem solvers. Writing is the flip-side of reading. Writing is a way of recording thinking.

Wars 1970s – 1990s	The focus of instruction changes from sound-symbol relationships to strategies such as predicting, confirming, reading ahead, re-reading, and using picture clues. Lessons at school become less formal. ECEC is recognized as a developmentally appropriate context for informal literacy lessons. Advocates for Direct Instruction of phonics and language debate with advocates of Whole Language. Whole Language is dominant in classrooms, but Direct Instruction is used in remedial settings and some Head Start programs.
The age of reading & writing connections 1990s – present	Reading and writing are meaning-making processes. Kindergartens and early childhood settings pay more attention to print in the environment. More literacy play props are available in early childhood settings. Pretend writing and invented spelling are encouraged. Young children are encouraged to write for authentic (real) purposes. Emergent writing is recognized as one path to reading.
The age of social purposes 1990s – present	Literacy learning is a life-long process. We never stop learning to read and write as long as we keep reading and writing. We read and write for a variety of purposes including, but not only school-related purposes. School literacy provides access to the "culture of power."
The age of multiliteracies 1990s – present	Literacy implies the ability to read and write and use other literacy tools in a range of contexts. We read and write not only printed text, but also colours, sounds, movement and visual representations such as graphs and photos. Some reading and writing strategies can be generalized to other communication modes, e.g., we read pictures and interpret dance. Many educators are not yet sure how to support multiliteracies.
The age of accountability and contradictions: 2000 – present	Literacy is often described in economic terms. Policy makers express concerns about the need for a highly literate workforce. Most provincial literacy assessments still conceptualize literacy primarily as print literacy.

	Early childhood programs are now considered appropriate settings for systematic and intentional print literacy instruction and standardized assessments. Explicit teaching of sound-symbol relationships and strategies are a part of most kindergarten programs, and attention is being paid to spelling, grammar and word usage.
	At the same time, it is evident that we now inhabit a "new media" age. More educators pay attention to pop culture and literacy practices such as social networking that originate outside of school. New technologies are at the forefront of programming for marginalized youth.
	Digital literacies and critical literacy are linked in theory and in practice by multiliteracies pedagogy.

Adapted from: Turbill, J. (2002).The four ages of reading philosophy and pedagogy: A framework for examining theory and practice. *Reading Online, 5*(6).

Available at http://www.readingonline.org/international/inter_index.asp?HREF=turbill4/index.html

1.2.2 Literacy Education in an Age of Accountability

As the chart indicates, we are currently living through an age of contradictions and an age of accountability. This is a challenging combination.

Since the 1990s, policy makers at all levels of education have become preoccupied with the assessment of print literacy, but even supporters of large scale literacy interventions such as *Early Reading First* in the United States are wondering "what counts" in literacy education and what exactly educators should be counting (see, for example, Teale, 2008).

The chart also makes clear how deeply politicized literacy education is. The Reading Wars of the 1970s and 1980s are over, but there is no consensus about the nature of print literacy, about how it develops, or about how best to teach print literacy to beginners.

1.3 How Does Literacy Develop?

Most literacy researchers tend to locate their work within one of two broad perspectives: a cognitive-developmental perspective and a sociocultural / social practices perspective.

The cognitive lens views literacy as a set of skills. The skills develop "inside the head" and in a similar way for everyone, regardless of their class, gender, or cultural background. Most researchers who view literacy through a cognitive lens see literacy development as a set of stages or phases in which beginners learn to decode and encode (spell), acquire fluency and develop comprehension strategies. Emergent literacy is discussed as a lens and as a stage in literacy development. Since the late 1990s, a highly influential group of researchers from the field of psychology has published several meta-analyses of scientifically-based reading research and proposed a set of best practices for early literacy instruction.

The social practices perspective has its roots in anthropological and sociological studies. It treats literacy as a set of cultural tools. It stresses the importance of social context and purpose. Social practices researchers claim that there are different kinds of literacy and ways of being literate. Think, for example, of grammar and spelling in workplace emails and compare them with social media such as text messages or Face Book. Social practices researchers have pointed out that being literate in the traditional sense is more valued in educational settings, but not as useful as it was in out-of-school settings.

1.3.1   The Cognitive Lens

Researchers in the field of cognitive psychology share some basic understandings about learning and memory (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 126). They have researched "such human mental capabilities as perception and attention, representations of knowledge, memory and learning, problem solving and reasoning, and language acquisition, production and comprehension" (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004, p. 42).

Literacy researchers who view literacy through a cognitive lens believe that print literacy develops in a series of stages marked by milestones. People may develop literacy at different rates, but the milestones are the same for everyone. The three most significant achievements for readers are decoding, fluency and comprehension.

Among the most influential literacy constructs explored from a cognitive perspective are *bottom-up/top-down processing, schemas and stages of skill learning* (Purcell-Gates et al., p. 42).

Bottom-up and top-down processing:
Information processing theory describes the unobservable, underlying cognitive processes involved in the processing, storage and retrieval of information during reading.

- Bottom-up models envision the reading process as one in which lower level cognitive processes such as matching letters to sounds influence higher level processes such as predicting what will happen in a story.

- Top-down models envision the reading process as one in which higher level processes such as predicting what will happen next influence lower level processes such as what a word says.

The most influential of the information processing models in reading education is Rumelhart's Interactive model (1977, 1994). Rumelhart argues that bottom-up and top-down processing can occur simultaneously. In everyday terms, Rumelhart's model suggests that comprehension supports children's ability to decode new words; at the same time, the ability to recognize new words supports comprehension.

> In Rumelhart's Interactive Model, a variety of processors converge on visual information simultaneously, rather than in a linear process. The simultaneous processing of syntactic information (referring to word order in sentences), semantic information (related to message construction), orthographic information (related to visual input), and lexical information (referring to word knowledge) allows for higher level and lower level processes to simultaneously interact on the visual input. (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, pp. 138-139)

What does Rumelhart's interactive model mean for teaching early literacy?
Rumelhart's interactive model "settled" one of the key debates of the Reading Wars. Whole language advocates argued that beginning readers use a whole text such as a story or poem to figure out the parts of the text (sentences and words). Code-emphasis or Phonics advocates argued that children should begin with the letters and sounds and work up from the parts to the whole. Rumelhart

argued that readers do both and that the two kinds of processing support one another interactively.

Schemas
Schema theory helps us to understand why being out and about and building a good general knowledge base is so important to young children's reading success.

Schema theory proposes that people organize everything that they know into their own personalized knowledge structures. A schema works like Velcro. If a child has a basic schema for a topic such as restaurants, they will more easily grasp the idea of a fast food restaurant or a cafeteria – and in so doing they will add to their schema for restaurants.

Anderson and Pearson (1984) claimed that readers have schemas for reading processes such as decoding, skimming, summarizing and so on, as well as for the actual topics they are reading about. Readers also develop schemas for different types of text such as storybook, activity book, poem, and so on (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, pp. 52-53).

Stage theories of reading and writing development
Stage theories have been popular and influential. Almost all educational programs use a stage model. In some educational programs, learning to read and write has been broken down into smaller and smaller steps arranged along a continuum.

Chall (1983) proposed six stages in learning to read. She argued that readers must master the skills associated with one stage before moving on to the next. Chall focused on reading instruction in classrooms and organized stages to correspond with children's ages.

Chall's stages of reading development

- Pre-reading ~ 0-6 years
- Initial reading (decoding) ~ 6-7 years
- Confirmation, fluency, ungluing from print ~ 7-8 years
- Reading for learning the new ~ 8-14 years
- Multiple viewpoints ~ 14-18 years
- Construction and reconstruction ~ 18+ years

Ehri (1999) proposed four phases in learning to read and argued that readers could move on from a stage without having mastered it. Ehri's model focuses on learning the alphabetic principle.

Ehri's 4-Phase Model

- Pre-alphabetic
- Partial alphabetic
- Full alphabetic
- Consolidated alphabetic

Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnson's (1996) emergent and beginning stages of writing focus on encoding (spelling) rather than composition.

Bear et al.'s Writing Stages

The Emergent Stage (ages 1-7) is characterized by scribbling, pretend writing and drawing, some letter-like shapes, but no sound-symbol matching.

The Beginning Stage (ages 5-9) is a time of progress from copying one or two word

phrases to composing half page retellings of events or stories. Children use invented spellings with increasing success and memorize spellings of irregular words.

The Transitional Stage (ages 6-12) is characterized by more planning, organization, detail and general fluency.

The Intermediate and Specialized Writing Stage (ages 10+) is characterized by fluency, new expressions and knowledge of genres such as arguments. Voice becomes more obvious in this stage.

1.3.2 Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy is a stage in reading and writing development and a theoretical perspective about how people learn to read and write.

Much of the research that informed stage models of reading or writing development was experimental or quasi-experimental and took place in laboratories. However, the early emergent literacy studies gathered observational evidence.

The term, *emergent literacy*, was coined in 1969 by the New Zealand psychologist, Marie Clay. Emergent literacy denotes a period in literacy development that begins at birth and concludes when the child achieves automaticity* and fluency.**

> *Automaticity is the ability to read most everyday words in English at a glance. No more lessons in decoding are required.
> **Fluency is the ability to read a passage with expression and at a conversational pace. The choppy, word-by-word reading of beginning readers has disappeared.

Emergent literacy is not tied to the age of the child. It can cover any time period in a child's life from birth to eight years or even older. For some children the emergent literacy phase is over before they begin kindergarten; for others it may extend well into the junior grades (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 85).

Emergent literacy made a profound contribution to the field of Early Childhood Literacy. Its focus is how children orchestrate different kinds of knowledge as they learn to read and write. It takes a broader view of literacy than some other cognitive perspectives. Listening and speaking as well as reading and writing are part of emergent literacy.

During the emergent literacy phase children acquire many understandings about written language. They use that knowledge to solve the puzzle of print.

Some understandings acquired by children in the emergent stage:

- What we say and what others say can be written down and read.
- Pictures can help us guess what the words might say, but readers read the words, not the pictures.

- In print, spaces separate words from each other. (Children need to grasp this understanding about oral language first. For example, some very young children may believe that "How are you?" is a single word, but they grow out of it.)

- Reading involves matching the printed words on a page or a screen to spoken words.

- Reading goes from left to right and from top to bottom of a page or screen.
- A book is read from front to back.
- A book has a title, an author, and sometimes an illustrator.

- Printed language is usually divided into sentences.
- Sentences begin with capital letters.
- Sentences end with periods, question marks, or exclamation marks.
- Sentences are divided into words.
- Words are made up of letters. The letters tell readers what to say. It's like a code. (see Gunning, 1996, pp. 26-27)

What is emergent literacy?
Children begin learning about reading and writing at a very early age by observing and interacting with adults and other children as they use literacy in everyday activities, such as writing shopping lists, and in special literacy-focused routines, such as storybook reading.

Young children test their beliefs about how written language works and, based on how others respond and the results they get, modify these beliefs and construct more sophisticated systems of reading and writing. For example, their attempts at

writing often evolve from scribbles, to letter-like forms, to random streams of letters, and finally to increasingly elaborate systems of invented spelling (Sulzby, 1990).

Eventually, with lots of opportunities to engage in meaningful literacy activities, large amounts of interaction with adults and peers, and some incidental instruction, children become conventional readers and writers. (Vukelich & Christie, 2009, p.1)

During the emergent stage, children are busy acquiring and orchestrating knowledge in the following areas: oral language and vocabulary, knowledge of the alphabet, phonological and phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, knowledge about print and books, and emergent writing skills.

Oral language and vocabulary

Children learn language by interacting with the people close to them. Even a baby's babbling and cooing, which sounds to us like joyful but meaningless noise, fulfills communicative purposes.

One source of language learning is genetic. We are programmed to communicate and to figure out the language rules of the communities into which we are born.

The other source of language learning is the environment. We pick up the specific rules of our language communities.

Children learn language in order to interact socially and to make sense of their experiences.

Children do not learn only by imitation. If children learned only by imitation, they wouldn't use expressions such as "I goed to the store."

Children do not learn by being corrected, either. They need to work out the rules themselves. Eventually they figure them out, but they need time and opportunities to make mistakes.

Before they use words, children use cries and gestures to communicate.

Language development is not predictable, but in general children say their first words between 12 and 18 months of age.

Children begin to use complex sentences by 4 to 4 ½ years. By the time they start kindergarten they know most of the fundamentals.

Babies' babbling sounds are their first attempts to get control over their sound-making apparatus. All babies, whatever their nationality, make the same range of sounds, but the adults in a baby's life reinforce the sounds that most resemble the sounds of their own language. Very gradually babies learn to use the sounds that seem most meaningful to the people around them and they forget how to make the other sounds. At first, babies don't babble to communicate, but when adults respond to them as if they are communicating, they quickly learn to use babbling so that they can be part of the social world of the family. When adults act as if babies' babblings are "real words," they are actually promoting language development.

Language is always purposeful.

Michael Halliday (1973) observed that even at 12 months, babies use language for a variety of purposes such as finding things out, creating imaginary happenings and socializing. The "informative function" of language, that is language that says, "I've got something to tell you," is only observable at 22 months. It is hard for some children to tell us things even as late as four years of age.

A rich vocabulary is necessary for reading achievement, but vocabulary helps in different ways at different stages.

For younger preschoolers and for older children (e.g., grades four and five), an extensive vocabulary directly influences reading comprehension. For children in early primary grades, a rich vocabulary supports the development of phonological awareness.

Research indicates that interventions designed to support children's vocabulary and knowledge of story structure will be most beneficial to children early in the preschool years (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001).

Children encounter new words when listening and reading. They usually understand many more words than they can say and write.

Children do not acquire new vocabulary by memorizing lists of words. They make words their own by using them.

Risk takers and extroverts acquire new words more quickly than shy children. However, some shy children will talk to a puppet and let a puppet speak "for them."

For preschoolers, socio-dramatic play is an important way to promote vocabulary development.

Knowledge of the alphabet

Alphabet knowledge is more than being able to recite ABCs. As children encounter and interact with print in their daily lives, they figure out many things about the alphabet.

For example:
- People use squiggles to write things down.
- Some squiggles are letters.
- Letters have names.
- Letters make sounds.
- My name is made of letters.

Phonological awareness

Phonology is the branch of linguistics concerned with the sounds of a language. *Phonological awareness* is an "umbrella" term that covers many concepts related to hearing sounds in the environment as well as sounds in words.

To develop phonological awareness:
- sing songs and chant rhymes;
- play percussion instruments and clap to a beat,
- play with words,
- listen to rhyming books,
- listen to the grass grow.

The two aspects of phonological awareness that make a difference to children's future reading achievement are: (1) the ability to distinguish between the "onset and rime" of a word; and (2) the ability to detect and manipulate the smallest speech sounds (phonemic awareness).

Phonological and phonemic awareness should not be confused with phonics. Children can acquire phonological awareness and phonemic awareness without being able to name letters. Children gradually learn to use phonemic awareness together with knowledge of the alphabetic principle to figure out words.

The following table shows how phonemic awareness and phonics differ.

How Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Differ

Phonemic Awareness	Phonics
Focuses on auditory awareness	Focuses on visual and auditory discrimination
Is speech-based (listening and speaking)	Is print-based
Phonemes (sounds) to graphemes (letters)	Graphemes (letters) to phonemes (sounds)

From: *Ontario Early Reading Strategy: Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading Kindergarten to Grade 3, 2003*

Questions that support phonemic awareness:

- Whose name begins like your name?
- Which two of these pictures begin with the same sound?
- How does the word *turtle*, end?
- Can you say the sounds in mat? (m – a – t)
- What do you hear if you take the sound /t/ from tap and put in the sound /m/?

Onset and Rime:

The onset of a word is every letter before the first vowel.

Onset	Rime
h	im
th	en
k	itten

Some questions that help children acquire an awareness of onset and rime:
- Do these words rhyme?
- What rhymes with . . .?
- Can you find two things that rhyme in this picture?

The Alphabetic Principle

The alphabetic principle is the key to cracking the code. In the English writing system, letters of the alphabet stand for sounds.

- Children need to recognize the letters of the alphabet.
- They need to be able to segment words into individual sounds (phonemic awareness).
- They need to be able to match sounds to letters.

For example, the letter "p" says /p/ in the words post, place and panic.

Learning the alphabetic principle is easier in some languages than in others. This is because some languages are more regular than others.

English is only partly regular.
There are only 26 letters to represent 44 phonemes (sounds).

For example, the letters "t" and "h" are needed to make the sound /th/ as in thing and though. (But notice that they don't make quite the same sound!)

The fact that English is only partially regular means that the rules of phonics can help readers, but knowing and using the rules of phonics will not always help.

Three reasons why learning to read and write English is tricky:

One vowel sound can be represented in many ways, e.g., bed /head, or/oar, even/meat
The "long e" in the word "sleep" can be spelled in 14 different ways.

The vowel letters (a, e, i, o, u and sometimes y) symbolize a variety of sounds, e.g., earth/ear.

Some letters such as c, q and x are superfluous.
We could do without them because other letters already do the same work, e.g., box could be written as "bocks."

Learning about print and books

As children learn about print and books, they learn the following concepts:
- Print says something.

- Print looks different from drawing.
- There are long and short words.
- Words are made of letters.
- Spaces and punctuation marks mean something too.
- Books have fronts and backs.
- We read from front to back.
- On each page we read from left to right and from top to bottom.
- People make and use print for a variety of purposes.

Children figure out the idea of a word in stages.

1. Words and the things they represent are not the same.
2. Words name things.
3. Words are used in stories and other texts.
4. Words have meanings outside of their contexts.

Children learn about print and books when they
- play with the books and handle them,
- talk about books as if they were strange objects using terms such as front & back, cover, blurb, title page, endpapers, line, word, illustration,
- count the words on posters and other environmental print,
- point to the words sometimes as someone reads to them,
- play games such as Find the Word.

Many children memorize texts before they can read them "properly."
- Memorizing a book is not the same as actually reading, but memorizing is a step along the way.
- Children often point to each word as they "read" the book and they begin to memorize exciting words such as *dinosaur*.
- Adults often read the same book to a child over and over again and encourage children to "pretend read" the book independently.

Emergent writing
Emergent writing is much more than learning how to form letters. Children compose messages for their own real (that is authentic) purposes. They do not need to know how to form letters in order to engage in pretend writing.

As children pretend to write for play purposes, they gradually learn how to form letters and they draw on their emerging knowledge of the alphabetic principle to invent spellings and sometimes create their own rules.

Young children test their beliefs about how written language works and, based on how others respond and the results they get, modify these beliefs and construct more sophisticated systems of reading and writing. For example, their attempts at writing often evolve from scribbles, to letter-like forms, to random streams of letters, and finally to increasingly elaborate systems of invented spelling (Sulzby, 1990).

Eventually, with lots of opportunities to engage in meaningful literacy activities, large amounts of interaction with adults and peers, and some incidental instruction, children become conventional readers and writers. (Vukelich & Christie, 2009, p. 1)

Adults help children learn to write when they
- respond to pretend writing as if the writing actually says something,
- put pencils, markers, etc. in play areas,
- provide access to developmentally-appropriate interactive technologies,
- provide access to literacy-rich play environments. (Play centres might include Post Office, Train Station, Airport, Book Centre and Library, Restaurant, Medical Centre, Grocery Store, Video Store*).*

The importance of emergent literacy for literacy education
Emergent literacy was popular and highly influential in professional education and classroom teaching during the 1980s and 1990s. It remains influential in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

Emergent literacy is less influential as a perspective now than in the 1990s. It is sometimes mistakenly confused with Whole Language Instruction because it stresses the importance of access to good books in the early years and because its ideas achieved popularity among educators at about the same time as Whole Language.

Emergent literacy brought genuinely new understandings to the field of literacy.

Emergent literacy drew educators' attention to the social contexts in which children learn language and literacy.

The emergent literacy framework, with its roots in cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics, was one of the first theories of early literacy to challenge the commonly held assumption that reading and literacy activities in general are intrapersonal and linear mental processes. (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003, p. 36).

> Emergent literacy research "stressed the importance of parents, caregivers, teachers and literacy-rich environments in children's literacy development. . . . As a result, contextual factors that lead to literacy development became a crucial dimension in the study of early literacy. (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003, p. 36).

In an essay entitled *The Emergence of Early Childhood Literacy*, Julia Gillen and Nigel Hall (2003, p. 6) identify two major contributions of emergent literacy research to the field of Early Childhood Literacy:

> (1) an expanded view of literacy;
> (2) respect for children as strategic literacy learners.

I would add

> (3) an expanded role for parents and ECEC practitioners.

An expanded view of literacy
Emergent literacy illuminates the interrelatedness of the four language modes, speaking, listening, writing and reading. It brings into view the fact that development in one mode supports development in one or more of the others and that difficulties in one area have ripple effects, too (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 85).

A view of young children as strategic literacy learners
Emergent Literacy research provides support for the social constructivist model of learning in which young children are seen as active, strategic and social problem solvers.

Anyone who has observed young children making and using pretend shopping lists, traffic tickets, and restaurant menus, or sharing in a routine pastime such as storybook reading can see children at work as problem solvers. It seems surprising to us now that only in the 1970s did literacy researchers as a group begin to speak out about their observations.

> It is absurd to imagine that four- or five-year-old children growing up in an urban environment that displays print everywhere (on toys, on billboards and road signs, on their clothes, on TV) do not develop any idea about the cultural object until they find themselves sitting before a teacher. (Ferreiro and Teberosky,1982, p.12)

An expanded educational role for parents and ECEC practitioners
Prior to the advent of emergent literacy, reading and writing instruction were considered to be the responsibility of the school.
Most educators believed that children should not be exposed to formal reading and writing lessons until they were physically and mentally ready for formal instruction. For this reason, parents were discouraged from teaching their children to read.

Reading Readiness: 50 years of misinformation

Morphett and Washburne (1931) said that a child should reach the mental age of 6years and 6 months before beginning formal reading lessons.

Dolch and Bloomster (1937) said that a child needed to reach the mental age of seven years before being taught phonics.

Ironically, educators developed ways to teach Readiness. Until the late 1970s, children in kindergarten completed Readiness exercises. Sometimes they traced lines with a fat pencil, sometimes they listened to pairs of words such as *Sam* and *sat* and told the teacher if the words were the same or different; sometimes they coloured pictures of rhyming words (e.g., hat and bat).

During the 1970s, the readiness perspective was challenged on several counts:

- Key readiness studies were found to be unscientific.

- The instruments employed to measure mental age are measures of oral language development. A component of emergent literacy was being used to measure whether children were ready to learn literacy.

- Evidence from studies of precocious (early) readers suggested that early intellectual giftedness is not the key predictor of early reading ability. Rather, it was children's experiences in the home and community that enabled them to read early.

Several pioneering emergent literacy studies focused on early readers, children who came to kindergarten already able to read. . . . Results showed that many early readers were of average intelligence, contradicting the commonly assumed link between early reading and intellectual giftedness. Parental interviews revealed that

> these children shared several characteristics, including an early interest in print and writing. The parents also reported that they frequently read stories to their children
>
> and took the time to answer their children's questions about written language. These findings suggested that home experiences had an important role in promoting early reading. (Vukelich & Christie, 2009, p. 1)

Once policy makers became aware of the importance of the years before school for literacy learning, they began to pay more attention to literacy learning in community settings such as parent-child resource centres, childcare, preschool and nursery programs, and, of course, children's homes. A new field called *family literacy* emerged. Family literacy is discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

The consequences of family literacy have been mostly positive.

However, awareness that the years before school make a difference to children's learning at school have fuelled the debates about beginning reading and writing instruction in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) arena. Some educators have argued for more direct instruction of early reading skills such as phonemic awareness and even phonics.

Others have expressed concern that the learning opportunities afforded by the more playful aspects of the ECE curriculum are being eroded.

> In recent years the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) community in North America has been increasingly preoccupied with notions of evidence especially in relation to children's print literacy development and, as Sally Lubeck (2000, p. 3) pointed out, "professional commitment to play is being eroded" in a "political climate dominated by the language of standards and outcomes."
>
> Given the attention paid to accountability in ECEC over twenty years or more, it is not surprising that storytelling activities are sometimes viewed as peripheral to the "real" business of literacy learning. It has been difficult to make a direct link between storytelling activities and the learning outcomes listed in many standardized curricula. (Stooke, 2009, p.245)

Emergent literacy and Developmentally Appropriate Practice

The ECEC community responded to the new literacy policies in constructive ways.

For example, the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) developed and revised a series of guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice.

The following summary appears in the IRA / NAEYC (1998) position statement: *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children.* Notice that the guide is organized as a continuum that follows the school curriculum.

A continuum of children's development in early reading and writing
Phase 1: Awareness and exploration (goals for preschool)
Children explore their environment and build the foundations for learning to read and write.

Children can
- enjoy listening to and discussing storybooks
- understand that print carries a message
- engage in reading and writing attempts
- identify labels and signs in their environment
- participate in rhyming games
- identify some letters and make some letter-sound matches
- use known letters or approximations of letters to represent written language (especially meaningful words like their name and phrases such as "I love you")

What teachers do
- share books with children, including Big Books, and model reading behaviors
- talk about letters by name and sounds, and establish a literacy-rich environment
- reread favorite stories
- engage children in language games
- promote literacy-related play activities
- encourage children to experiment with writing

What parents and family members can do
- talk with children, engage them in conversation, give names of things, show interest in what a child says
- read and reread stories with predictable texts to children
- encourage children to recount experiences and describe ideas and events that are important to them

- visit the library regularly
- provide opportunities for children to draw and print using markers, crayons, and pencils

Phase 2: Experimental reading and writing (goals for kindergarten)
Children develop basic concepts of print and begin to engage in and experiment with reading and writing.

Kindergartners can
- enjoy being read to and retell simple narrative stories or informational texts
- use descriptive language to explain and explore
- recognize letters and letter-sound matches
- show familiarity with rhyming and beginning sounds
- understand left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation and familiar concepts of print
- match spoken words with written ones
- begin to write letters of the alphabet and some high frequency words

What teachers do
- encourage children to talk about reading and writing experiences
- provide many opportunities for children to explore and identify sound-symbol relationships in meaningful contexts
- help children to segment spoken words into individual sounds and blend the sounds into whole words (for example, by slowly writing a word and saying its sound)
- read interesting and conceptually rich stories to children frequently
- provide daily opportunities for children to write
- help children build a sight vocabulary
- create a literacy-rich environment for children to engage in reading and writing independently

What parents and family members can do
- read and reread narrative and informational stories to children daily
- encourage children's attempts at reading and writing
- allow children to participate in activities that involve writing and reading (for example, cooking, making grocery lists)
- play games that involve specific directions (such as "Simon Says")
- have conversations with children during mealtimes and throughout the day

Phase 3: Early reading and writing (goals for first grade)
Children begin to read simple stories and can write about a topic that is meaningful to them.

First graders can

- read and retell familiar stories
- use strategies (rereading, predicting, questioning, contextualizing) when comprehension breaks down
- use reading and writing for various purposes on their own initiative
- orally read with reasonable fluency
- use letter-sound associations, word parts, and context to identify new words
- identify an increasing number of words by sight
- sound out and represent all substantial sounds in spelling a word
- write about topics that are personally meaningful
- attempt to use some punctuation and capitalization

What teachers do
- support the development of vocabulary by reading daily to the children, transcribing their language, and selecting materials that expand the children's knowledge and language development
- model strategies and provide practice for identifying unknown words
- give children opportunities for independent reading and writing practice
- read, write, and discuss a range of different text types (e.g., poems, informational books)
- introduce new words and teach strategies for learning to spell new words
- demonstrate and model strategies to use when comprehension breaks down
- help children build lists of commonly used words from their writing

What parents and family members can do
- talk about favorite storybooks
- read to children and encourage them to read to you
- suggest that children write to friends and relatives
- bring evidence of what your child can do in writing and reading to a parent-teacher conference
- encourage children to share what they have learned about their writing and reading

Phase 4: Transitional reading and writing (goals for second grade)
Children begin to read more fluently and write various text forms using simple and more complex sentences.

Second graders can
- read with greater fluency
- use strategies more efficiently (rereading, questioning and so on) when comprehension breaks down
- use word identification strategies with greater facility to unlock unknown words
- identify an increasing number of words by sight

- write about a range of topics to suit different audiences
- use common letter patterns and critical features to spell words
- punctuate simple sentences correctly and proofread their own work
- spend time reading daily and use reading to research topics

What teachers do
- create a climate that fosters analytic, evaluative, and reflective thinking
- teach children to write in multiple forms (e.g., stories, information, poems)
- ensure that children read a range of texts for a variety of purposes
- teach revising, editing, and proofreading skills
- teach strategies for spelling new and difficult words
- model enjoyment of reading

What parents and family members can do
- continue to read to children and encourage them to read to you
- engage children in activities that require reading and writing
- become involved in school activities
- show children your interest in their learning by displaying their written work
- visit the library regularly
- support your child's specific hobby or interest with reading materials and references

Phase 5: Independent and productive reading and writing (goals for third grade)
Children continue to extend and refine their reading and writing to suit varying purposes and audiences.

Third graders can
- read fluently and enjoy reading
- use a range of strategies when drawing meaning from the text
- use word identification strategies appropriately and automatically when encountering unknown words
- recognize and discuss elements of different text structures
- make critical connections between texts
- write expressively in many different forms (e.g., stories poems, reports)
- use a rich variety of vocabulary and sentences appropriate to text forms
- revise and edit their own writing during and after composing
- spell words correctly in final writing drafts

What teachers do
- provide opportunities daily for children to read, examine, and critically evaluate narrative and expository texts
- continue to create a climate that fosters critical reading and personal response
- teach children to examine ideas in texts
- encourage children to use writing as a tool for thinking and learning

- extend children's knowledge of the correct use of writing conventions
- emphasize the importance of correct spelling in finished written products
- create a climate that engages all children as a community of literacy learners

What parents and family members can do
- continue to support children's learning and interest by visiting the library and bookstores with them
- find ways to highlight children's progress in reading and writing
- stay in regular contact with their child's teachers about activities and progress in reading and writing
- encourage children to use and enjoy print for many purposes (such as recipes, directions, games, and sports)
- build a love of language in all its forms and engage children in conversation

From: International Reading Association and National Association for the Education of Young Children. 1998. *Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children* (pp. 8-9). A full-text PDF version of the Position Statement is available at http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSREAD98.PDF.

1.3.3 Scientifically-Based Reading Research (SBRR)

Like all influential ideas in education, emergent literacy has been challenged.

- One challenge comes from sociocultural researchers who acknowledge a debt to emergent literacy, but question its privileging of school-based literacy and its research base in studies that primarily examine the reading and writing of English-speaking children learning an alphabetic writing system. (See, for example, Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003.) The sociocultural lens is described in Section 1.3.2.

- The other challenge comes from a body of experimental research and correlation studies in psychology and special education known collectively as Scientifically-Based Reading Research (SBRR). SBRR researchers call for instructional practices based on research findings from experimental, quasi-experimental and correlation studies.

Scientifically-Based Reading Research (SBRR) challenges the research base of emergent literacy which consisted of small-scale, observational studies.

- SBRR studies aim to reveal the skills and concepts that young children need to become proficient readers and writers.

- SBRR also seeks to reveal the most effective strategies for teaching that content.

- One of the most consistent research findings is that young children's phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge can be increased via explicit instruction (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

- SBRR studies tend to focus on aspects of decoding print and on visual and auditory processes associated with reading ability.

- SBRR research provides the foundation for many "readiness for school" grant initiatives in the United States (Vukelich & Christie, 2009, p. 8).

- A recent influential SBRR report is *Developing Early Literacy: Report of 2the National Early Literacy Panel* (NICHD, 2000) which presents findings from a meta- analysis of studies of early intervention initiatives (http://www.nifl.gov/earlychildhood/NELP/NELPShanahan.html).

Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel (Executive Summary)

The panel set out first to establish which early skills or abilities could properly be said to be the precursors of later literacy achievement. This was important because, without such determination, it would be impossible to ascertain what programs or practices were most effective, because, even in the best of circumstances, most young children develop few conventional literacy skills before starting school. To identify the essential early skills or abilities relevant to later literacy development, the panel searched for published scientific studies that could provide correlational evidence showing the relationship between early skill attainment and later literacy growth in decoding, reading comprehension, or spelling. (p. 2)

Conventional reading and writing skills that are developed in the years from birth to age five have a clear and consistently strong relationship with later conventional literacy skills. Additionally, six variables representing early literacy skills or precursor literacy skills had medium to large predictive relationships with later measures of literacy development. These six variables not only correlated with later literacy as shown by data drawn from multiple studies with large numbers of children, but also maintained their predictive power even when the role of other variables, such as IQ or socioeconomic status (SES), were accounted for.

These six variables include:
- alphabet knowledge (AK): knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters
- phonological awareness (PA): the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning
- rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits: the ability to rapidly

  name a sequence of random letters or digits
- RAN of objects or colors: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of repeating random sets of pictures of objects (e.g., "car," "tree," "house," "man") or colors
- writing or writing name: the ability to write letters in isolation on request or to write one's own name
- phonological memory: the ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time. (p. 4)

Instructional Practices that Enhance Early Literacy Skills
The panel did not set out to find evaluations of previously identified programs or interventions but searched for all such studies that had been published in refereed journals in the English language. The panelists then grouped the identified studies into five analytical categories.

The categories of intervention and the number of studies within each category included the following:

- Code-focused interventions ($n = 78$): Interventions designed to teach children skills related to cracking the alphabetic code. Most code-focused interventions included PA instruction.

- Shared-reading interventions ($n = 19$): Interventions involving reading books to children. These interventions included studies of simple shared reading and those that encouraged various forms of reader-child interactions around the material being read.

- Parent and home programs (• $n = 32$): Interventions using parents as agents of intervention.

- These interventions may have involved teaching parents instructional techniques to use with their children at home to stimulate children's linguistic or cognitive development.

- Preschool and kindergarten programs (• $n = 33$): Studies evaluating any aspect of a preschool or kindergarten program. Ten studies in this category concerned one particular intervention (the Abecedarian Project). Other studies evaluated the effects of educational programs, curricula, or policies, such as extended-year experience, on kindergartners.

- Language-enhancement interventions (• $n = 28$): Studies examining the effectiveness of an instructional effort aimed at improving young children's language development.

Together, these findings suggest that there are many things that parents and preschools can do to improve the literacy development of their young children and that different approaches influence the development of a different pattern of essential skills.

It should be noted that the interventions that produced large and positive effects on children's code-related skills and conventional literacy skills were usually conducted as one-on-one or small-group instructional activities. These activities tended to be teacher-directed and focused on helping children learn skills by engaging in the use of those skills.

Almost all of the code-focused interventions included some form of PA intervention. These PA activities generally required children to detect or manipulate (e.g., delete or blend) small units of sounds in words. Few of the interventions used rhyming activities as the primary teaching approach. Teaching children about the alphabet (e.g., letter names or letter sounds) or simple phonics tasks (e.g., blending letter sounds to make words) seemed to enhance the effects of PA training. (pp. 4-5)

PDF of full Report: http://www.nifl.gov/publications/pdf/NELPReport09.pdf
PDF of Executive Summary: http://www.nifl.gov/publications/pdf/NELPSummary.pdf

A comprehensive resource for SBRR and other research on language and literacy is the Canadian Language and Literacy.Research Network's *Enclyclopedia of Language and Literacy*. The Netwok is now closed, but its online resources can still be accessed. The online *Encyclopedia of Language and Literacy* can be accessed at http://literacyencyclopedia.ca/.

1.3.4   The Sociocultural Lens
Sociocultural researchers acknowledge the contributions of emergent literacy to the field of early childhood literacy, but they also critique emergent literacy.

What is the sociocultural critique of emergent literacy? Emergent literacy researchers studied literacy outside of school, but their focus was always on the literacy development of individual children and on the kinds of problem solving and learning that would eventually lead to successful literacy learning at school.

Certain practices such as storybook reading were highly valued as were certain ways of talking to children at home.

Sociocultural researchers assert that it is wrong for educators to put all their efforts into teaching the "ways with words" of English-speaking, middle-class families.

First, it means children from certain home backgrounds are doubly disadvantaged when they arrive at school. They struggle with the expectations of school and they find that their resources are not recognized. They learn to see themselves through the eyes of more powerful others.

> While emergent literacy . . . identified the importance of literacy activity prior to school and the role of adults/caregivers in this process, early literacy researchers drawing on sociocultural theories were also able to illustrate the informal contexts in which literacy develops prior to normal schooling. (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003, pp. 37-38)

> Rather than only raising questions about whether children can read or write . . . studies ask what children know about literacy, seeking to learn about the relationship between children's literacy and the nature of literacy practices in which they routinely engage. (p. 35)

SBRR researchers are also concerned to help children from non-mainstream backgrounds, but SBRR researchers assert that "the achievement gap" can be closed through research-based instruction. Sociocultural researchers such as Luis Moll and his colleagues (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1994) have argued a different point. Moll at al. contend that every family and every community has "funds of knowledge" on which educators can build sound practices.

Sociocultural research is informed by the theoretical writing of the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. In the late 1970s Vygotsky's (1978) early theoretical writing was made available in translation to English-speaking literacy researchers. Vygotsky's work draws attention to the interrelatedness of language, culture and development. Sociocultural researchers therefore study literacy learning as culturally-shaped, situated practices.

Concepts such as "scaffolding" (Wood et al. 1976), "structuring situations", "apprenticeship" (Rogoff, 1986, 1990) and "assisted performance" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) have been particularly influential in describing how children learn to read and write (Gillen & Hall, 2003, p. 6).

SBRR research has been more successful at influencing policies than sociocultural research, perhaps because its recommendations are framed straightforwardly in research–to–practice terms. The high profile meta-analyses prepared by the National Reading Panel and National Early Literacy Panel excluded ethnographies and other qualitative studies.

It is therefore not surprising that advocates for sociocultural approaches and advocates of SBRR have been highly critical of one another.

> In April 2000 the National Reading Panel presented their analysis of more than 100,000 studies on early literacy and concluded that the five most essential components to a child's ability to read are the following: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. What is notably absent from this report are the significant contributions that sociocultural views of literacy and human development have had on understandings of early literacy development and instruction. (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003, p. 35).

Anthropologist Brian Street (1995) introduced the term *autonomous model* to describe the cognitive perspective because it conceptualizes literacy as discrete "in-the-head" skills that are the same for all, regardless of language background, identity, social status, or purpose.

Street contrasted the *autonomous model* with an *ideological model* in which literacy is conceptualized as practices that get "done" differently in different contexts. This "ideological" model assumes that different communities use language and literacy in different ways. Its research base until recently has consisted primarily of detailed ethnographic accounts of situated literacy practices. Street's work is foundational to New Literacy Studies, a field we discuss at the end of this chapter.

Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) studied the arguments on both sides of the debate and summarized their differences as follows:

Limitations of sociocultural approaches (from the perspective of SBRR):

- The focus on what children can do makes it difficult to talk about differences in achievement and worse, to do anything about them.
- The focus on practices means there is no way to identify subskills.
- Sociocultural research downplays "in-school" literacy activities and the role of instruction.
- Sociocultural research downplays the differences between oral language and print.

Limitations of SBRR (from the perspective of sociocultural researchers):

- SBRR focuses on individual skills and fails to see the forest for the trees.

- It is a mistake to search for one right teaching method.
- SBRR fails to acknowledge the role played by contexts of literacy use and by students' language and cultural backgrounds.
- SBRR fosters a deficit perspective toward children and families. Children's failures are attributed to a combination of cognitive or linguistic deficits, poor instruction, or deprived home lives.

Some criticisms of SBRR come from mainstream educators.

In *What Really Matters to Struggling Readers* Richard Allington (2001, p. 15) writes, "Rigorous, unbiased scientific research is an ivory tower standard that is just very hard to accomplish in the real world of schools, teachers and children." Allington writes that there is no best way to teach, but there is a growing consensus that certain things matter.

- Kids need to read a lot.
- Kids need texts they can actually read. (Teach them the three-finger rule. The reader asks: Are there more than three words on this page that I can't read?)
- Kids need to develop fluency. (The more they read at their own level, the more fluent they become.)
- Kids need to develop thoughtful literacy. (Teach them to make connections to their lives, to the world, and to other parts of the text. Teach comprehension strategies. Teach critical reading and critical literacy.)

Sociocultural researchers have been especially vocal in expressing concerns about the dominance of SBRR in American and British educational policies.

- Acceptable rates of progress are determined by politicians and other powerful stakeholders..
- High-stakes assessments are being used as control mechanisms in schools.
- Teachers adopt formulaic "paint-by-numbers" programs and teach to the test.
- Instruction is marked by a lack of authenticity and power sharing.
- Devastating consequences ensue for students and teachers when students fail to meet prescribed standards.

1.4   What Works? Supporting Young Children's Literacy

Questions about "what works" in education always point to other questions.

> What should policy makers be doing?
> What should teachers be doing?
> What should parents be doing?
> What should communities be doing?

This chapter has presented competing views about what counts as literacy and how literacy develops. I have aimed to show that the challenge of stating "what works" is complicated by the differences between the two major perspectives on what counts as literacy and what counts as research.

For example:
The US National Institute for Literacy's (2008) report, *Developing Early Literacy*, a meta-analysis of interventions for young children's literacy, found the following kinds of interventions made the most difference for children's decoding skills in the primary grades:

- One-on-one or small group activities
- Developmentally sensitive intervention
- Explicit (direct) teaching by parents as well as teachers
- Code-focused activities

On the other hand, high-profile educators such as Richard Allington have critiqued the idea that success can be equated with decoding ability at the end of grade two, and some early advocates of SBRR-based policies have started to question the wisdom of framing the idea of research-based practice so narrowly.

In a retrospective essay on early literacy instruction, a group of American researchers (Teale, Hoffman, Pacigo, Garrette, Lisy, Richardson, & Birkel, 2009) led by the "Reading First" researcher, William Teale, welcome the advent of systematic and intentional literacy instruction in the early childhood classroom, but they warn against systematic instruction that takes the form of "worksheets, workbooks . . . skill-and-drill computer programs . . . and scripted literacy lessons" (p. 85).

Teale et al. also express concern about policy makers' recent preoccupation with literacy assessment. While well-designed diagnostic literacy assessments are rich sources of data for instructional decision-making, standardized assessments

have become sources of stress and alienation for American teachers, many of whom do not employ the results in their programs, but regard assessments as bureaucratic tasks to be done "in addition to – and apart from -- instruction" (p. 90).

Teale (2008) has also published his views in the widely distributed professional journal, *The Reading Teacher.* In an article about "what counts" in literacy instruction, he does not question the SBRR findings, but worries about the resulting educational focus on measurable skills in early literacy. He observes that the achievement gap is not getting any smaller, especially as children progress through the grades.

The trouble is, according to Teale (2008), that "we wake up around middle school to discover that our students can't develop interpretations, read critically, write a decent extended response to a piece of literature, and so on" (p. 360).

Can educators afford to sit on the fence?
No. Practitioners cannot afford to equivocate. They look to research to support their decisions even in the absence of a consensus. This report aims to provide an even-handed review of existing research, but it is also charged with the task of making recommendations for action.

Recommendation:
The literature reviewed in this chapter supports an expanded view of literacy and an expanded view of research, what Purcell-Gates et al. (2004, p. 84) call a "widened lens" that nests a developmental approach to literacy for individual children within the socioculturally shaped practices of the child's community.

A "widened lens" is congruent with the goals of the Child Youth Network's plan for the Huron Heights neighbourhood. Supporting literacy through a "widened lens" implies promoting literacy as a way of life *and* providing explicit instruction.

A "widened lens" does not overlook the importance of success at school.
It recognizes that literacy develops over time and with some teaching inputs, but it draws on sociocultural theory to conceptualize development as the ability to create and use increasingly sophisticated texts, and to participate in a greater variety of literacy practices, including, but not only, the literacy practices needed to succeed in school.

A "widened lens" recommends that instructional practices take into account the following principles:

- Literacy instruction should aim for authenticity. All instruction should be in tune with the literacy worlds and practices of the learners. Programs should be built around the texts and practices of the community.

- Collaborative program planning and curriculum development with community members promotes the creation of authentic literacy experiences; the hard work of literacy skills learning is more likely to be engaging when learning activities also meet locally defined needs; the learning is more likely to be retained when people are personally invested in what they are learning.

Purcell-Gates has been working with graduate students and practitioners to develop resources for teachers. The following teacher resource contains "field-tested" ideas for family literacy programs and early primary classrooms.

*Real-life Literacy Instruction, K-3: Handbook for Teacher*s.

This resource was created by Purcell-Gates and her research assistant. It describes the research-base for authentic literacy and contains practical plans that cover each element in the following "good practice" framework.

Purcell-Gates lists four things to consider, or keep in mind, when planning and carrying out an authentic literacy activity, or lesson, in the classroom:

(1) Learning the literacy practices in the lives of your students;
(2) Creating the necessary authentic contexts for literacy activity in your classroom;
(3) Selecting both real-life texts for your students to read and write as well as real-life purposes for the reading and writing of these texts;
(4) The explicit teaching of skills and strategies as well as formative assessment of how your students are learning them.

Topics addressed:

Chapter 1. Creating Real-Life Literacy Activities for Young Readers and Writers *by Victoria Purcell-Gates*

Chapter 2. Learning the Literacy Worlds of Your Students
    Intro *by Victoria Purcell-Gates*
    Model Lesson #1: The "To-Do" List *by Allison Jambor*
    Learning what is 'Real-Life' for Your Students *by Victoria Purcell-Gates*
    Model Lesson #2: Cooking Up Some Authenticity *by Sarah Loat*

Chapter 3 Creating Contexts for Real-Life Literacy
    Authentic Contexts: Requirement for Real-Life Literacy *by Victoria Purcell-Gates*
    Model Lesson #3: The Sears Catalogue Comes to School *by Marianne McTavish*
    Creating the Contexts for Real-Life Literacy *by Victoria Purcell-Gates*
    Model Lesson #4: Guinea Pigs in the Classroom *by Colleen Stebner*

This Open Source resource is available as a PDF file at
http://www.authenticliteracyinstruction.com/.

1.4.1 Multilingual Literacy Through a "Widened Lens"

The work of supporting the literacy development of bilingual and multilingual children provides a case through which to explore the value of a widened lens.

- Canadian communities are increasingly diverse. More and more children are growing up speaking more than one language; more and more of them do not have English or French as their first language. For native speakers of minority languages, access to early learning programs in the parents' first language is limited. In large cities such as Toronto or Vancouver, it is getting easier to find an early learning program in languages such as Mandarin or Spanish, but in most communities, most children will attend programs in English or French – regardless of their home language(s).

In addition to presenting practical information, I aim to show that language, culture, gender, ability and other forms of difference must all be considered in any account of "what works" for literacy learning.

This section begins by outlining the stages of language acquisition that children experience as they acquire a second or additional language. It includes suggestions for ways in which practitioners can help individual learners at each stage.

Second (additional) language acquisition usually occurs in predictable stages.

Stage	Characteristics	How educators can help
Silent *The Silent Stage may last as little as a few hours or as much as a few months.*	The learner seems to be "taking it all in." The learner may be actively listening. The learner most likely understands more than you would guess.	Ask questions that can be answered with YES or NO. Use visual information and real objects when explaining. Give lots of extra information in the form of gestures etc. Learners need redundant information.
Early production *This stage can last from a few months to a year or more.*	Learners tend to communicate with single words or short phrases.	Continue to ask questions that can be answered with YES or NO. Provide part of a sentence and allow the learner to orally fill in the missing part, e.g., I like to sit on this ____. Continue to use visual information and real objects when explaining. Focus on familiar topics. Help learners to make lists of objects from pictures. Classify lists.
Speech emergent	Learners can compose sentences and short narratives.	Begin to ask "open" questions. Use Language Experience Approach (LEA) to teach reading and writing. *(See Module Three.)* Begin to use journal writing and guided reading.
Intermediate fluency	Learners compose longer narratives. They tend to spell words as they sound.	Encourage learners to choose their own reading materials. Have them participate in groups to share the work of textbook reading. Teach note taking. Introduce Readers' Theatre.
Advanced fluency	Learners' speaking, reading and writing approach grade level expectations.	Encourage independence. Ask learners to lead discussions.

Viv Edwards (2009) summarizes the research on multilingual print literacy. Edwards presents several implications for practice and makes two key observations about education in English- speaking countries:

- English-speaking countries are apt to talk about multilingualism and literacy as if they are separate from each other;
- English-speaking countries approach bilingual and multilingual literacy from a monolingual perspective.

The assumptions made by emergent literacy research and SBRR studies exemplify Edwards's point. Both characterize speakers of other languages as "other" than normal children.

Edwards explains that many findings from SBRR studies are not valid for most bilingual and multilingual learners because the studies do not distinguish between groups of bilingual learners.

- Learning to read and write in English is not the same task for a Spanish-speaking immigrant child as it is for a Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrant child. The task is different again for a refugee child who has had no access to schooling and arrives in Canada traumatized by war and upheaval, and yet again for the child of professional parents recently arrived from a European city.

Edwards lists research findings from applied linguistics for which a high degree of consensus currently exists.
- Minority language speakers who have opportunities to speak their own language and the new language over an extended time period of learning the new language achieve average or above average outcomes in school.

  Implications for practice include drawing on learners' personal experiences to create lessons and materials and encouraging code switching. Code switching is switching from the "target" language (usually English or French) to their home language whenever they need to do so.

- Conversation proficiency develops quickly over a short period of time, but academic language takes much longer. Learners need more intense and longer- term academic support than they currently receive in most educational settings.

- The table below lists some social uses of language and some academic uses of language.

Social Language Functions	Academic Language Functions
• Greet someone • Answer simple questions. • Ask simple questions • Respond to commands. • Describe how one is feeling. • Share an exciting event.	• Retell a story. • Describe how a character in a book is feeling. • Compare and contrast two plots. • Infer what a character might do. • Make connections to one's own life.
• Communicate with adults. • Get along with peers. • Work on a project with others. • Play a game with friends. • Chat on the playground. • Share a snack or lunch. .	• Support one's own opinion. • Interact in the science centre. • Share a news article. • Synthesize information from two texts.

- There is inadequate support for minority languages in schools. Families have had to provide their own programs.

- Children draw on the practices of their homes and communities as well as school as they learn to "do" literacy.

- Educational practice lags behind research in the areas of cultural awareness and tapping into "funds of knowledge." Many educators don't know enough about their students' outside-of-school literacy practices and they underestimate the influence of siblings, grandparents, and other family members.

- Children become aware of writing systems early and they can learn to write in more than one system quite easily.

- Exposure to more than one language increases phonological awareness.

- Phonological awareness in a child's first language is predictive of reading ability in an additional language.

- The usefulness of phonemic awareness training in the first year of language instruction is doubtful. Children need to acquire a vocabulary first, so that the words being broken down into syllables and phonemes are familiar to them and mean something.

- Whether the learner's home language is sound-based or meaning-based makes a difference to the task of learning to read English.

  English, Greek and Hebrew are sound based languages. Mandarin and Japanese are meaning based languages. The task of learning English for a child whose first language is Greek or Hebrew is somewhat easier than the same task for a child whose first language is Chinese or Japanese.

- Phonics is necessary but not sufficient for reading.

- Most forms of dyslexia are based in sound processing, but dyslexia can occur for children from meaning-based language backgrounds.

- New language learners tend to rely on sounding out because their knowledge of the new language's structure and vocabulary is only just developing. This doesn't mean that sounding out words is their learning style. What they most need is meaning-focused instruction.

- Recent emphasis on skills rather than meaning in early literacy teaching is not helpful to multilingual learners. Knowing rules helps for tasks such as proofreading, but not for initial learning.

Key understandings from the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

People learn new languages faster when they are more relaxed and open to learning and when the level of the language input is just above the learner's level. The same is true for first language acquisition.

> For example, Xiao Long and Ben are talking about the picture book they have just read in class. The main character in the book has just fallen out of a tree and

broken his leg. Ben informs Xiao Long, "My older sister likes to climb trees and she likes rock climbing, too. But my dad is afraid of heights." Xiao Long asks, "What is 'heights'?" Ben replies, "You know— high places like the top of trees and mountains." Xiao Long nods in understanding.

Jim Cummins (2001) and other SLA researchers point to the importance of engaging all learners in activities that demand higher-order thinking. Cummins found that English language learners can manage cognitively demanding tasks as long as the tasks are presented with enough contextual information. A photograph provides more contextual information than a diagram; a face-to-face conversation provides more contextual information than a telephone call. Drama and role playing support language learning because they can communicate without words.

Multiliteracies teaching is empowering for language learners. Cummins is a high-profile, Canadian SLA researcher who advocates Multiliteracies teaching to support English language learners in Canada. Multiliteracies is discussed later in this chapter.

Eve Gregory (2008) reminds educators that taking pleasure in lessons and having fun are not valued in all cultures.

- Risk taking and initiative are culturally specific values. Some cultures value memorizing and repetition.
- This means that sometimes literacy is taken more seriously if it looks like work. In Western countries, people expect a text to mean something before they take the time to read it. This is not true for everyone at all times. For example, children in Islamic communities first learn the Q'ranic scriptures by rote.

Culturally specific language practices often affect how children "do" school. Some examples are storytelling, show-and-tell, taking turns, speaking up, and looking at the teacher. A child may not be familiar with the traditional stories of the new culture. Storybooks sent home to read may look like toys to some families. It is important to note that bilingual and multilingual children are not the only children whose interests are not well served by traditional emergent literacy research and SBRR.

For example, a recent analysis of the National Reading Panel's findings found that deaf children's early literacy experiences are not well addressed in SBRR literature (Schirmer & McGough, 2005).

At the same time, identifying marginalized groups may only perpetuate a version of what Edwards (2009) called a monolingual perspective. Sociocultural researchers argue that all learners benefit from literacy learning opportunities embedded in the valued practices of their communities.

1.4.2   Implications for Community Literacy Initiatives
Viewing literacy through a "widened lens" has important implications for community literacy initiatives.

A "widened lens" perspective raises the question: Can we develop the technical skills of literacy in the absence of community literacy practices that encourage or require people to use the technical skills?

To put it another way: Will people learn skills if they have no personally meaningful (authentic) reason to use them?

Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) answer, "No." Unless learners are participating in socioculturally-shaped literacy practices in their communities, the lessons they learn in programs or at school are unlikely to stick for long (p. 131).

Later in this literature review a parallel idea is presented in relation to the sustainability of community initiatives. For literacy to become a way of life, it needs to be embedded in people's everyday practices. Therefore initiatives that want to promote literacy must teach skills in the context of valued activities.

Two studies in which Purcell-Gates was a Principal Investigator help to clarify this point.

In a study of early literacy achievement in kindergarten children, Purcell-Gates and Dahl (1991) found that the children who were best able to make sense of the literacy instruction they received at school were those children who had grasped the principle of intentionality, that is children who had acquired the idea that print says something and serves different purposes in people's lives.

Not surprisingly, grasping the principle of intentionality was linked to the frequency of reading and writing events in children's homes. More surprising was

the finding that the type of text made no difference, only the frequency of events. It didn't have to be storybooks.

What about storybook reading?

A question that sometimes arises in discussions about family literacy and community values is whether reading aloud to children should be promoted so strongly. Storybook reading is a valued practice in some communities, but it is not so valued in others. Children can become

literate in the absence of storybooks.

Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) nevertheless underline the importance of teachers and program leaders reading to children. Written language is not simply speech written down. In order to make sense of written language, learners need to hear how written language sounds.

The implication for formal programs is that reading aloud is more helpful than isolated skills training. Too often children deemed to be "at risk" for school failure receive instruction that focuses on decontextualized skills.

Purcell-Gates also describes working as a tutor with a grade two boy called Donny and his mother, neither of whom was experiencing much success learning to read and write. Purcell-Gates concluded that neither Donny nor his mother had acquired the principle of intentionality. They were used to getting by without reading and writing and had very few uses for it. Purcell-Gates had to work hard to find ways that literacy could become part of Donny's everyday life. Donny's mother wanted to be able to grocery shop without help, so that was a start. She learned to read so that she could grocery shop on her own and so that she could read to Donny and his siblings. As she learned to read and write, she added new practices to her repertoire – and to Donny's.

Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) also asked themselves: If community practices are the glue that makes literacy lessons sticky, do literacy lessons encourage participation in community practices? The LPALS (Practices of Adult Learners Study) study of adult literacy learning, which is described by Purcell-Gates et al., found that they did. Participation in literacy practices increased as a result of participation in literacy instruction. Even Donny and his mother did eventually incorporate a range of personally meaningful practices into their literate lives.

Threaded through all these findings is the notion of authenticity. Authenticity is described by Purcell-Gates et al. as a quality of texts and a quality of purposes. Authentic texts are "read and written by people in their lives to accomplish communicative purpose" (p. 140), not just for learning to read and write.

For example, making grocery lists would probably not have been an authentic activity for Donny's mother, but reading the labels on the store shelves was.

Collaborative planning with community members supports authentic practice because ideas are more likely to work when they meet locally defined needs.

- A group in Nunavut, for example, formed a traditional seal-skin clothing sewing group in which the elders taught younger women how to speak, read, and write the patterns in Inuktitut (Sanders & Smythe, 2002). The principle of authenticity is taken up again in the chapters on Family Literacy and Community Initiatives.

1.4.3   Widening the Lens Beyond Print: New Literacy Studies
The idea that literacy learning opportunities should be nested within the valued practices of a community suggests that print literacy can no longer be considered in isolation from other communication media and modes. That is, we can no longer afford to take a "monomodal" perspective toward literacy. New Literacy Studies (NLS), which has its roots in a social practices perspective towards print literacy, is extending the definition of literacy to consider communication more broadly. NLS is about more than print.

A detailed discussion of New Literacy Studies is beyond the scope of this report, but it may not be beyond the scope of the Child and Youth Network's future initiatives. I have therefore included a brief introduction to the field.

New Literacy Studies "views literacy as taking place everywhere all of the time guided by social context and practices that take place in that context; e.g., the language and practices of skateboarding" (Rowsell, 2006, p. 148).

> Our means of communication shifted from primarily written script with letter writing, to oral communication with the telephone, to typing on a keyboard through e-mail and chat rooms. Our students are writing all the time—online, playing video games, texting friends, updating blogs—and the writing is slightly different with each genre. Typically this kind of writing is not governed by accurate spelling or punctuation, but it has its own grammar. (Rowsell, 2006, p. 15)

NLS is used as an umbrella term for a family of theoretical perspectives that includes critical literacy, mulitliteracies, and multimodal literacies.
Critical literacy is a strategy for reading between the lines. The reader asks questions about how a text has been put together, whose interests and purposes are reflected in the text, and what the consequences of the text might be in the world. Critical literacy is not quite the same as critical reading -- which focuses on fact versus opinion, reality and fantasy, and deconstructing media propaganda techniques. The goal of critical literacy is to disrupt taken-for-granted ideas and engage in social action.

Multiliteracies theory holds that the screen has changed the way we learn and practice literacy (Rowsell, 2006, p. 15). Teachers cannot ignore this fact. They must teach the new technologies overtly and critically.

Multimodal theory expands the definition of a text and modalities to include speech, sound, movement, vision, gesture and visual texts. ECE practitioners are familiar with children's multimodal meaning-making, even if the vocabulary of NLS seems unfamiliar. In a recent study of multimodal storytelling, Stooke (2009) explains how traditional flannel board storytelling is multimodal. Flannel board stories, like web sites, can be redesigned quite easily. They allow children to experiment concretely with alternative endings, flashbacks and comic book style devices such as split-screens. They free children from what Mackey (2006, p. 18) calls "the unchanging stolidity of the book." In fact, gesture, movement, music, sound effects and gaze are all important ways in which children make meaning. Given the opportunity, children choose the modes that best suit their communicative intentions.

As Rowsell (2006) points out:

> Multimodality is not a new phenomenon; it has been around for the longest time. The key difference today, however, is that multimodality has become more sophisticated and more complex in the face of increasing media, technology, texts of all kinds, and popular culture. (pp. 19-20)

New Literacy Studies has implications for educators who work with young children. "Multiliteracies may be more difficult to define and identify in a kindergarten classroom than in one with older learners" (Hawkins, 2004, p. 20), but those who work with young children are very much aware that the communicative spaces inhabited by their students are now deeply influenced by digital culture. "Today's children are growing up in a world where print operates as

one among many media" (Mackey, 2006, p. 19), and they are growing up in a world where the distinction between print and digital culture is by no means clear (Stooke, 2009).

Unlike the earlier mentioned models of reading development, New Literacy Studies theories do not propose stages of skill development. In keeping with a social practices model, they assume people will participate in community practices associated with new literacies in unique ways and that they will acquire new practices for authentic purposes. Witness the growth and change in cell phone use over the last decade.

Rowsell's two-page summary chart provides illustrations of the ways in which New Literacies practices develop and change.

New Theories of Literacy Development

Age Ranges	Social Contexts	Critical Literacy	Multimodality	Multiliteracies
2–4	Home and early childhood environments	• Highlight who characters are—their cultures—what different texts do, say, look like. • Environmental print walks. • Daily talk during child-initiated activities. • Ask students to retell a familiar story from another perspective.	• Encourage all kinds of play; tactile picturebooks; emphasis on cultural resources in the home. • Environmental print displayed. • Display and honor children's artwork and three-dimensional figures.	• Interaction with print and with moving images that are slow-moving and repetitive. • Have students move from reading a text to making their own rendition of text.
5–8	Home, school, out in community with parents and friends	• Explore the nature of settings and characters (how they are unique; what makes them that way); look at power issues (comparing and contrasting power in fiction and non-fiction texts; why certain characters have more power than others); account for different cultures and multiple interpretations of them. • Explore different approaches that peers have to texts. • Ask students to make intertextual connections.	• Develop awareness of different genres of texts and *choices* used in the making of texts (why does a text look this way? who wrote it? who is the audience? what kinds of texts students are making and why?). • Encourage and analyze children's three-dimensional figures. • Ask students to describe why a text falls into a genre based on the way it looks and sounds (e.g., fantasy books vs. magazines).	• Explore different and varied genres of texts. • Demonstrate different kinds of reading. • Students begin to understand and appreciate different kinds of visuals, talk, and vocabulary. • Increased use of new media and technology; harness teaching to understanding of different texts to move from one genre to the next. • Ask students to make inter-genre connections (e.g., something online and moving to a piece of art you can hold in your hand).

New Theories of Literacy Development (cont.)

Age Ranges	Social Contexts	Critical Literacy	Multimodality	Multiliteracies
9–11	Exploring home, school, out in community with parents, friends, and web spaces	• Enhance students' skills as text decoders. • Have students peel away layers in texts in terms of content and design. • Encourage students to analyze and be critical of different traits a character can possess (e.g., having physical power vs. having wisdom). • Balance stories with strong male characters and strong female characters.	• Be aware and plan around different genres of texts; foster an understanding of what certain text genres offer over others. • Create assignments that tap into students' awareness of different modalities (what can one text do that another cannot; and vice versa?)	• Develop using understanding of one genre (e.g., a web page) to move into another genre (e.g., an essay discussing an issue) in teaching and planning. • Interview students about what they do at home and out in the community. • Incorporate technology as much as possible, being aware of its issues of access.
Adolescence	Home, school, community, out in the world	• Content and design of texts represent messages, people, and institutions that affect how we understand them. • Incorporate questioning and critical framing of texts to get at deeper meanings and their relevance/implications. • Acknowledge students' lifeworlds (e.g., rap) but acknowledge that content is often inappropriate for the classroom, and why this is so. • Ask students to think about positioning in their reading, writing, listening, and talking.	• Students should use, understand, and engage with all sorts of texts; know that texts can be widely perceived; see that each carries different designs, content, voices, ideas; recognize that these factors affect how we read them. • Different modes carry different potentials we can use in our reading and our writing. • Look at classic modalities and media and how they became modern modalities and media.	• When planning and assessing, acknowledge and take account of contemporary skills (e.g., how students use abridged text in their electronic correspondence that they should not use in more formal writing). • Assess based on composition and structure of texts, thereby building on their tacit understanding of multimodality.

From: Rowsell, J. (2006). *Family literacy experiences*. Markham, ON: Pembroke.

1.4.4   Policies that Work: An Early Literacy Strategy for Canada
In March 2009, the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network
sponsored a series of consultations across the country aimed at developing a
National Early Literacy Strategy. Although an open invitation to submit research
papers was issued to Canadian scholars, few presentations were informed by
sociocultural theory. Purcell-Gates and the University of British Columbia's Dean
of Education, Rob Tierney, submitted a brief warning against following the
example of the United States with respect to literacy.

Public Policy Brief: Increasing Literacy Levels of Canadian Students

Climbing even higher on this house of cards, we find proponents of systematic
skill instruction proposing 'new' models for literacy instruction. They use as
support for these proposals research that was gathered in the United States to
pave the way for contentious and failed programs from the Bush administration .
. . But, let's step back and look at some much-needed evidence.

- First, we absolutely agree that children must be taught, and taught systematically,
  the skills of reading and writing. To argue otherwise is to engage in magical
  thinking – "They'll figure it out as they go along." This is dangerous and
  irresponsible thinking.

- Second, systematic skill instruction is not "new." Nor is there any real evidence,
  scientifically gathered and analyzed, that concludes that Canadian children are
  not receiving skill instruction. Before we proceed with new policies, programs,
  initiatives, etc. – all of which will cost Canadian taxpayers a great deal of money
  – let's start to gather the data needed to support such efforts.

- Third, supposing such data are gathered and support new initiatives, let's not
  simplistically import failed U.S. models into our Canadian context.

  A recent report by the U.S. Department of Education evaluated the reading
  comprehension of first, second and third graders who participated in the $6
  billion (US) Reading First program, part of the 2002 No Child Left Behind law.
  Reading First curricula and practices focus on "scientific-based" teaching,
  primarily phonics-based instruction and comprehension, and standardized testing
  to evaluate reading progress. The report found that weekly reading instruction
  increased on average by 45 minutes for first graders and one hour for second
  graders subject to the Reading First program.

However, despite additional instruction time, the reading comprehension of these students did not improve when compared to students who weren't subject to Reading First instruction methods.

The report noted:

"At its core, Reading First is a federal funding process designed to influence local education policy and teacher behavior with the ultimate goal of improving student reading proficiency…However, after up to three years of funding, the study finds, on average, that Reading First's impact on student reading achievement was not statistically detectable".

No Child Left Behind and Reading First are on their way out in the U.S. and under serious scrutiny by U.S. Congressional oversight committees for improper influence peddling and corruption. To import such models is somewhat akin to the situation in many developing countries that take in discarded buses that no longer meet emissions standards in countries like the U.S. and Canada. These buses go on to pollute the air of the receiver country. Surely, Canada can do better. Instructional models that have failed and are being discarded in the U.S. should not be recycled with Canadian children.

Literacy policy and instruction in Canada must build on its strengths and values to begin to directly address these educational challenges. Sufficient evidence exists to suggest a way forward. Further evidence is needed to document and develop this path.

Victoria Purcell-Gates, Tier 1 Canada Research Chair – Early Literacy, University of British Columbia and Rob Tierney, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia (http://cpls.educ.ubc.ca/content/pdfs/LiteracyPolicyBrief.pdf)

1.5   Concluding Remarks

How people learn to use their cell phones illuminates the importance of embedding skills learning into valued practices. Most cell phone users in my children's age group play and experiment until they figure out their new phones. People like me who hesitate to experiment and play are at a disadvantage in cell phone culture. I have been unable to find someone to teach me how to get the most out of my cell phone. Even when I visit a provider's store, I usually get

referred to online assistance. The result is that I just get by on basic service. I simply don't practice enough to discover how to make the applications work for me. The learning fails to stick and I remain an outsider.

Luckily for me, I can get by with a minimum knowledge of my cell phone. But what if I couldn't? I would probably seek out a provider who understood my needs and my ways of dealing with technologies. This is the challenge faced by many people with respect to print literacy. They, too, need to access educational opportunities that take into account their needs and their preferred or valued ways of learning. Educators need to pay attention to the practices that learners engage in outside of educational settings, and they need to recognize and build on the resources that learners bring to educational settings. Educators will sometimes need to provide explicit instruction, but they should always try to embed the instruction in authentic activities carried out for purposes that learners see as worthwhile. People can always find ways of getting by, so they need to believe that by participating in literacy learning activities they will be able to do more than just get by.

In the next chapter these principles are taken up in a discussion about family literacy. In Chapter Three they are taken up again in a discussion of community practice.

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Chapter Two
Family Literacy

2.1   Introduction

Family literacy is a field of study within Literacy Studies. It is an emerging field. Its roots are in ethnographic studies of language use (e.g., Heath, 1983) and print literacy practices in family settings (e.g., Taylor, 1983) during the 1980s.

Family literacy is a field of professional practice within adult education, early childhood education and care (ECEC), and public schooling. It is apt to look different in each of those contexts. It is a field of practice for families, too. Stated simply, family literacy refers to literacy practices in family contexts.

Finally, family literacy is a field of education and social policy.

The scope of family literacy in research and practice, but not policy making, has expanded in two important ways.

First, the field now encompasses not only reading and writing, but also an array of communicative practices including digital literacy (see, for example, Rowsell, 2006) and numeracy, what some people call family math (see, for example, Action for Family Literacy Ontario's *Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices*. .

Second the range of research approaches has expanded to include evaluation studies and experimental designs as well as observational studies.

Policy makers, project coordinators and practitioners look to the research literature to guide decisions about how to employ limited resources in ways that make life better for families and communities. They ask: What kinds of family literacy programming can promote literacy as a way of life? They also ask: How can we employ limited resources in ways that help program participants gain access to better lives? The nature of a "better life" is, of course, understood differently by different stakeholders. This chapter aims to address the questions from more than one viewpoint.

Chapter Two examines the two broad principles of practice introduced in Chapter One, authenticity and collaboration, in the context of family literacy literature.

As did Chapter One, Chapter Two begins with definitions. It then examines research and professional literature with a view to making recommendations about how best to promote and support family literacy in the context of community initiatives. Finally, it considers how family literacy can be a resource for "literacy as a way of life."

2.2 What is Family Literacy?

The term *family literacy* refers to literacy activities that take place in the everyday lives of families and to programs that aim to increase family literacy in homes and communities. The definitions of family literacy reviewed for this report all include the idea that family literacy is made up of practices and activities that take place "in the context of a shared social experience" (Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 1-3).

Definitions of family literacy can be divided into two groups: (1) definitions that view family literacy as "what families do together" in the home and out-and-about in the local community or neighbourhood; (2) definitions that focus on what families and literacy practitioners do together in planned programs, usually located in community settings, but sometimes integrated into home-based support services for parents. Action for Family Literacy Ontario's *Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices* presents definitions of both types.

We define family, parent, literacy and family literacy as follows:

- A family is two or more people related by blood, marriage, adoption, or commitment to care for one another. A family can be any group of people who define themselves as a family. (Action for Family Literacy Ontario web site) http://www.aflo.on.literacy.ca/famlit/dfl.htm

- A parent is a significant adult and primary caretaker in a child's life.

- Literacy . . . encompasses written communication, comprehension, the capacity to analyze text critically, and the skills needed to understand communications technologies, video, television, and new media, as well as the ability to use a wide range of information to function in daily life. Literacy skills in society today are increasingly complex and sophisticated, with implications for economic and cultural survival and access to job opportunities and the earning power necessary to support oneself, family,

and community (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2005; Province of Prince Edward Island, 1999, cited in Timmons et al., 2008, p. 94)

Family Literacy

Family literacy is about the ways families use literacy and language in their daily lives. It is about how families learn, use literacy to do everyday tasks, help children develop their emergent literacy, use literacy to maintain relationships with each other and with the community, interact with organizations and institutions, and use numbers to get things done.

Family literacy programs provide meaningful opportunities for children, their parents, other family members and caregivers to learn and grow together.

Family literacy programs:
- help build self-esteem
- address individual and family needs by building on strengths
- recognize adult family members' skills, knowledge and attitudes as powerful influences on children's emergent literacy and success in school
- promote the development of closer, stronger relationships within families
- value families' use of first languages and diverse cultural practices
- provide resources that increase adults' and children's motivation to learn
- help prepare children for school
- help families understand the school system and their roles in it
- include as many as possible of the following components:
    - early childhood education
    - parenting support
    - interactive parent-child learning activities
    - adult literacy instruction or support
    - information about community supports and help in accessing them
    - health and nutrition information related to learning

Family literacy programs promote community collaboration to provide a seamless, flexible and accessible system of services and supports for families with children.

Action for Family Literacy Ontario. *Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices*, pp. 9-11. The document can be downloaded as a PDF from http://www.nald.ca/library/learning/bstprcgd/cover.htm.

2.2.1 Who Participates in Family Literacy?

Mothers participate in family literacy most frequently, but fathers, siblings, grandparents and other family members support young children's literacy, often in playful ways (Gregory, 2001).

Morgan, Nutbrown and Hannon (2009) found that fathers were involved in providing literacy opportunities albeit less than mothers, that they showed children that they valued the children's literacy achievements, that they interacted with children on literacy related activities and that they modeled literacy uses. Morgan et al. note that their findings corroborate other findings that fathers do engage in family literacy.

> [S]tudies have found that many fathers do engage in literacy activities with their children (Ortiz et al., 1999; Nichols, 2000; Nutbrown & Hannon, 2003; Nutbrown et al., 2005). The middle-class mothers in Nichols's (2000) study tended to delegate story reading to fathers, a finding which challenges the assertion that mothers may be reluctant to encourage fathers to engage with their children (Polatnik, 1974; Lamb, 1977; Bonney et al., 1999). It has been suggested that fathers who engage in literacy activities with children strengthen relationships with them in the process (Ortiz et al., 1999). (p. 169)

2.3   Family Literacy Literature

The family literacy literature contains a few large scale evaluation studies and syntheses of findings from experimental and quasi-experimental study designs. A small body of scientifically-based studies identifies specific program characteristics associated with children's literacy achievement in primary grades. A larger body of qualitative research and in-house evaluation reports provides anecdotal accounts of successes and challenges. "Best practice" and "good practice" statements draw on both kinds of research.

2.3.1 Experimental, Quasi-Experimental and Correlation Studies

Most studies of family literacy programs do not meet the methodological criteria for scientific studies employed by the National Early Literacy Panel. Senéchal and Young (2008) examined 108 studies from five literature reviews, but found only sixteen studies that qualified. Senéchal and Young note that only experimental and quasi-experimental research designs allow researchers to make causal claims with any confidence. Some other systematic studies included in the existing reviews made associations between variables such as "reading proficiency at the end of grade two" and "participation in family literacy programs" during the preschool years, but the correlation studies do not claim that participation in programs actually caused the documented gains.

2.3.2 Qualitative Evidence

In addition to experimental, quasi-experimental and correlation studies, family literacy literature contains reports from qualitative case studies and action research studies.

Numerous reports on programs can be accessed from providers' or funders' web sites. Practitioners' and participants' accounts of their experiences are featured prominently in these reports. However, successes and challenges are rarely stated in terms of literacy skills gains. The accounts contain descriptions of successes and challenges pertaining to partnerships, community engagement, awareness of literacy issues, and program recruitment and retention.

Participants' voices are often included in the reports. Usually they describe concerns or talk of the differences programs have made in their lives.

The differences in data collection methods and the kinds of evidence collected in family literacy programs make it impossible to compare findings as a meta-analysis might, or to compare qualitative evidence with the findings of meta-analyses. It makes more sense to examine each body of literature on its own terms.

The need to read critically

I have included anecdotal evidence from selected in-house evaluation studies and technical reports as long as the findings demonstrate relevance to the

purposes of the review. I acknowledge the limitations of the anecdotal evidence and advise that individual accounts should be read critically.

By the same token, I advise readers to exercise caution in applying scientifically derived findings. The goals of family literacy programs usually include skills improvement, but skills improvement is rarely the only goal of a family literacy program.

Family literacy programs, and all community change initiatives, are complex ecologies. Any intervention will have unanticipated ripple effects.

2.3.3 "Best Practice" Statements

"Best Practice" (sometimes called "Good Practice") statements support both planning and assessment. I have not included all the statements currently available. Statements tend to draw on the same sources and on each other.

This review draws primarily from Action for family Literacy Ontario's *Family Literacy in Ontario* (a comprehensive and locally-developed guide), and from "Good Practice" statements provided by Alberta's Centre for Family Literacy. Both sets of statements promise to be useful in the development of assessment procedures.

Recommendation: Employ all three kinds of literature in planning. Use them to plan action research studies to be carried out in tandem with project implementation.

2.4 The Policy Context for Family Literacy in Canada

Family literacy policies are located at an intersection of school readiness policies, Early Child Development (ECD) policies, and adult literacy policies. School readiness, adult literacy and family literacy policies all reflect human capital theory. At the societal level, high literacy levels are associated with economic well- being and improved health (Perrin, 1998, quoted in Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, pp. 1-12). Family literacy supports an economic goal that aims to improve life chances for individual parents and children.

2.4.1 School Readiness Policies

Social policy makers became aware of emergent literacy during the 1980s. Emergent literacy research provided observational evidence that in the absence of educational exceptionalities such as learning disabilities or cognitive impairments, children growing up in print-rich environments acquire important understandings about how print works in the years before school.

As noted in Chapter One, emergent literacy redefined the parent's role in supporting young children's literacy. Whereas educators in the 1960s and 1970s encouraged parents not to act as teachers, in the 1980s they began to promote the now axiomatic idea that parents are "the child's first and most important teachers."

The inclusion of family literacy in early child development policies also dates back to the 1980s. During the 1980s, family literacy research (Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988) drew educators' attention to the fact that children's experiences in homes and communities prepared them for school in different ways. School literacy lessons seemed easy for some children and the research suggested that the lucky children who found lessons easy were not necessarily more capable than children who found them difficult. Rather, the early language and literacy experiences of the "lucky" children matched school expectations reasonably well. Some lucky children were more "ready-to-learn" at school than others.

Educators began to see family literacy programs as a way to support the not-so-lucky children who were learning to read and write more slowly than expected. A disproportionate number of the slow achieving group came from poor or new immigrant families. Such children were labelled "at risk for school failure" by many policy makers and educational researchers. Their parents, too, were labelled. Over the last two decades whole families – and sometimes whole schools were labelled "at risk" (Heydon & Iannacci, 2008). Educators hoped family literacy activities would fill in the knowledge gaps for the children before they arrived at school. There was – and remains – a belief that the achievement gap can be fixed outside of school. The following quote is taken from a 2008 "Manifesto" published by the UK's National Literacy Trust.

Parents with lower literacy levels often lack the confidence to help their children with reading and writing thereby reinforcing a cycle of disadvantage. Unlocking parental power is hugely advantageous as parental behaviour that supports children's learning is a more profoundly influential force for academic success than a child's socioeconomic background. (Rigg, 2009, p. 8)

Cultural mismatch theory

First identified by Shirley Brice Heath (1983), the observation that some children's home communication styles put them at a disadvantage for school literacy lessons is known as cultural mismatch theory.

The question that critical researchers (including Heath) ask is not how do we fix children? Rather, they ask how educators can learn to recognize and address issues of difference without making it seem that the problem resides in the children's home backgrounds?

> Heath's explanation of school failure is part of a large body of work that has investigated how cultural and linguistic mismatch across home and school contexts influences children's engagement and participation in the classroom and teachers' assessment and treatment of students (see also Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Michaels, 1991; Michaels & Collins, 1984; Philips, 1972, 1983; Shultz, Florio, & Erickson, 1982). These and other studies document innumerable instances where linguistic and cultural practices in the home conflict with expectations for the child and learning practices at school. However, as suggested below, in many instances, it is not difference itself which creates the problem, but rather the interpretation of this difference as a deficit rather than a resource (Ruiz, 1984). (King & Hornberger, 2005, p. 718)

King and Hornberger's comments echo Edwards's (2009) assertion that in English-speaking countries, the literacy research communities tend to approach literacy from a monolingual perspective (see, for example, Section 1.4.1.).

Some family literacy programs continue to be based in cultural mismatch thinking. By and large, they are framed as intervention programs. Because they include assessment components that measure progress in early literacy skills they are the ones most likely to be described in meta-analyses. At the same time,

the cultural mismatch programs are criticized for their deficit orientation, especially by sociocultural researchers. The field of family literacy is as politicized as that of literacy itself.

During the 1990s the emergent literacy perspective was woven into many education and social policies designed to promote school readiness. As public library advocates Feinberg and Rogoff observe, "Not since the launch of sputnik in the late 1950s has there been such anxiety about improving education" (1998, p. 50). But in spite of such policies, school readiness continues to preoccupy the educational community and family literacy continues to be listed as a way to better prepare children for school.

> Schools continue to face the challenges of having many children not ready for school, experiencing school failure, and dropping out of school (The Anne E. Casey Foundation, 2008). Considerable financial and material resources are channeled toward correcting school failure problems.

> School failure impacts every aspect of our society, creating economic and social problems that permeate the lives of all citizens (Eisler, 2000). Early childhood family literacy programs have been designed to help prevent the processes of illiteracy and related school failure syndromes during the preschool years. These programs hold great potential for increasing children's readiness for school and for school success. (Swick, 2009, p. 403)

2.4.2 Early Child Development (ECD) Policies

Emergent literacy and family literacy research only partly explain the increased attention to family literacy programming. Significant, too, were findings from the fields of neuroscience, public health and social welfare that emphasized the importance of the *Early Years* (McCain & Mustard, 1999) in preparing children to participate as skilled workers in the New Economy. Cost benefit analyses suggested that governments could avoid some future spending on health and social welfare by investing in young children's development. These findings appeared in a synthesis report called *Early Years Study: Final Report* (McCain & Mustard, 1999). Ten years later, Swick (2009) reviewed family literacy research and drew the same conclusion:

[H]igh quality early childhood family literacy programs are cost effective. . . . . . Preschool children and families who participate in these programs are more successful in school, less likely to end up in the criminal justice system, and more likely to be productive citizens. (p. 405)

2.4.3 Adult Literacy Policies

Finally, it is worth noting the role played by adult literacy advocates and policy makers in the early promotion of family literacy. In Canada, two high profile adult literacy surveys revealed that one in five Canadian adults did not write and read well enough to cope with the literacy demands of everyday life (Calamai, 1987, 1988).The adult literacy community (e.g., Fingeret, 1989) drew attention to evidence that when parents develop their own literacy, they contribute to the development of literacy in the family as a whole, and that such parents are more willing to engage in educational programs when the programs address the needs of their children. In response to this evidence the first family literacy programs in Canada were often funded and administered as components of adult literacy initiatives.

Human capital theory and social justice

It is important to note that although human capital arguments are sometimes deployed by practitioners when applying for funding, the social justice implications of low literacy skills drive the work. Literacy problems are associated with school failure and poor self esteem in children, and low literacy in adults is associated with poverty and other forms of social exclusion.

> The family literacy approach offers whole families educational opportunities so that every member is able to improve literacy and life skills. It is based upon the simple but powerful premise that parents and children learn best when learning together. The benefits span generations: both parents and their children build essential skills to learn and compete in today's economy.
>
> Time and again, family literacy breaks down barriers to success such as poverty, unemployment, poor health and inadequate housing. When parents struggle with literacy and basic life skills their children have fewer chances for success. Family literacy reverses this destructive cycle by giving families the tools they need to thrive today, and most importantly, by helping them to educate the generations of tomorrow.

National Center for Family Literacy. Retrieved March 24, 2010, from www.famlit.org.

2.5   Family Literacy Programs

From their tentative status within adult literacy programs, family literacy programs have acquired a high profile in community change initiatives. A variety of family literacy program types currently exists in Canada. The best known programs are designed for young children and their adult caregivers, but recently there have been more programs located in schools and these are targeted to school-age children as well as preschoolers and their families. An increasing number of Canadian classroom teachers are making the effort to learn about their students' home literacy practices and to view those home literacy practices as resources for curriculum making.

> Family literacy programmes are educational programmes which focus on literacy, and acknowledge, and make use of, learners' family membership. Such programmes have focused on disadvantaged communities, since it is children from these communities who are thought to have the most difficulties with school literacy. . . . [F]amily literacy programmes are usually evaluated in terms of literacy outcomes for children. (Morgan, Nutbrown & Hannon, 2009, p. 168)

All family literacy programs

- value lifelong learning.
- respect parents' efforts towards a better life for themselves and their families.
- support the literacy development of parents and children throughout the school years.
- provide young children with developmentally appropriate literacy experiences in reading and writing.
- provide information and support for parents in the areas of parenting, other educational programs, and children's development.

Many family literacy programs

- support parents in developing advocacy skills.
- support the development of constructive relationships between families and school professionals.
- connect parents to other support services.
- provide opportunities for parents to pursue their own educational goals.
- work more recently to weave literacy into daily life activities.

Some recent family literacy programs are informed by New Literacy Studies. In these programs, literacy is viewed as more than reading and writing.

2.5.1 Types of Program

American researcher Ruth Nickse (1993) created a typology for programs, basing categories on the extent to which participants received direct teaching and on the intended audience for the program activities. Nickse's typology is summarized in the following table.

DIRECT ADULT / DIRECT CHILD Parents and preschoolers participate in separate, structured literacy experiences.	DIRECT ADULT / INDIRECT CHILD Parents participate in structured literacy activities and/or language classes. Parenting issues might be addressed. Children might receive childcare, but children do not participate.
INDIRECT ADULT / DIRECT CHILD The program is developed for the children. Parents may attend, but they do not receive direct support for their personal educational goals.	INDIRECT ADULT / INDIRECT CHILD Parents and children attend programs such as library storytimes that encourage sharing and enjoyment of literacy experiences together. No direct teaching is provided.

2.5.2 A "Widened Lens" for Family Literacy

The arguments for and against the two broad perspectives presented in Chapter One are echoed in arguments about family literacy and family literacy practices. Carmen Rodriguez (2002) writes that when literacy is viewed through the cognitive lens it comes to be perceived as a commodity or a thing. More important, literacy is seen as the same thing for everyone.

Debates about the value of storybook reading illustrate this point.

Storybook reading through a "widened lens"

Shared storybook reading has much to offer young children and their families. It is widely understood that storybook reading provides multiple opportunities for literacy learning and contributes to the development of warm relationships between parents and children. Children's author, Mem Fox (2001, cited in Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2001, p. 6) talks of connecting "through minds and hearts" in a "secret society associated with the books we have shared."

Storybook reading supports emergent literacy by exposing children to vocabulary and language patterns and concepts not usually part of everyday conversation. Storybook reading in the preschool years is correlated with positive literacy outcomes in the primary grades (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Klesius & Griffith, 1996; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994).

Research suggests that storybook reading can be a context for rich learning opportunities, but the kinds of interaction that take place between the reader and the listener make a difference. A group of researchers informed by scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) is currently promoting interactive storybook sharing, sometimes known as dialogic reading (DR).

Dialogic reading employs questioning strategies during reading events to encourage children's active involvement. "DR has been included among a handful of evidence-based practices in early childhood education within the *What Works Clearinghouse* (www.whatworks.ed.gov), sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences" (Briesch, Chapouleas, Lebel, & Blom-Hoffman, 2008, p. 979).

DR strategies are promoted through professional development activities for public librarians, ECE educators and caregivers as well as family literacy participants (Briesch et al., 2008; DeBruin-Parecki, 2009)

> Specifically, teachers are taught to (a) ask children to answer open-ended questions about a story's characters, setting, and events in the story (b) expand on children's answers by repeating the answer, clarifying the answer, or asking further questions, (c) provide praise and encouragement to children for giving input into the story, and (d) build on children's interests when selecting stories and questions regarding the story (Whitehurst, Arnold, et al.). Whitehurst et al. (1988) found that reading dialogically to children who are at risk for academic failure

increases their expressive and receptive language (as measured by standardized, norm-referenced tests). These gains occur whether the intervention is used in daycare settings, low-income households, or Head Start classrooms (Whitehurst, Arnold, et al., 1994; Whitehurst, Epstein, et al., 1994; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). (Morgan & Meier, 2008, p. 12)

At least one researcher has criticized the way in which dialogic reading is represented in professional education materials. Dombey (2003) recorded teachers reading with six year olds and analyzed the transcripts in relation to a training video provided for British teachers. She writes:

> Paradoxically, the teacher chosen to demonstrate the Literacy Hour in action presents the most limited kind of interaction and the narrowest view of the process of reading. It is the teachers taking a more independent line who establish and support the interactive style and focus on meaning claimed by the NLS. These teachers encourage their children to develop relationships of both engagement and detachment with the texts that are the focus of attention, and thus, it is suggested, lay an important foundation for the development of complex acts of comprehension. (p. 37)

Other critics have argued that storybook reading receives too much positive attention in family literacy promotional activities. They remind us that storybook reading is not valued by all cultural groups and that over emphasis on storybook reading can discourage children from reading. Gregory (2008), for example, found that some high achieving immigrant families saw little value in reading stories with their children at home, and Anderson, Lenters, and McTavish (2008) caution against creating a "broccoli effect" by insisting that children engage in storybook reading "because it's good for you."

The pros and cons of storybook reading can be considered in light of the following concerns expressed by Rodriguez (2002):

- Programs based on an autonomous model may assume (wrongly) that everyone has the same goal and a similar idea about what they want to do with literacy once they have it.

- Programs informed by the autonomous model may reproduce the inequities they aim to redress. For example, a practitioner may assume that because activities are fun and engaging for some families they will be fun and engaging for all.

Related to these concerns is an additional one, that programs based on an autonomous model do not reflect the communities in which they are located. Rather they seem to resemble each other. An interesting study of providers' web sites was conducted by Anderson et al. (2008). Anderson et al. were surprised to find that family literacy providers' websites seemed to be focused almost exclusively on young children and portrayed families narrowly. Also of concern was the similarity of the Canadian sites when the country is marked by such cultural and linguistic diversity.

Anderson et al. question whether the sameness among images of family literacy extends to program activities. This is a question taken up by Stooke and McKenzie (2009) in their multi-site observational study of neighbourhood-based early learning programs for very young children and their caregivers. In spite of efforts to conduct research in diverse sites, Stooke and McKenzie noted remarkable similarities among programs.

Rodriguez (2002) urges practitioners to ask themselves the following questions:

- What is being lost when children from non-mainstream families are asked to learn mainstream practices in order to succeed?
- How might schools and family literacy programs validate the practices of children from non-mainstream families?
- How might programs act as "multidirectional bridges between home and school?"

Following Street (1995), Rodriguez contrasts the autonomous model with an ideological model in which literacy holds different meanings for people and is "done" differently in different contexts.

Literacy programs based on an ideological model share the following characteristics:

- They assume that a person's desire to improve their literacy is influenced by their personal and culturally embedded needs.
- They assume literacy is embedded in the community.
- They involve communities and participants in the planning of programs.
- They assume that literacy includes many kinds of reading and writing and is more than just reading and writing.

- They see people's languages and cultural backgrounds as resources for everyone's learning.
- They assume that everyone learns and everyone teaches.

The Aboriginal Head Start program is an exemplar of culturally sensitive family literacy programming. Aboriginal Head Start is a federally-funded, community-run initiative administered through Health Canada. Aboriginal Head Start programs promote Aboriginal cultures and languages, education, health, nutrition and counselling.

Aboriginal Head Start

Goals and objectives for the programs include:
- Promote the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical growth of each child. Encourage a desire in the child for lifelong learning.
- Support parent participation in all aspects of program planning, delivery and evaluation.

Involves the local community.
- Recognizes and supports extended families in teaching and caring for children.
- Ensures the program works with and is supported by other programs and services.
- Ensures the best possible use of financial resources for child, family and community outcomes.

Priscilla George, Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, pp. 11-16

Asset-Based Programs

Aboriginal Head Start is one of a growing number of asset-based programs that work with parents, children, teachers and other service providers to identify and mobilize families' culturally and linguistically shaped "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Ananti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1994) in order to create powerful learning opportunities for the children. The goals of such programs include school success, but they focus on the wealth of knowledge and personal experience that each child brings to school rather than the lack of any particular knowledge or experience.

Looking at family literacy through a "widened lens" makes it crucially important for educators to learn about the literate lives of participants outside of programs. When the participants are young children this means learning about their home lives. For older children, it means looking more broadly at their lives at home and in their communities. We attend here primarily to young children's home lives.

If literacy is viewed through a "widened lens," it is possible to state with confidence that all families engage in family literacy. The challenge for family literacy practitioners is to see and value practices that may not, at first glance, look like assets. Unfortunately, cultural mismatch theory has attained the status of common sense. It is difficult to see differences as anything but deficits, especially when those differences seem to result in lack of success. People can care deeply about social justice and yet see differences in deficit terms. Practitioners also need to question the often unsubstantiated idea that parents will not be able to support their children's education on the basis of the parents' membership in a group such as "new immigrants" or "people living in poverty." There is ample empirical evidence that many families labelled "at risk" do engage their children in reading and writing and most of them hold education in high regard (Anderson & and Stokes, 1984; Reyes, 1992; McTavish, 2007).

> Naturalistic research over the last 20 years or so demonstrates that the family is a rich site for supporting children's literacy development across socioeconomic and cultural contexts. That research suggests that families engage children in a wide array of literacy activities in their daily lives. Furthermore, significant others, in addition to parents, play important roles in children's literacy development. (Anderson et al., 2008, p. 63)

Research indicates that parents and other caregivers support children's literacy development in a variety of ways:

> by encouraging them to "write" notes, messages, lists, and so forth (Taylor, 1983); reading print in the home and community such as signs, books, advertisements, religious materials, notes, grocery lists, and logos (Purcell-Gates, 1996); encouraging language development through discussion, and through riddles, rhymes, raps, and songs (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001); teaching, in developmentally appropriate ways, the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent (Senéchal & Lefevre, 2002); supporting their young children's responses to popular culture texts (Lenters, 2007); and providing role models as readers and writers (Anderson, 1995). As well, young children use a range of symbols to

construct and represent meaning (Kress, 1997; Marsh, 2006). (Anderson et al., 2008, p. 63)

2.6   What Works in Family Literacy?

This review found that program information rarely stated the theoretical grounding of the program although programs often discussed core values. Ideas about what works are nevertheless linked to ideas about what counts as literacy and what counts as research. Researchers who support an autonomous approach to program planning are more likely to subscribe to traditional forms of assessment or scientifically-based meta-analyses.

2.6.1   Research-Based Practices

The US-based National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) analyzed the findings from scientifically-based studies of early literacy (SBRR) research to produce resources for practitioners. The section on family literacy is summarized in the table below.

What Works?
An Introductory Teacher Guide for Early Language and Emergent Literacy Instruction

- It is hard to isolate the best practices for parents.
  The variety of practices found in homes makes it difficult to identify the most effective practices. (p. 51)

- Parents' strategies have the greatest effect for children aged 0 – 3 years. (p. 52)

- Successful programs build awareness and teach parents skills and strategies.

[S]uccessful parental involvement programs help parents understand the importance of their role as first teachers and equip them with both the skills and the strategies to foster their children's language and literacy development (p. 51). In successful programs parents were responsible for implementing the strategies and they were instructed and supervised on the implementation of the strategies by the developers themselves (p. 52).

- Teachers can support parents by teaching effective strategies. Children benefit when parents learn simple and effective strategies for supporting their development. Teachers can help parents learn these strategies by sharing information, demonstrating simple activities, and providing opportunities for guided practice (p. 54).

- Parents promote early literacy primarily through language support and rich experiences.

  Parents build children's language skills by "modeling appropriate language skills, labeling objects and actions and describing what they or their child is doing, recasting the child's words in ways that expand language and apply more complex skills, and by asking questions that
  encourage thinking and talking" (p. 52).

  "When parents provide a variety of experiences, their child is exposed to words and their uses that are specific to the experience or setting. For example, the types of language and activities experienced at church, the zoo, when shopping, at a park, and visiting friends and relatives may differ from the language and activities that take place at home. Interactive shared reading is another highly effective way for parents to build a child's vocabulary and cognitive abilities. Books often include new words and structures that are different from language typically used in conversations" (p. 52).

- Parents support early literacy in the context of shared reading activities.
  Parents can learn dialogic reading strategies. (p. 52)
  Parents should reread the same book many times. "When a book is reread, the conversation about it can be expanded with more complex types of questions and a child can become more confident and competent in the comfortable setting of its familiarity. Providing a variety of books is a way for parents to diversify their child's experiences with language, structure, and information" (p. 53)

Podcasts for Parents of Preschoolers
"Talking About Stories," a series of podcasts from Thinkfinity.org, presents easy activities to do with young children while reading popular children's books. The activities described in these podcasts can be done before, during and after reading the book, and enrich reading aloud experiences.

National Centre for Family Literacy (2009)
PDF file available at https://www.famlit.org/NELP/pdf/What%20Works.pdf

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Family literacy programs can have positive outcomes for neighbourhood children who did not participate.

The National Center for Family Literacy's meta-analysis examined data pertaining to the literacy outcomes for program participants. One mixed methods study (Evangelou, Brooks, & Smith, 2010) that was not included in the meta-analysis deserves mention because it examined literacy outcomes for other children living in the neighbourhood and found that even children who did not participate in the initiative made literacy gains beyond the gains that could be explained by other factors.

> One of the aims of PEEP was to achieve a 'significant improvement in educational attainment by whole communities of children' (PEEP, 2005). This is regardless of whether their families choose to attend the weekly sessions on offer. The community findings demonstrate similar effects on parents and on the rate of progress made by the children, in important outcomes related to literacy development to those found for the PEEP sub-group. . . . The cognitive effects in favour of the children living in the PEEP area suggest that children at risk of low educational achievement,

whose families chose not to participate in the weekly sessions, were still able to benefit from its existence within the community. (p. 606)

It is not always possible to identify the model of literacy that informs a study. This is especially true of studies that aim to synthesize existing data. Swick (2009) reviewed a range of family literacy research studies and found four documented impacts of high quality early childhood family literacy programs: school readiness, school success, economic gains and improved quality of life (p. 405).

Swick also found that effective programs

- provide regular, intensive literacy support over long periods of time;
- are flexible in design and adaptive in the strategies used;
- are the products of strong community partnerships;
- are embedded in webs of community literacy supports such as libraries and adult education programs;
- strengthen staff competence through continuous training and growth opportunities;
- address the total needs of the children with a major emphasis on literacy skills;
- educate parents about quality early childhood programs;
- address parent and family needs for developing short- and long-term goals that coincide with their educational pursuits;
- integrate early childhood and related program components;
- adapt to the work and family lives of parents;
- utilize technology . . . to better relate to the busy lives of working adults;
- address parent competence in various parenting skills;
- enhance the parent–child relationship to the highest possible level of functioning;
- strengthen the literacy focus within the parent and child relationship;
- focus on building vocabulary, literacy enjoyment, and comprehension of concepts and ideas;
- assure that families have the health and well-being to carry out the literacy and developmental tasks of parenting and family life. (pp. 403 – 405)

2.6.2 What Works? Recruitment and Retention

Ideas about "what works" do not only apply to educational activities that take place during programs. Recruitment and retention are ongoing challenges for

most programs. Although everyone faces parenting challenges, people with lower incomes have fewer choices about where and how to access social support (Coldblatt & McBean, 2002).

Planners and practitioners tend to rely on networking and information sharing with other program providers for advice on such issues. Garcia and Hasson (2004) shared insights from twenty years of experience with culturally and linguistically diverse families.

> Insights from the authors' experiences with implementing family English literacy programs for over 20 years in the South Florida area include the role of needs assessments, recruitment and retention, curricular design and curricular materials, personnel selection and staff development, and interagency collaboration. Given the current emphasis on these types of programs, it is imperative that issues of implementation be addressed in order to maximize the success of these initiatives. (p. 1-13)

The following ideas are compiled from the Alberta-based Centre for Family Literacy's (2002) *Pathways Sourcebook*. To prepare the *Sourcebook*, researchers Coldblatt and McBean met with eighteen practitioners and twelve other staff from agencies that referred parents to programs. They asked: What factors influence practitioners' decisions to refer parents to programs and what makes parents follow through?

Strategies for Effective Outreach, Recruitment and Retention

Agency Networking
- Build relationships with other agencies in an ongoing way.
- Take advantage of mutually beneficial opportunities.
- Promote your services in conjunction with another agency such as Good Food Boxes.
- Conduct information workshops in other agency settings. It may take eight
  to ten outreach workshop sessions to build connections strong enough for other service providers to promote your program.
- Lead a demonstration session on how to make referrals.

Reaching your audience

- Targeted outreach is essential. Many programs can fill up without involving "hard-to-reach" groups.
- Outreach needs to be ongoing and deliberate even though the formula for success is unlikely to remain the same.
- Be visible. A store front location often works well.
- Have multilingual promotional materials.
- Try door to door flyer runs. Ask parents to take flyers back to their apartment buildings or neighbourhoods.
- Locate your program in a space already being used by your target audience.
- Put information in new baby kits, on grocery bags, on recreation centre notice boards and so on.
- Publish articles in newspapers.
- Send Fact Sheets to human service agencies.

Trust precedes take up

- Some people rely solely on word of mouth, friends and family service providers
- Encourage parents to bring a friend to the program.
- Take food and/or books to home visits.
- Assure parents of stable funding.
- Try to find out if other family members support attendance. Ask parents about pressures at home.
- Be sure to let families know how you plan to handle confidentiality and cliques. Acknowledge the discomforts of coming into a new group.
- Ask key community leaders to arrange for interpreters if necessary.
- Invite extended families.

What if people have been told they must attend?

- Ask them for input.
- Ask them to take on defined roles.
- Ask them to share the experience they bring.

Promotion materials and principles of clear writing
- Use active voice, action verbs.
- Use present tense.
- Avoid exceptions to rules.
- Avoid split infinitives.
- Use the same words to mean the same things.
- Choose simple words.
- Avoid gender specific terms.
- Use short sentences.
- Avoid acronyms.

Scheduling and Grouping
- People need time to warm up to programs. Schedule sixteen weeks rather than six.
- Programs themselves can be effective outreach. A low key program such as "drop-in stories" can be a person's way in to further involvement.
- Be realistic about numbers. How many participants can you adequately support?
- Grouping people based on interests is more effective than grouping people based on skill levels.
- Ask about shift work and nap times.

Before the program
- For most people groups are intimidating at the beginning. People who have experienced violence may struggle with self-worth are often reluctant to participate.
- Parents are more likely to attend if they've met someone from the organization.
- Staffing continuity makes a difference.
- Phone a day ahead to remind people about the program and to check in.   Knowing the children will have fun is a draw for parents.
- Parents like to know there will be practical ideas.
- Let people know if there will be right and wrong answers.
- Honour everyone's dignity and privacy.
- Respect cultural traditions.

At the program
- Serve food. Avoid pot lucks until you know it will be possible for all to bring food.
- Arrange transportation. Provide name tags for introductions.
- Let people know where things are and tell them to help themselves.
- Work together to develop a list of things people want to do.
- Figure out ways to hand over responsibility.
- Provide free childcare. Assure parents they can go into the childcare
  setting whenever they want.
- Don't get locked into a prescribed curriculum. You need to be flexible.
- Use everyday conversational language rather than program language.
- Have something creative for people to do with their hands. It sometimes makes conversation possible. "Make and Take" activities increase the chances that people will attend.
- Many people appreciate access to computers and the opportunity to develop computer skills.
- Other well-liked activities are book swaps, nature walks, library visits, making a meal together, and family storytelling.
- Parent-made materials help to ensure that no one is reading or writing over their head.

After the program
- Keep in touch with people who drop out. Things can change.
- Keep in touch with people after the program.
- The effects of the program may not be appreciated until later.

2.6.3 Research-Based Practices Through a "Widened Lens"

Viewing research through a "widened lens" involves a willingness to view experience as evidence. In human service professions, much of what we know is learned in practice. Therefore reflection on action can support purposeful decision-making and professional discernment. In the absence of reflexivity, practitioners are more likely to make decisions that lead to unintended outcomes.

A program model that acts on a principle of trust for experience is Holistic education. Holistic practice takes into account all aspects of a learner's development. While holistic practice is not unique to Aboriginal education, it is a hallmark of Aboriginal programming such as Aboriginal Head Start.

> In Canada, while First Nations communities and educators continue their discussions on the most appropriate teaching approaches, there seems to be an understanding shared by all: Aboriginal learners of all ages are best served by pedagogies based on traditional practices, where "all aspects of the learner's development [are] taken into consideration, including cultural, spiritual, political and economic factors." (Palmantier, 2000, quoted in Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 2-21).

Two pages from the *Pathways Sourcebook* (Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002 , pp. 38-39) illustrate the value of thinking about theory in practice. The information provided in the resource demonstrates how the principles of adult learning can support practitioners as they address challenges associated with recruitment and retention in programs.

The two *Pathways* pages are followed by brief descriptions of critically reflexive practice models.

11. What keeps adults coming back?
Principles of Adult Learning

Whether parents keep coming back after the first time they explore a new program has a lot to do with fit. Does the atmosphere feel comfortable? Is it safe, warm and welcoming? Are the activities fun? Am I learning something new? To design programs that fit for adults, there are some helpful principles that can be applied.

What are the fundamental principles of adult learning? (Knowles, 1970)
- Adults have a need to know why they should learn something. The adult has to consider it important to acquire the new skill knowledge or attitude.
- Adults have a need to be self-directing and decide for themselves what they want to learn.
- Adults have a far greater volume and different quality of experiences than young people so that connecting learning experiences to past experience can make the learning experience more meaningful and assist the participant to acquire the new knowledge.
- Adults become ready to learn when they experience a life situation where they need to know.
- Adults enter into the learning process with a task-centred orientation to learning.
- Adults are motivated to learn by both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

How do we apply these principles?
- We begin by creating a climate of mutual trust.
- We can clarify mutual expectations with the learner, creating a cooperative learning climate.
- We allow for as much choice as possible in making decisions during the learning experience.
- We create a means for mutual planning to help adults figure out what their needs are, and then build the objectives and activities specifically to suit their needs.
- We can encourage participants to link new learning activities to previous experience.
- We can use positive reinforcement.

Source:
Adapted from Gerard O'Brien (2002) in
http://www.med.monash.edu.au/faculty/cpme/articles/adult_learning.htm

Learning Styles

When we apply the principles of adult learning, we acknowledge that people have different learning styles. Programs that use varied approaches are more likely to keep people coming back. We can observe how parents respond and we can ask them to consider how they learn best, with the help of the following chart:

When you..	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic & Tactile
Spell	Do you try to see the word?	Do you sound out the word or use a phonetic approach?	Do you write the word down to find if it feels right?
Talk	Do you sparingly but dislike listening for too long? Do you favor words such as see, picture, and imagine?	Do you enjoy listening but are impatient to talk? Do you use words such as hear, tune, and think?	Do you gesture and use expressive movements? Do you use words such as feel, touch, and hold?
Concentrate	Do you become distracted by untidiness or movement?	Do you become distracted by sounds or noises?	Do you become distracted by activity around you?
Meet someone again	Do you forget names but remember faces or remember where you met?	Do you forget faces but remember names or remember what you talked about?	Do you remember best what you did together?
Contact people on business	Do you prefer direct, face-to-face, personal meetings?	Do you prefer the telephone?	Do you talk with them while walking or participating in an activity?
Read	Do you like descriptive scenes or pause to imagine the actions?	Do you enjoy dialog & conversation or hear the characters talk?	Do you prefer action stories or are not a keen reader?
Do something new at work	Do you like to see demonstrations, diagrams, slides, or posters?	Do you prefer verbal instructions or talking about it with someone else?	Do you prefer to jump right in and try it?
Put something together	Do you look at the directions and the picture?		Do you ignore the directions and figure it out as you go along?
Need help with a computer application	Do you seek out pictures or diagrams?	Do you call the help desk, ask a neighbor, or growl at the computer?	Do you keep trying to do it or try it on another computer?

Adapted from Colin Rose (1987) in http://www.chaminade.org/inspire/learnstl.htm

Critical practice is not negative; rather it implies a willingness to ask difficult questions and to ask whose interests are served by an action. Most critical practice models are informed by the groundbreaking work of the famous Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (e.g. Freire, 1980). Freire said that education should be the practice of freedom. Learners should have opportunities to pose problems related to their experiences, name their experiences, reflect on them, and engage in dialogue about them. Freirian models include dialogical and popular education, critical literacy, multicultural education, and critical language education.

Model	Characteristics
Dialogical education / Popular education	Dialogical education leads to greater awareness, what Freire calls conscientization. Popular education, that is "education of and for the people," is based on the principles of dialogic education.
Critical literacy	Critical literacy is a strategy for reading the word and the world. Critical literacy focuses on disrupting taken-for-granted ideas, looking at issues from multiple viewpoints, thinking about ways that the sociopolitical context shapes the issues and taking action around issues to promote social justice. Critical literacy is not quite the same as critical reading, which focuses on fact versus opinion, reality and fantasy, and deconstructing media propaganda techniques. The goal of critical literacy is to prepare learners to actively participate in a democracy and to move text to social action.
Multicultural education	Multicultural education challenges racism and other forms of discrimination. Like critical literacy, it focuses

	on reflection and action to promote social change.
Critical language education	Critical language education recognizes that the extent to which language, culture and identity are related. Critical language education promotes the inclusion of learners' home languages in mainstream education experiences.

Feminist pedagogies are not directly informed by Freire's work, but they too advocate a reflexive approach. Feminist pedagogies recognize women's experiences as valid resources for literacy learning.

Characteristics of feminist pedagogies:

- Women's experiences are validated.
- Empowerment for all is the goal.
- Knowledge is built together, not passed from teacher to learner.
- Critical literacy is practised.
- Personal knowledge and experience are connected to disciplinary knowledge.

A contradiction arises for feminists because programs tend to be staffed and attended by more women than men. Homer (2008) cites several studies that discuss the potential of family literacy programs to reinforce gender stereotypes of literacy work within families (Cairney, 1995; Freebody, 1996; Luttrell, 1996) .

Critical teaching practice – a summary

Rodriguez (2002) writes that inclusive and critical teaching practices

- Build on and honour the language and literacy practices of the home,
- Introduce new literacy practices,
- Have meaningful and relevant content,
- Promote critical thinking and inquiry,
- Stress dialogue and interaction,
- Integrate all kinds of language use while emphasizing one form,

- Provide opportunities for individual and community action,
- Make use of community resources.
  (Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 3-34)

2.6.4 A Participatory Approach to Working with Parents

Rodriguez writes that family literacy programs can avoid reproducing power inequities by adopting the following principles of practice:

- Avoid using standardized tests of skills. Try to understand participants' practices. Build on the families' perceptions and uses of language.
- Develop activities around issues of interest and concern to participants.
- Use participants' words, experiences and cultural artefacts in your programs. Create materials that reflect their stories.
- Employ flexible scheduling if possible. Draw on the community to support curriculum planning and actual activities.
- Affirm home languages. Encourage people to use their home languages even if you don't understand. Encourage universal languages such as drawing pictures.
- Emphasize dialogue, interaction and critical thinking. (Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 2-14)

A participatory approach to working with parents fits comfortably with this critical and inclusive approach to teaching. A participatory approach is about doing *with*, not *for* and not *to* parents. A participatory approach involves:

- sharing decision-making
- dialoguing and questioning
- challenging the taken-for-granted
- focusing on everyone's strengths
- attending to issues of power

  Critical participatory education shifts the focus from what parents do not bring to the learning situation (deficits), to what they do bring (diverse but significant strengths). In family literacy this means that literacy practitioners focus on what parents bring to the family, to the family literacy situation, to the program, and to the community. For example, parents bring their stories, their cultural heritage, even their humour to their families and to others. (Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 3-7)

Participatory education is built on inquiry and research. Participants are challenged to find questions and issues that are important to them. Being critical involves learning to live with uncertainty. Not all questions have easy answers. Practitioners must therefore be prepared to respond authentically and to admit when they don't know the answer.

A participatory approach can be challenging. Practitioners need to understand themselves very well before they can understand others. They need to cultivate a habit of reflecting on their actions. Sometimes a participatory approach can seem contrived. It takes time to develop relationships. If people move too quickly it may not feel right.

Maureen Sanders and Suzanne Smythe (2002) remind us that community literacy programs are not just programs located in a community. By adhering to principles of participatory practice and critical education, family literacy programs can promote social change and contribute to the creation of a more just society.

A community literacy program:
- Involves all participants in key decisions
- Responds to community needs
- Is part of a larger educational plan
- Uses community resources
- Incorporates the cultures and languages of the learners
- Is oriented to finding solutions and taking action to make a positive change in people's lives and in the life of the community

An example: Inuktitut language programs in Pelly Bay, Nunavut
- Making traditional puppets; writing and performing the puppet show
- Forming a traditional seal-skin clothing sewing group in which the elders teach younger women how to speak, read, and write the patterns in Inuktitut.
- Illustrating stories in Inuktitut, distributing the stories through the local grocery store, and then reading the stories to everyone over the local radio.

Sanders & Smythe, quoted in Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 7-4

	Traditional ways for the group	Current ways for the group	Proposed (wished for) ways for the group
Who teaches?			
Who learns?			
How did/do they teach and learn?			
Where do teaching and learning happen?			
What gets taught and learned?			

The chart above is a planning tool through which aboriginal educators are encouraged to think about ways that traditional practices can inform contemporary practices. See *Tools for Community Building,* a workbook published by the Northwest Territories Literacy Council (2002, p. 40).

2.6.5 "Best Practice" and "Good Practice" Statements

"Best Practice" statements are not intended to regulate but rather to serve as guides.

Statements can:

- Serve as guides for program planning and development,
- Be used as tools for raising awareness of and support for family literacy,
- Be shared with community partners and key stakeholders across various sectors,

- Be helpful to practitioners and managers in the development of proposals,
- Provide a framework to assist funders in making informed decisions when allocating resources. (Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 10-23)

The first set of "Best Practice" statements for Family Literacy programs was produced by the International Reading Association in 1994. An *International Declaration of Principles* (Taylor, 1997) became the starting point for critical reflection.

Seven themes can be identified in Taylor's *Principles:*

- Principles about families
- Principles about language and literacy
- Principles of ethical program development
- Pedagogical principles
- Principles for assessment
- Principles for educators and funding agencies
- Principles for policy makers (Centre for Family Literacy, 2002, p.10-5)

Several sets of statements currently guide family literacy programs in Canada. Action for Family Literacy Ontario's *Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices*, and the Alberta-based Centre for Family Literacy's *Statements of Good Practice* are summarized below.

Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices

Philosophy

A quality family literacy program has a clearly written mission statement that is built on carefully considered values and beliefs. This philosophy is communicated to everyone involved with the program and is reviewed regularly.

Needs assessment and planning

> A quality family literacy program lays a solid foundation for itself by conducting ongoing community needs assessments for family literacy, identifying target groups, and exploring potential partnerships and the availability of resources.

Policies and procedures

A quality family literacy program has policies and procedures to ensure everyone involved in the program is supported in meaningful ways, and that a safe and welcoming learning environment is established.

Program models

A quality family literacy program is built on a well-researched model that emphasizes the strengths of families, affirms the influence of parents on their children's learning, and empowers all generations to learn.

Program content

A quality family literacy program supports the learning efforts of all family members by using a wide variety of instructional methods, strategies and materials. While a program model may be followed, modifications are made continually to meet the needs, interests and capabilities of program participants.

Resources, materials and facilities

A quality family literacy program uses a variety of learner-centered, age appropriate and authentic learning materials, and provides accessible facilities where families feel safe and comfortable learning.

Staff development

A quality family literacy program has well-trained staff who can meet the diverse learning needs of participating family members. The staff understand the theory and research underlying family literacy, bring practical skills to program delivery, and keep up-to-date through professional development.

Volunteers

A quality family literacy program may recruit, train and support volunteers to contribute in meaningful ways.

Promotion and recruitment

A quality family literacy program uses a variety of methods and outreach materials to promote the program effectively in the community and to recruit families who have the most to gain from the program.

Access, participation and retention

A quality family literacy program offers the program in a central and safe location with relevant resources and supports. Sensitive staff create a learning environment where participants of all ages attend for as long as it takes to reach their goals.

Supporting families' diversities and differences

A quality family literacy program celebrates and supports the range of diversity in its community by providing a variety of relevant resources and modifying program content as appropriate. Self-aware staff communicate effectively with families of all backgrounds and abilities, practicing anti-bias strategies and using language that is clear and inclusive.

Funding and sustainability

A quality family literacy program takes steps to become sustainable by exploring various long-term funding sources at local, provincial and national levels. The program also recognizes great value in short-term funding opportunities and community collaborations.

Community involvement and partnerships

A quality family literacy program views itself as a vital part of a community able to meet the learning needs of families most effectively when working closely within a network of family support agencies with similar values and goals.

Assessment and evaluation

A quality family literacy program uses a participatory method to assess and document progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of different aspects of the program in helping participants meet their learning goals. The full document can be downloaded in PDF format at http://www.nald.ca/library/bstprcgd/bstprcgd.pdf.

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Statements of Good Practice for Family Literacy Programs in Alberta

The *Statements of Good Practice for Family Literacy Programs in Alberta* were developed by a committee of family literacy practitioners from around the province. This committee looked at examples of "good practice" statements and guiding principles from other provinces and associations, prepared a number of drafts of statements, and received feedback from other literacy coordinators and practitioners in Alberta.

These "good practice" statements reflect what we believe to be the elements of an effective, high-quality family literacy program. They are a way of setting goals that can inform program planning, delivery, and evaluation. They are not definitive or meant to be used as measures, but rather should serve as guiding principles for practitioners, funders, and policy makers.

As the field of family literacy continues to grow and change, what is considered to be good practice in family literacy will also change. These statements, therefore, should be seen as dynamic and needing to be redefined over time.

The Statements have been developed to address ten themes in the practice of family literacy.

1. Intergenerational

- Successful family literacy programs work with parents and children, directly or indirectly, to establish an intergenerational cycle of literacy achievement.

2. Collaborative

- Successful family literacy programs recognize the importance of collaboration, and are developed, delivered, and continually improved with participant and community input.

3. Build on strengths

- Successful family literacy programs build on literacy behaviors and strengths already present in families, and introduce additional strategies to help further enrich literacy activities in the home.

4. Responsive

- Successful family literacy programs are flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of the families who participate in them.

5. Culturally sensitive

- Successful family literacy programs are culturally sensitive, and use resources that are appropriate for specific participant groups.

6. Celebrate learning

- Successful family literacy programs offer activities that celebrate and emphasize the joy of learning.

7. Sound methods

- Successful family literacy programs follow sound educational practices appropriate for the literacy development of children and adults. Practitioners select from a variety of research-based approaches according to the needs of each group.

8. Staff qualifications

- Successful family literacy programs have qualified and trained staff appropriate to the educational needs of children and adults and appropriate to the specific roles and responsibilities within a particular delivery model.

9. Access

- Successful family literacy programs are held in accessible, welcoming locations. Support is given to overcome barriers to participation, such as lack of child care.

10. Evaluation

- Successful family literacy programs include an on-going, manageable evaluation process.

The full document in PDF format can be downloaded at
http://www.famlit.ca/resources/goodpractice.html.

Recommendation:

Statements of "Best Practice" and "Good Practice" can guide assessment and can also guide funding decisions.

For example, the assessment checklists for the Centre for Family Literacy's programs incorporate the Statements of Good Practice.

The example below is an adaptation of the assessment checklist for an infant program described on the Centre for Family Literacy's web site called Rhymes That Bind.

Rhymes that Bind	yes	no	n/a	Need for assistance and/or action to be taken
Partnerships are an integral component of success in the program.				
Ongoing support and information about the program is provided to partner agencies.				
Partnership agreements are in place and scheduled for review on a regular basis.				

Program coordinator is available to give support to partners.				
All partners contribute their expertise.				
Parents' needs are the first priority.				

The above checklist could be developed as part of a funding application form.

2.7   Concluding Remarks

Do family literacy programs make a difference for children and parents? A review of the literature suggests that they can and that many of them do support families in a variety of ways. One study actually found that neighbourhood children not involved in a program were also benefiting from the ripple effects of a family literacy initiative.

It is evident, however, that the field is contested. Disagreements exist about what family literacy programs should look like, who they are for, what they are for, and how they help. These disagreements run parallel to the disagreements identified in Chapter One and they are echoed in Chapter Three in the discussion of community practice.

The key points made in Chapter Two are:

Family literacy refers to literacy activities that take place in the everyday lives of families. It also refers to programs that aim to increase the amount and frequency of family literacy in homes and communities.

At their best, family literacy programs provide meaningful opportunities for children and their parents to pursue literacy goals and gain access to a better quality of life as defined by them. It is important to recognize, however, that

family literacy cannot be a panacea for intransigent social problems such as child poverty.

A small body of scientifically-based studies identifies specific program characteristics associated with children's literacy achievement in primary grades.

A larger body of qualitative research and in-house evaluation reports provides anecdotal accounts of successes, challenges and insights.

"Best practice" and "good practice" statements draw on a variety of data sources including practitioners' and participants' accounts and principles drawn up by family literacy practitioners.

In order to be of practical assistance to planners and practitioners, the term *research-based practices* needs to be defined broadly to include experiential accounts, but all evidence should be critically assessed. Research-informed action studies have potential to support planning, implementation, assessment and evaluation.

Statements of "good practice" and "best practice" are resources for developing funding criteria.

Statements of "good practice" and "best practice" are not carved in stone. They are starting points for critical conversations among stakeholders.

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Part II

Literacy in Community Initiatives

Building a neighbourhood renewal process is like building a stairway to the stars – challenging, inspiring, but never complete.

(Makhoul, 2007)

The enduring aspects of CCIs [Comprehensive Community Initiatives]seem to be not the initiatives themselves, but the capacity for change that they build, the connections they forge among people and organizations, the broad strategic principles that they promote, and the opportunities for knowledge development that they provide. A better framework for community change would put those elements front and center.

(Kubisch et al., 2002)

Introduction

Social change is unavoidable and unrelenting. In fact, most of us at one time or another feel overwhelmed by change and wish it would slow down. Planned change, on the other hand, is hard to achieve. The complexity of everyday life means that planned community change must be nurtured over a long period of time by involved residents working alongside community practitioners.

What are the markers of a successful initiative?
A Canadian action research initiative called "Action for Neighbourhood Change" (ANC) set out to answer that question in a multi-site action research study. As part of their study, ANC researchers developed a "Neighbourhood Vitality Index."

Anne Makhoul (2007) lists three key assumptions that inform the "Index:"
- A vital neighbourhood can improve the quality of life of its residents.
- Vitality is *not* about poverty; a neighbourhood may be both poor and vital.
- Vital neighbourhoods identify and respond to opportunities and challenges on an ongoing basis by acting together in ways that reflect the collective priorities of the people who live and work there.

Improving literacy is an explicit goal for many neighbourhood change initiatives because improved literacy provides the foundation for other types of change. Certainly literacy brings its own rewards for many individuals, but literacy is also a resource on which individuals, families, communities and society as a whole routinely draw to achieve outcomes such as community capacity, social inclusion, economic development and civic engagement.

Literacy consultant Carmen Rodriguez (2001) explains:

> The twin goals of sustainable economic development and social inclusion cannot be achieved without a fully literate society, nor can democratic processes and institutions flourish without people skilled in sustaining robust democratic government and vibrant voluntary sectors. (p. viii)

Part II examines the challenging, rewarding, and too often invisible work of fostering positive social change. In particular it is concerned with fostering literacy as a way of life in the context of a community-based initiative.

Part II addresses the following questions:
- What are some characteristics of successful community initiatives?
- What are some successful neighbourhood-based, literacy initiatives reported in the literatures of education, community development and related fields?
- What are some commonly recognized techniques, methods, processes, activities, incentives, etc. for the enhancement of literacy and literacy awareness in neighbourhoods?

Part II is comprised of two more chapters. Chapter Three draws on research literature and descriptive accounts of community change initiatives to identify what Harder Company Community Research (2003) call "promising practices," those practices that appear to be associated with successful community initiatives. The chapter also showcases activities from successful initiatives.

Chapter Four is a synthesis chapter.

In Chapter Four, key findings from the first three chapters are highlighted and mobilized to address the question:
- What are some commonly recognized techniques, methods, processes, activities, incentives, etc. for the enhancement of literacy and literacy awareness in neighbourhoods?

Chapter Four draws on the statements of "promising," "good" and "best" practices that have been laid out in the first three chapters to make recommendations for criteria to be employed in a small grants funding initiative.

Part II draws primarily on community development literature. The community development field is unfamiliar terrain for literacy practitioners who work in formal settings such as schools, but it is more familiar to community literacy and family literacy practitioners. Literacy practitioners who work in educational settings have long recognized that there is much to be learned from colleagues in community practice. Often the principles of good practice in community development and the principles of good practice in community literacy are well aligned, even when the terms are different.

The meanings of the following terms are clarified for the benefit of readers who are more familiar with literacy literature.

Neighbourhoods and Communities

In everyday conversation the words neighbourhood and community are often used interchangeably. Maureen Sanders and Suzanne Smythe) show how community and neighbourhood overlap.

> Communities can be geographical such as a neighbourhood, town, or city, or can be based on mutual interest or involvement such as in a neighbourhood school, workplace, cultural group, advocacy group and so on. Community can also refer to the ways that people interact with one another and with other communities and institutions. (cited by the Centre for Family Literacy Society of Alberta, 2002, p. 7-3)

In this literature review, *neighbourhood* refers to a geographic space or place while acknowledging that a neighbourhood can be much more than that. Community on the other hand is a social entity.

*Communit*y refers to both a group of people (noun) and the processes of community building (verb).

A community is a group of people who share characteristics such as (but not only) language, cultural background, beliefs and values. It can also refer to a group who participate in what Etienne Wenger (1998) calls a "community of practice". Members of a community "are conscious of belonging to a group, with no necessary assumption that [it] is limited to a particular locality" (Roos, Trigg & Hartman, 2006, p. 203).

How does community building get done? Wenger claims that communities of practice emerge out of a group's sustained participation in a valued activity. Rossi (2001) says that community happens when people forge a "rich array of associational affiliations . . . beyond the primary ties of family, co-workers and friends" (p. 33, quoted in Roos et al., 2006, p. 199), what some people call making connections or networking.

At the heart of both these ideas of community is the idea that people themselves create community. Others cannot do it for us. Neither can they impose community upon us.

Community attachment

Much work carried out in neighbourhood revitalization projects is based on a belief that a personal attachment to one's neighbourhood is an important source of well-being (Hyman, 2002). Locating a community initiative in a neighbourhood builds on and fosters neighbourhood attachment . The hope is that the

neighbourhood will become a place where people as individuals can "do" community, and a place where pre-existing and emergent community groups can come together to engage in a variety of community-building activities that collectively increase the vitality of the neighbourhood.

Community development
Gorman (2007) defines community development as the process of cultivating a broad network of interaction in order to enable communities to achieve a sustainable, healthy economy and improved quality of life" (p. 11).

Community building

Community building emphasizes:
- Communities working together to identify and solve their problems;
- Cultivation of socially valuable relationships;
- Support for leadership development and increased human capital;
- Increased relational and organizational skills of residents and groups;
- Sustained stakeholder engagement;
- Development of a sense of common purpose and an action agenda;
- Increased local and institutional capacity. (Saegert, 2005, p. 3)

> Community building as a local activity has local outcomes. These include increased contact among community residents which in successful community building efforts leads to greater social capital at the local level. For example, residents get together to clean up vacant lots, to establish block watches, etc. They also help each other with personal problems, provide referral networks for jobs, housing openings, and schools, and in general work to achieve individual and collective goals by using their own resources. Increased social capital and community building activities in marginalized neighborhoods most often also lead to the emergence of one or more agendas for community change. When community building works, it leads to some concrete improvement in community conditions such as cleaner vacant lots or less crime. Finally, community building activities affect the human capital of the individuals it engages. (Saegert, 2005, p.10)

Community practice

Community practice draws attention to the dynamic nature of community building. Community, then, is an ongoing accomplishment, something that people do together.

Best practices, good practices, promising practices

The notion of "best practices" refers to research-derived principles. However, the term "best practices" is sometimes associated with one-size-fits-all solutions imposed from outside the community. By contrast, the terms "promising practices" and "good practices" recognize the locally-specific, situated nature of community building. Of course, a practice that appears on a list of "best practices" may well turn out to be a "promising practice" for a local situation. The point made here is not a comment on any practice, but on the ways in which practices are identified as good, promising, or best.

Social capital

"Doing" community usually results in the creation of social capital. "Social capital is created when relations among people change in ways that facilitate action" (Coleman, 1988, quoted in Hyman, 2002, p. 197). For example, partnerships and networks are created and strengthened as people invest their accumulated social capital. One goal of community building is therefore to support people with relatively little social capital as they work to build more.

A Note on the Sources

Numerous accounts of community-based initiatives are available in the public domain, with most of them on the web sites of sponsoring organizations. The majority of the web-based accounts contain information about the contexts in which initiatives were implemented, but many of them appear in the form of planning documents. That is, they document their community's assets, needs and plans, but say little about the implementation of those plans and almost nothing about assessment.

While a brief overview of an initiative followed by the name and email address of a contact person is an appropriate and efficient way to "get the word out" and to forge networks among agencies, it is less useful for researchers. As two other authors of literature reviews (Saegert, 2005; Kubisch et al., 2002) also found, the lack of detail makes it difficult to distinguish one initiative from another.

The accounts that appear in this report were selected primarily because they provide relatively detailed responses to one or more of the key questions noted earlier in this introduction. These accounts cannot be considered a representative sample of the available literature, nor do they meet a common set of methodological criteria such as the criteria employed by the United States

National Reading Panel (2000). It is therefore not wise to compare initiatives except when they are part of a "family" of initiatives organized around common principles. To augment the accounts, several policy reports, professional resource books, and academic articles were also consulted.

The accounts discussed in Part II include but are not limited to accounts of literacy initiatives. This is because literacy activities and literacy learning opportunities are often embedded in comprehensive community initiatives. Even when literacy is not identified as a goal for the initiative, literacy learning opportunities are invariably present. Such literacy learning has the added advantage of being integrated in purposeful activities, and as such meets the criterion of authenticity which has been linked to robust literacy learning for children and adults alike (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004).

Limitations of the Literature Review

Comprehensive literature reviews, by definition, examine large quantities of information. The danger in summarizing large quantities of information about community building initiatives is that specific characteristics of individual initiatives can be erased or painted over in the process. I have tried to respect the uniqueness of initiatives and acknowledge the complex and unpredictable nature of community change processes, but I have not always been successful. I therefore encourage readers to consult the actual reports provided by sponsors of initiatives, almost all of which are available on the internet.

Added to the danger of creating too simple a portrait of community change is the temptation to focus on success stories and so to overlook what can be learned from reflection on situations "gone wrong." There is much to be learned from problem situations, but unfortunately, few reports discuss them in depth.

A focus on success stories may also convey unintentionally that neighbourhood initiatives are a panacea for social problems. This is not the case. Longstanding patterns of exclusion, for example, cannot be assuaged overnight. Also, neighbourhood initiatives are situated in and affected by the sociopolitical context. Unanticipated changes in government or funding structures will "shape the nature and impacts of any community initiative" (Butcher et al., 2007, p. 34).

Finally, this review of the literature does not claim to be an exhaustive one. Instead the data were sampled to the point of redundancy. This means that although new accounts of neighbourhood initiatives can still be found, the observations and insights contained in the new accounts appear to shed no new light on the issues. Collectively the articles and reports consulted tell a coherent story about "what works" in community building initiatives and what needs to be done, but readers are encouraged to review these findings in light of their own observations and experiences.

Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods Set Children's Reading Skills on Negative Course

The study, published this week in the journal Health & Place, finds children who live in neighbourhoods with higher rates of poverty show reduced scores on standardized tests seven years later – regardless of the child's place of residence in Grade 7. The study is the first of its kind to compare the relative effects of neighbourhood poverty at early childhood and early adolescence.

"Our findings suggest that it's not necessarily where children live later in life that matters for understanding literacy in early adolescence – it's where they lived years earlier," says lead researcher Jennifer Lloyd of UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP). "Children's reading comprehension may be set on a negative course early in life if children and their families are living in resource-deprived places."

Lloyd explored children's Grade 7 reading comprehension outcomes in relation to their residential neighbourhoods' level of poverty (concentrated disadvantage) at kindergarten and Grade 7. Higher rates of poverty have been shown to be associated with higher rates of infant mortality, low birth weight, high school drop-out rates and adolescent delinquency.

Along with colleagues Leah Li and Clyde Hertzman, Lloyd collected Grade 7 Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) data for 2,648 urban British Columbia children, followed from kindergarten to Grade 7, as well as socioeconomic data describing the children's residential neighbourhoods at both time points.

The researchers found a "delayed effect" of the residential environments in which children are raised. Children who lived in neighbourhoods with a higher socioeconomic status at kindergarten age scored better on the Grade 7 FSA than children who came from poorer neighbourhoods – regardless of where they lived in Grade 7.

The researchers say it's possible that the socioeconomic conditions of children's early residential neighbourhoods exert a strong effect later because acquiring reading skills involves the collective efforts of parents, educators, family friends and community members, as well as access to good schools, libraries, after-school programs and bookstores.

"Sadly, our findings demonstrate the lasting effect of neighbourhood poverty on children's reading comprehension – highlighting that children's literacy is not simply an important issue for parents, but also for community leaders and policy makers alike," Lloyd says.

Science Daily, January 17, 2010. Retrieved from
http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/01/100114143330.htm

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Chapter Three
Promising Practices for Neighbourhood Change

3.1   Introduction

The subject of Chapter Three is best expressed by Kathy Day, an Alberta literacy specialist, as she reflects on the value of capacity building for community literacy.

> Long ago the community of Pincher Creek," says Kathy, "through its Friends of Literacy Society, set the goal of having the community 'value literacy.' However, the projects were always initiated by myself or by other literacy workers. I welcome turning this over to the community. The difference is that the ownership for valuing literacy rests now within community institutions. This happened because of staff training, document changes and changes in practice, as well as ongoing in-servicing in literacy needs. The local literacy worker can now be seen as a resource, not always the initiator. (Day et al., 2005, pp. 20-21)

Social change is unavoidable and unrelenting. In fact, most of us at one time or another feel overwhelmed by change and wish it would slow down. Planned change, on the other hand, is hard to achieve. The complexity of everyday life means that planned community change must be nurtured over a long period of time by involved residents working alongside community practitioners.

Improving literacy is an explicit goal for many neighbourhood change initiatives because improved literacy provides the foundation for other types of change. Certainly literacy brings its own rewards for many individuals, but literacy is also a resource on which individuals, families, communities and society as a whole count on to achieve outcomes such as community capacity, social inclusion, economic development, and civic engagement.

Literacy consultant, Carmen Rodriguez (2001) puts it this way:

> The twin goals of sustainable economic development and social inclusion cannot be achieved without a fully literate society, nor can democratic processes and institutions flourish without people skilled in sustaining robust democratic government and vibrant voluntary sectors. (p. viii)

Chapter Three draws on research literature and descriptive accounts of community change initiatives to identify what Harder et al. (2003) call "promising practices" - those practices that appear to be associated with successful community initiatives. The chapter also showcases successful initiatives and identifies opportunities for literacy learning embedded in the activities and programs.

3.2   Assessing Community Change

A Canadian action research initiative called Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) created a Vitality Index. In a multi-site action research study, the ANC team set out to answer the question: What are the markers of a successful community initiative? As part of their study, ANC researchers developed a "Neighbourhood Vitality Index*."*

Anne Makhoul (2007) lists three key assumptions for the Index:

- A vital neighbourhood can improve the quality of life of its residents.
- Vitality is *not* about poverty; a neighbourhood may be both poor and vital.
- Vital neighbourhoods identify and respond to opportunities and challenges on an ongoing basis by acting together in ways that reflect the collective priorities of the people who live and work there.

As noted in the Introduction to Part II, not all the initiatives discussed in this chapter make explicit reference to literacy goals. However, literacy learning opportunities are often present in activities that serve a variety of other purposes for people, especially in comprehensive community initiatives where the goals are usually overlapping and interdependent.

Learning from the Weaving Literacy Project

As the outcomes of the "Weaving Literacy Project" suggest, an integrated, community-building approach to literacy does not necessarily mean the development of a new literacy program, or more literacy classes, or the rolling out of a new literacy model across a province or territory. Although these are possibilities, the "Weaving Literacy" approach involves building a cooperative environment among community groups, agencies and community members for addressing literacy, learning and family quality of life issues in a holistic way. This places community groups and community members in the driver's seat for deciding what kinds of literacy and learning initiatives are most needed in their communities.

Integrated, community-building approaches to literacy can incorporate many elements or approaches, including the following:

- Creating opportunities for people to come together to learn about things that are important to them, to share ideas and to develop networks
- Linking literacy and learning to existing community activities and projects where people already feel comfortable and have few barriers to participation
- "Pulling out" the opportunities for literacy and for community-building within these existing community activities and projects
- Collaborating with, not competing with, other community groups when setting up new projects or applying for new funding
- Seeing the community as a whole and working to reduce institutional barriers to the services and supports people need (Smythe, 2005, p. 7)

3.2.1 The Challenge for Practitioners

The research base for community practice is strong on principles, but less strong on practical action. Most community initiatives described in the literature operate from a set of broad principles, but the challenge for practitioners is to translate broad principles into practices that can make a difference in the lives of neighbourhood residents.

Voices From the Field II

Anne Kubisch (2002) and a team of American researchers interviewed 64 community practitioners about their experiences working "in the field" and produced a report called "Voices from the Field II." Kubisch et al. concluded that there is a need for a knowledge base that includes "syntheses of existing knowledge and efforts to gain new knowledge from applied and basic research" (p. 75). One of the participants "from the field" made the following comment:

> [W]e don't have the means of capturing experience [and] transferring it from one place to another. . . . And we're all drawing on the same few folks and often they're consultants. So sometimes their information is proprietary, but in any case it's not institutionalized anywhere. (p. 75)

Kubisch et al. explain as follows:

The principles of community, comprehensiveness, participation, collaboration, democracy, empowerment, and capacity building have served community-change initiatives well, in some ways. They have drawn attention and sometimes significant resources to poor neighborhoods. They have shifted the focus from categorical, remedial approaches to holistic, asset-based, developmental ones. The process of applying the principles has driven community revitalization efforts to produce real outcomes—for businesses, jobs, housing, services— and vital connections among organizations and individuals. And it has strengthened the support structures— consultants and intermediary organizations, training centers and curricula, funders, and research organizations—that facilitate and inform the work of practitioners across the nation. These broad principles have provided less guidance for action than people need, however. . . .The strategies that people have used to produce better communities—such as mobilizing residents, developing new leaders, implementing good practices from other programs, building effective organizations, and collaborating around shared interests—are extremely difficult to implement well. Each step along the path spawns new challenges as various participants and institutions exert their influence and roles and relationships change. (pp. 74-75)

Chapter Three is organized around broad principles of practice. However, each principle is presented as a success statement, and where possible, it is followed by examples of the principle *in* practice.

3.2.2 The Value of Multisite Initiatives

The complexities of community practice and the unique nature of each neighbourhood-based initiative make it methodologically difficult to establish categorically the causes of success or failure for community change initiatives. Knowledge building for the field is an ongoing challenge.

Some multi-site initiatives facilitate knowledge building because practitioners agree to gather similar kinds of data and use parallel (if not identical) methods of reporting. "Action for Neighbourhood Change" was such an initiative, as were "Weaving Literacy" and British Columbia's "2010 Legacies: Literacy Now" initiative, all of which are cited frequently in this chapter.

Another coordinated, multisite initiative was "The Civic Engagement Project for Children & Families" based in California (Harder Company Community Research, 2003). I selected the report on *The Civic Engagement Project*, *Promising Practices* as a model to guide the preparation of this section of the literature review.

Following the approach laid out by authors Harder and Company, I analyzed numerous accounts and reports of community initiatives in an effort to identify principles of successful community practice. I then returned to the accounts and reports.

- First, I examined them to identify specific ways in which individual initiatives were putting the principles into practice;
- Second, I examined descriptions of activities with a view to identifying literacy learning opportunities embedded within them.

The accounts appear in a variety of forms and some of them provide very few clues as to the nature of the actual work carried out in the initiative. However, collectively the accounts and reports do point to *promising practices for promoting literacy within the life of a neighbourhood.*

Lessons from the Civic Engagement Project for Children & Families

Promising Practices
"The Civic Engagement Project" was implemented in several counties in the San Francisco Bay area. Each county developed its own plans and initiatives, but two overarching goals guided the initiative: (1) to support civic engagement in communities; and (2) to engage practitioners from diverse fields to dialogue about their standards of practice. The authors of the report (Harder & Co., 2003) examined each county's initiatives and identified six "Promising Practices." In their report they elaborate on each "Promising Practice" and make recommendations for future initiatives.

The six "Promising Practices" are:
- targeted outreach,
- community-oriented skill building,
- meaningful community participation,
- small-scale grants programs,
- collaboration with existing organizations,
- civic engagement integrated into practices.

The recommendations pertaining to each "promising practice" are summarized below:

Targeted Outreach
- Identify an audience. Determine the best places to reach the audience.
- Don't underestimate word of mouth.
- Provide linguistically, culturally and community appropriate materials.
- Provide spaces for community forums.
- Provide free child care, food, and other incentives for attendance.
- Follow up and offer encouragement.
- Be patient and persistent.

Recommendations:
- Make sure community conversations are results-oriented.
- Don't expect groups to work well together. They may need support.
- Develop clear job descriptions for outreach workers.
- Outreach workers are not case workers.
- Recognize the work of volunteers.
- Recognize unique contributions of community workers.

Community-Oriented Skills Building
- Identify training and technical assistance needs and assets.
- Determine what training to give, to whom and how often.
- Training areas may include community building, conflict resolution, advocacy for children and families, and child development, and media or technology skills.
- Advertise the available training in multiple ways.
- Provide assistance and follow up.

Recommendations:
- Make sessions accessible and unthreatening.
- Hire experts.
- Consider internal resources.
- Work from the needs assessment.

Meaningful Community Participation
- Groups meet regularly to discuss priorities.
- Individuals commit to specific tasks and time commitments.
- Members of community should have opportunities to review proposals.
- Provide opportunities for community members to form groups, sponsor events and run programs.
- Provide small grants to individuals and groups.

Recommendations:
- Make sure community members have real responsibilities.
- Recognize volunteers regularly.
- Locate meetings in places that can be reached via public transit.
- Provide free child care and food.
- Attend to language, culture and diversity.
- Where possible employ staff from the community.

Small-Scale Grants Programs
- Make them available to community members as individuals or groups and/or service providers in the community working with community members.

- Align with local needs as identified in a needs assessment.

- Granting agency establishes the criteria: Who is eligible to apply? Are partnerships required?) What form should a proposal take? What is the submission process?

What amounts will be awarded? What time frame will be applied to funded proposals?
What kinds of results will be reported?
How will grantees report results?

- The application process is accessible and easy to follow.
- The granting agency provides training.
- The granting agency provides technical assistance to grantees.
- The granting agency assists potential grantees in finding resources and/or partners.

Recommendations:
- Keep amounts small. (Suggested amount was $5,000.)
- Make application available in multiple languages and plain language.
- Avoid jargon.
- Provide technical assistance.
- Provide a clear method of accountability
- Tell grantees know what kinds of information to collect.
- Include civic engagement expectations in the funding criteria.
- Strive for programs that are community-led.

Collaboration with Existing Organizations
- Partnerships extend access to the community.
- Providers identify common goals for working together.
- They publicize each others' events and programs.
- They distribute culturally and linguistically appropriate materials.
- They ensure good communication among members of a network.

Recommendations:
- Use alternative methods to publicize events.
- Ensure clear communication.

Integrate Civic Engagement
- Civic engagement promotes relevant and accessible programs.

Recommendations:
- Bring community members to the table.
- Build support structures that ensure meaningful participation.
- Give community members voting rights.
- Conduct meetings in a variety of locations.
- Publicize results.
- Celebrate volunteer contributions. (Harder & Co., 2003)

3.3   Putting Principles to Work

This section is organized around seven success statements based on principles of good community practice.

- Successful initiatives are innovative.
- Successful community initiatives are sustainable.
- Successful initiatives are inclusive.
- Successful initiatives build capacity for residents and organizations.
- Successful initiatives are collaborative.
- Successful initiatives explicitly address power imbalances.
- Successful initiatives create opportunities for learning and reflection.

3.3.1 Successful Initiatives Are Innovative.

By definition an innovative initiative offers something new, for example, a new way of organizing an existing program, the development of new partnerships, or even new ideas for programs.

Keep in mind that supporting short term projects may be less helpful in the long run than supporting an existing infrastructure in a new way.

For some community change efforts, supporting infrastructure and assisting coordination might be genuinely innovative.

Action for Neighbourhood Change: Scarborough Village site

This site demonstrates what can be achieved when skilled community developers work with and train residents. United Way of Greater Toronto hired Public Interest Strategy and Communications, Inc., an organization with a proven team of community developers who continue to search for innovative practices that expand their already substantial repertoire. After extensive individual conversations and group meetings, this team identified and trained community animators – residents with established trust and networks within a particular cultural, age or linguistic group. These community animators became a crucial communication conduit for ANC. (Gorman, 2007, p. 11)

3.3.2 Successful Initiatives Are Sustainable.

Sustainability is the extent to which activities and programs can function "under their own steam" over time.

Neighbourhood initiatives are more likely to be sustainable when activities are integrated into the everyday life of the neighbourhood and when they are led by residents themselves.

However, as Cheryl Gorman (2007) reminds us, "Do it yourself doesn't mean do it alone" (p. 9).

The desire for initiatives to become self-sustaining as quickly as possible has been fueled, in part, by evidence that communities become more vulnerable when they depend on long-term project funding.

This evidence should be considered in light of counter arguments that advise funders to support operating costs as well as new initiatives.

Several authors assert that there is no efficient way to build community connections. Door to door work and meetings in people's homes are more productive than newsletters and town meetings. And yet, funding for informal community building activities is unusual.

> Despite the knowledge that resident organizing is a key to community change, there are few reliable sources of funding for that activity. Many initiative leaders say their funders would rather support specific program areas. (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 43)

> The engagement of low-income residents has proven to be a significant challenge for comprehensive community initiatives. Some observers suggest that community organizing has become something of a lost art, partly because some funders are reluctant to invest in the community engagement process at the core of this work. (Torjman et al., 2004, p. 7)

> Most funders would rather support programming than the development of unglamorous infrastructure. Many grants carry restrictions that limit the administrative fee organizations can charge on contracts and programs, which leaves the recipients barely able to manage their work—let alone build infrastructure. Yet if community organizations are to be healthy, stable, and effective, they need good leadership, staffing, and coordination. (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 46)

Related to the issue of supporting operating costs is the issue of funding programs rather than hiring highly skilled practitioners. Programs alone cannot produce success. A program may be highly effective when taught by a well educated teacher, but it is not possible to replicate highly effective programs without replicating the resources – including highly educated staff. (Barnett & Ackerman, 2006).

Reflecting on the Weaving Literacy Project, Smythe (2005) observes that for initiatives to succeed, support services must be reliable and stable.

> Expertise . . . is built because practitioners are able to "practise" and deepen their understanding through experience acquired over time. When as a country we create community programs as "projects" that come and go as the political wind changes, the reliability of support among community members is weakened and expertise is lost as practitioners are forced to move on at the end of a project's duration. In short, it is hard to build sustainability on what Linda Mitchell, director of Literacy BC, calls "drive-by funding." (Smythe, 2005, pp. 35-36).

The above comments point to the importance of "the long view." In fact, it is impossible to discuss sustainability without discussing long term goals as well as short term ones. Sustainable change demands to be nurtured over time.

Scottish educator Lynn Tett (2005) writes, "The time, effort and resources that must be put into any collaborative partnership if it is to be effective mean that change cannot be accomplished quickly" (p. 161).

Three examples:

The Civic Engagement Project (San Francisco, CA): Participants in the 'Civic Engagement Project' found that "civic engagement involves working through experiences" and that "more than one opportunity may be needed to successfully bring people together" (Harder & Company, 2003, p. 5).

North Lawndale (Chicago): "Guided by the geographic focus and commitments to relationship and capacity building, the Foundation took over a year to lay the groundwork for the initiative through a series of meetings with local influentials and representatives of local institutions" (Saegert, 2005, p. 19).

Action for Neighbourhood Change: Eighteen months is the minimum time required to achieve a new resident-led neighbourhood governance structure. Building this base is an essential starting point. Results relating to the sponsoring departments' specific mandates, such as literacy and homelessness, have naturally flowed from the projects initiated by residents in the second year of ANC. (Gorman, 2007, p. 8)

Another aspect of an initiative that affects its sustainability is the extent to which activities are integrated into the daily life of the neighbourhood. Integration has important implications for literacy learning in neighbourhood initiatives. One way to achieve integration of programs is through partnership activities.

10. On the scale of integration, where are we now?

Entering into partnerships within or between agencies is often done with the hope of programs becoming more 'integrated'. What does it mean for programs to be integrated? How integrated do we want to be? The following scale is a tool to assess where we are now and how integrated we want to become. If we want to move to another level of the scale, what steps would we have to take? What resources would we need?

1. I know you are doing something different from me but I don't really know what it's about.

2. I know what you are doing but I couldn't fully explain it to others.

3. I know what you are doing and I can explain it to parents and then refer.

4. I introduce parents to your program by being there.

5. I have input into the planning you are doing for your program and you into mine.

5. We plan our separate programs collaboratively.

6. You and I integrate separate programs into our whole program.

Source:
Workshop tool developed for Eastwood Public Health Centre, Capital Health, January, 2001

Examples from the research literature:

> Rather than doing board training about board-staff relations, we did it around the hiring of an executive director, which was the task of the moment. Or we gave them financial training when we needed to build a budget. (a practitioner quoted in Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 38)

> What has distinguished ANC from other Canadian neighbourhood initiatives is the degree to which the principle of resident-led change was embedded in all activity and decision-making, and the commitment that was made by all participants to do, reflect, learn, course correct and share. (Gorman, 2007, p. 2)

> Focus on the individual child, his or her family and the community; the aim is to meet each child 's needs in the round; the key is integrated provision of services – teachers, social workers, community education workers, health professionals and others working together as a single team. (Scottish Office, 1999c, p. 2, quoted in Tett, 2005)

Initiatives are more likely to be sustainable when they are resident-led.

Concerns that non-professionals may lack the technical expertise to lead initiatives should be weighed against the benefits of passion, heart and caring. For example, a participating practitioner in "Voices from the Field II" said, "These women don't need the solution that is given by experts. Many things can't be solved by a 501(c) (3) or a program. But at least I could figure out a way to bring them together so they could support each other" (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 40). Another practitioner pointed out:

> We find it easier to get technical training for a person who knows and understands our community and our organization than to take a professionally trained person and turn them into a community builder. (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 50)

Sustainability requires the development of healthy relationships and respect for diversity. If initiatives are to be resident-led, it is crucial that all participants learn to recognize potential assets and strengths in one another and focus on them rather than on perceived deficits or gaps. Diversity must be viewed as an asset and employed as a resource. Reflecting on "*Action for Neighbourhood Change,*"

Gorman (2007) notes that "local settings present unique factors which interact in a complex way to generate positive effects – like innovation and resilience as well as negative effects, such as poverty" (p. 7).

Engaging and mobilizing the residents of a diverse neighbourhood requires specialized skills.

> A deep understanding of tools, processes and interventions is needed along with sensitivity to know which ones might apply in a given situation. (Gorman, 2007, p. 11).

> What poor people experience every day in the world is people who won't respect their intelligence and who won't follow their lead," noted one observer. "The tragic cycle can be broken only if one recognizes the intelligence and capacity to lead of uneducated and sometimes damaged people. (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 37)

3.3.3 Successful Initiatives Are Inclusive.

The BC Legacies 2010 *Literacy Now Planning Guide* (2008) highlights the importance of respect in collaborative planning.

Unless there is respect, innovation and collaboration will be jeopardized.

Conversely, when all people are treated with respect, "even less active participants may gain skills in group participation, knowledge of community resources, and specific skills associated with community building activities" (Saegert, 2005, p. 10).

> Community members respect the hopes and dreams of everyone and there is a place for all. . . . People are involved in friendly and enthusiastic ways, celebrating success from time to time. . . . People are treated with respect and will be encouraged to freely share their ideas. Diversity is welcomed and valued. (*Literacy Now Planning Guide*, 2008, p. 4)
>
> Social connections can establish a basis for civic activity by fostering a sense of community identity, spirit, and pride that crosses boundaries of age, race, and economic class. (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 40)

Successful initiatives build on and aim to create a sense of belonging.

People should come to feel that they belong to a community of practice engaged in positive change.

People who feel that they belong in a neighbourhood are more likely to use its services and become part of a sustainable web of support that all residents can access. For example, Wiseman (2009) found that mothers' attachment or lack of attachment to their neighbourhood affected their involvement with local services and especially with the local school.

Brennan, Barnett and Lesmeister (2007) surveyed "involved" youth and found that a strong feeling of attachment to the community was the strongest predictor of their involvement. They conclude that "[a]ttachment represents and is an indicator of the extent to which individuals have become integrated in the community" (p. 17).

Another type of belonging that provides support for people is cultural connection.

> "Cultural connection is the degree to which people see their cultural experiences as distinct from the hegemonic [mainstream] culture" (Sims, 2002, p. 20).

Informal networks and events such as street parties, playgroups, school events, sporting clubs, churches, civic organizations and short term organizing around specific action projects all promote the development of attachment and cultural connections. These forms of social capital then function as "protective factors" (Sims, 2002, p. 58) that help people to build trusting relationships beyond the family.

Patterns of community involvement are changing.

It is important to note that patterns of community involvement have changed dramatically in recent years. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, community involvement in Canadian cities looks dramatically different from the way it looked in the years following the Second World War. Witness the decrease of participation in organizations such as "Home and School" Associations and increased participation in work-related volunteerism.

The blurring of boundaries between workplace and home is influencing patterns community involvement. Nowadays many workers expect and are expected to be available during evenings and weekends. The increased participation of women in the paid labour force, including their participation in "time greedy" professional roles once occupied primarily by men, makes for more sporadic and short-term community involvement by both women and men.

The resulting time crunch is experienced most intensely by women, but it affects everyone. Patricia Roos and her colleagues note that maintaining an "ethic of care" toward family members and others while at the same time trying to be an "ideal worker" creates conflicts for many people.

> Instead of cultivating lifelong ties with their neighbors, or joining organizations that reward faithful long-term service, people come together around specific needs and to work on projects that have definite objectives. (Wuthnow,1998, p. 8, quoted in Roos et al., 2006, p. 201)

What does this mean for neighbourhood improvement initiatives?

Brookman (2004) tells us that to be successful, a community initiative must work to build "a social infrastructure that connects families, workplaces, and communities in a mutually beneficial system of support' (p. 8, quoted in Roos et al., p. 220).

In plain terms, Roos et al. are saying that the changing realities of work and family life have created a situation where the volunteers who provide support for others also need to feel supported. Initiatives must weave a fabric strong enough to support everyone.

> Relationships are crucial to the change process, both among neighborhood residents and between residents and individuals outside the community. The work of strengthening these relationships is central to the notion of community building; participants often describe it as "reweaving the social fabric," "building social capital," "expanding social networks," or "making connections." (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 39)
>
> Techniques for strengthening these connections include: community outreach; creation of tenants' groups and block clubs; door-to-door organizing; resident involvement in group activities, services, planning processes, and decision making bodies; and mobilization of large groups of people for direct action. (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 39)

But as Gorman explains, the answers may not be as labour-intensive as people expect.

> "A series of simple, visible actions are powerful and create momentum. If you do not have a community gathering place, create one where all feel welcome – food and humour go a long way" (Gorman, 2007, p. 16).

In recent years planners have increasingly paid attention to a phenomenon that sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973) called the "strength of weak ties."

Weak ties are the social connections people might make by belonging to a church or community group, or even by visiting the same convenience store a few times each week.

Weak ties can be experienced as highly supportive because they tend to be conflict-free and less emotionally intense than the ties that people make with family and close friends. In community initiatives, some planning experts advocate a Network Strategy to foster the development of webs of connection.

> *Network Strategy*
>
> I think that if you take the assumption that what we've got to do is create a network of people who are touching each other 25 times per day. . . . All you have to do is agree with that. Bump against people not doing the same thing as you. This will over time raise the level of accountability, control of public life, etc. I would say that
>
> we can create organizations that can do that. I think it can be done. Beyond that, . . . staff track participants periodically in a case work fashion to think about how their needs could be better met and how they might be supported in becoming more involved in the community. (Bill Traynor quoted in Saegert, 2005, p. 20)

3.3.4 Successful Initiatives Build Capacity.

> *Some lessons learned from "Action for Neighbourhood Change"*
>
> - Residents bring valuable assets in the form of relationships, knowledge of the neighbourhood and social capital.
>
> - Many residents are skilled in community organizing and communication, and have a passion for making a difference in their neighbourhood.
>
> - Residents require skills training, especially in organizing meetings, conflict resolution, communication, community animation and leadership.
>
> - Learning circles and opportunities to network informally with resident leaders in other communities are very beneficial.
>
> - Early use of small action grants is an excellent investment. Residents gain organization and leadership skills in administering the grants and tangible improvements in neighbourhood assets inspire hope. This is a quick-win intervention. (Gorman, 2007, p. 9)

The desired outcome for a Network Strategy is not just a web of loose ties. Leadership in the area of connection building must also be cultivated.

The metaphor of weaving is a popular one in community practice and for good reason.
Saegert writes, "Staff members also try to expand the network of weavers, those community leaders who see themselves, and the leadership role, as a function of connecting and enabling" (2005, p. 20). Sometimes leadership skills must be taught, but the consensus among researchers in the field is that leadership is best learned in the context of authentic activities. The principle of integration, which has already been discussed in relation to sustainability, applies to leadership training.

> The idea of "becoming leaders through the work" resonates with many residents; it is an approach that builds confidence and generates positive relationships among people who share a common goal. However, it is challenging to implement because it requires professional staff to consider everything on two levels: how to get the task done and how to exploit the task's teaching potential. Some organizations have made serious commitments to developing resident leaders on the job, even if it means slowing down the pace of production, with an eye toward ultimately decreasing reliance on people from outside the community. (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 38)

As noted earlier, "Do it yourself doesn't mean do it alone" (Gorman, 2007, p. 9). But what kinds of support make a difference? Kubisch et al. report that the following strategies have been found to support leadership amongst residents:

- Formal training for local leaders on how to run meetings or monitor agency spending.
    > "One organization, for example, raised funds so that residents on staff could get the education they needed to take over leadership responsibilities from the non-resident professional staff; now, 60 of 75 staff are lifetime neighborhood residents" (p. 38).

- Technical skills and knowledge related to designing, managing, and implementing projects.
    > At an organization that develops community employment centers, for example, staff may need help identifying existing resources, conducting needs assessments, preparing clients for the workplace, and establishing relationships with employers.

- Organizational development.
    > In most cases, community organizations need to strengthen their existing work as well as assume new roles. They often need help managing their growth, developing new administrative systems, governing the complex process of change, evaluating progress, communicating with stakeholders, and resolving conflicts.

- Information about public and private service systems.
  > Individuals and organizations need to know how the systems that support and influence them work, how to take advantage of what they offer, and how to change them in positive ways.

- The "process skills" of community building, such as outreach, organizing, envisioning change, planning, and relationship building. (pp. 66 – 70)

Businesses help organizations to build capacity through partnerships, financial support for projects, corporate volunteering, incorporating social justice goals into their business plans, offering local jobs and other kinds of support (Sims, 2002, p. 59). The following examples of private sector involvement in capacity building are particularly noteworthy because they demonstrate "Alinsky's iron rule of organizing: never do for others what they can do for themselves" (Traynor, 2002, p. 23).

Involving the Private Sector: From Ben & Jerry's to Syncrude

One of the most high-profile ventures is Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream. While well known for its ice cream, the company is also an undisputed leader in creating opportunities for marginalized residents and communities. Through its "PartnerShops" program, Ben & Jerry's develops agreements with nonprofit groups interested in running businesses that provide employment, training and entrepreneurial experiences to youth considered "at risk." The company waives its normal franchise fee, enables marginalized youth to participate in a legitimate and high-profile business, and allows the organizations to use the profits to support their programs.

In its "For A Change" initiative, Ben & Jerry's procures materials from small-scale farmers and progressive enterprises that promote environmental, social and economic sustainability. The company purchases its brownie flavours and desserts, for example, from Greystone Bakery, a social-mission driven company that hires people typically unable to find and secure employment. The Ben & Jerry's Foundation directs more than $1 million in grants to groups that seek to address the root causes of social and environmental problems.

There are well-known companies in Canada that also employ an integrated approach to reducing poverty.

> Syncrude Canada, for example, has designed a variety of initiatives to create opportunities for Aboriginal peoples, develop a skilled and accessible workforce, and strengthen relations with Aboriginal communities in northern Alberta (Syncrude Canada, 2002). Through its "Community Development and Education" program, Syncrude funds a variety of scholarships to improve the literacy, graduation rates and university participation of Aboriginal students. By means of programs such as "Aboriginal Future Leaders," the company supports leadership training and practicum opportunities for young Aboriginal leaders ages 18 to 24.
>
> Syncrude also funded the construction of a drop-in facility in Fort McMurray in order to provide recreational opportunities for at-risk youth. Syncrude sponsors a variety of apprenticeship and co-operative programs for Aboriginal youth that combine employment, training and academic achievement. The company automatically hires graduates of its "High School Registered Apprenticeship" program. Syncrude actively recruits Aboriginal people for positions in the trades and professions; 10 percent of its employees are Aboriginal and the company is Canada's largest industrial employer of Aboriginal people.
>
> Syncrude also procures services from Aboriginal organizations and enterprises. The company has developed a customized business relationship with Denesolene, a business owned by the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, which provides waste management and janitorial services. The Chief of the First Nation community attributes the special relationship with Syncrude as a key factor that enabled Denesolene to grow from seven employees in 1993 to well over 200 in 2002. Syncrude has developed similar relationships with other community and privately owned Aboriginal enterprises worth $92 million in 2001. (Torjman et al., , 2004, pp. 12-13)

3.3.5 Successful Initiatives Are Collaborative.

In community practice, collaboration is a way of life, but not all collaborations are successful. Reporting on a Scottish initiative, Lyn Tett (2005), speculates on the reasons why collaboration can be so difficult.

> Research has shown that there will always be tensions and rivalries between partners about their professional knowledge because such specialization helps to distinguish one profession from another (Nixon and Ranson,1997). It appears that these tensions arise both from the different priorities that agencies establish and the different definitions of pedagogic purpose and practice that govern their work. There are limited

opportunities for members of different professions to learn together during their initial training when professional identities and stereotypical views of other groups may be formed. This leads to different professional partners having divergent views about what collaboration means (see Blair, Tett, Martin, Martin, Munn and Ranson,1998; Dyson and Robson, 1999). . . . Schools were more likely to welcome collaborating partners in areas that they saw as beyond their own expertise, such as health education. (pp. 159-160)

What, then, are the indicators of success?

In her report on the "Weaving Literacy" initiative, Suzanne Smythe describes the "whole community approach" and notes that the approach can be called successful when "community organizations come together to not just promote their own programs and projects, but those of other groups as well" (2005, p. 6).

Reflections on "Weaving Literacy"

The issue of collaboration had a practical importance in the "Weaving Literacy" project because it demonstrated that by itself each sector lacked the full range of skill, experience and connection to the community that was required to fully integrate literacy within community settings. As one of the team members noted in an interview, "The collaborations have enabled both energy and thought to come together to create new ideas. Often one organization cannot bring that perspective to the very complex set of needs and realities of the people they work with."

However, collaboration processes sometimes met with difficulties. One team member said: "One difficulty is the belief that one agency may have more or less power than the other, that one agency has to give up more than the other agency" (Smythe, 2005, p. 24).

Finally, successful initiatives employ collaboration – but not for its own sake. Kubisch et al. (2002) note that collaborations work best when the following conditions are met:

- Collaborators feel like equals despite differences in their resources and assets.
- Collaborators clearly articulate their own interests in the partnership and negotiate roles and responsibilities with each other at the outset.
- Collaborators work toward a common view and a fair division of labor which maximizes each partner's strengths and minimizes the differences.

- Collaborators share ownership of the effort and have a long term, mutual investment in its outcomes.
- Commitment to the partnership endures despite turnover within organizations or local government.
- The accountability process is clearly defined, including expectations for each organization.
- A structure exists for shared decision making and governance that gives community members some authority.
- The collaboration is not established to circumvent or compete with existing governance entities. (pp. 52-53)

Talking about collaboration necessitates talking about power.

The last words on collaboration introduce the next section on power imbalances. Bill Traynor reflects on community organizing and resident engagement in a report published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2002).

Traynor comments that although community organizations have come a long way in identifying good practices for service delivery, the field desperately needs to build a framework for understanding the workings of power within collaborative initiatives.

> In many ways the practice of collaborative governance is still in a primitive stage. Most of the time, we are trying to build a governance hybrid that is essentially a form of authoritative/hierarchical management with a nod toward greater inclusion. We are stuck in the middle between needing (and wanting) to make unilateral decisions and pressure to defer to residents or partners. There are psychological, social, political, and economic reasons for this tug-of-war. Unfortunately, in the area of power sharing and collaborative governance, an ounce of ambivalence is worth a ton of chaos, confusion, and mistrust. Halfway measures more often than not backfire. Some of the challenge of collaborative governance is due to the real risks involved in sharing power. But surely some of it is due to a lack of capacity to do it well. Our task should be to make this collaborative governance workable and as predictable as possible. More codification of methods and practice are needed. More tools and frameworks for teaching and guiding this work are essential. We need an industry-wide exploration of effective and creative strategies for collaborative governance that acknowledges the difficulty of this work. (Traynor, 2002, p. 31)

3.3.6 Successful Initiatives Explicitly Address Power Imbalances.

> *Action for Neighbourhood Change*
>
> Spryfield United Way (Halifax Region) organizers made an early decision to hire four neighbourhood residents as project staff. This choice helped ANC gain credibility and trust among residents and provided an ongoing reality check to ensure that decisions continued to be resident-led. Supporting resident priorities has put United Way Halifax Region into conflict with some traditional leaders in the community, such as institutions and politicians. Considerable care and attention were required to use this conflict as an opportunity to begin reshaping those relationships so that they are stronger and aligned with the resident-led principle. (Gorman, 2007, pp.16-17)

Power is a dimension of community practice that has not been explicitly acknowledged in *Promising Practices (*Harder & Co., 2003).

Traynor points out that imbalances of power in collaborative work are inevitable.

In a diverse community, people must bring differing amounts and kinds of resources to the table and these resources may not be recognized as assets by others.

Some practitioners share Traynor's frustration.

> Power relationships are unequal, so let's not pretend this is a partnership. Many other kinds of relationships are possible. But let's not have the fiction that all participants are equal. Funders like to say this is a more collaborative new approach, but they are still the people who sign the check. Grantee organizations still feel pushed around but don't want to say so. . . . It's very easy to say it's a new relationship, but it's just not so. (a practitioner quoted in Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 66)

Power imbalances can be addressed by explicitly stating each person's or group's unique contribution, by documenting the roles and responsibilities that have been agreed upon, and by revisiting the documented roles at transition points during the course of an initiative.

But it is also clear that the power imbalances inherent in these arrangements can be mitigated to a large extent through an approach which recognizes explicitly the unique contribution of each sector. (Torjman et al., 2004, p. 27)

Clearly written roles and responsibilities will enhance the effectiveness of partnerships and prevent misunderstandings and unmet expectations down the road. Authority, power, ownership and decision-making principles should be documented and revisited at major transition points. (Gorman, 2007, p. 11)

In their book, *Critical Community Practice,* Butcher, Banks, Henderson, and Robertson (2007) list several ways that power is exercised in community initiatives.

- Power can be employed to bring closure to a discussion, or to avoid making a decision.
- Sometimes power is exercised through the exclusion of certain issues or types of issues from discussions. This third manifestation of power is less visible and therefore harder to challenge than the first two.

"Power-with" strategies aim to redress power imbalances by adopting "win-win" approaches.

"Power-with" strategies do not pretend that everyone has the same amount of power, but they work from the assumption that there is enough power for all concerned.

Some power-with recommendations from *Promising Practices* (Harder & Co., 2003) were:
- bring community members to the table and build support structures that ensure meaningful participation;
- give community members voting rights;
- conduct meetings in a variety of locations.

Power-with approaches aim to be empowering for everyone.

Empowerment is about developing the confidence to question, and then challenge, the everyday 'stories' and 'taken-for-granted understandings' and discourses that circulate in society about disadvantage, exclusion

and oppression. . . . Challenging the taken-for-granted ways of looking at situations or people makes space to develop alternate visions and to gain power from within. (Butcher et al., 2007, p. 29)

Being a critical community practitioner does not necessitate being negative, but it does necessitate being reflective and reflexive (Butcher et al., 2007, p. 10), especially about issues of power. It is also important to find ways to learn from conflicts and tensions.

Butcher at al.'s book includes case examples of initiatives that demonstrate the principles of critical community practice. The descriptions themselves are too general to warrant inclusion in this report, but they do shed light on ways in which the principles of critical practice overlap with and differ from *Promising Practices* (Harder & Co., 2003)*.

Promising Practices	*Critical Community Practice*
Targeted outreach	Participation not limited to better educated or economically well-off
Community-oriented skill building	Action-learning experiences
Meaningful community participation	Participatory governance
Civic engagement	Authentic engagement
Small-scale grants programs	Institutional supports
Collaboration with existing organizations	Collaboration across boundaries

In these excerpts from Saegert's (2005) *Community Building and Civic Capacity*, conflict is identified as an outcome of positive changes in power relations.

When consensus-oriented initiatives in marginalized and minority communities gain momentum, they are often propelled into territories that elicit confrontation. (p. 15)

When community building and community organizing efforts are looked at closely, at different levels and over a longer time period, the emphasis on consensus versus confrontation appears mostly misleading. The attainment of civic capacity requires the ability to form distinct interests and goals, to develop shared agendas, and to act collectively. It requires cultivating strong and weak ties, recognizing allies and enemies, and changing the cast of characters as contingencies shift. (p. 36)

Action for Neighbourhood Change: Community Stories

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS), for example, has established a "Circle of Aboriginal Community Voices" steering committee which provides advice on government investment and service decisions in Regina. The RICCP [acronym?] will act as a reference group to this committee, providing advice on investment decisions and linking new initiatives to other available resources and supports.

http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/546ENG.pdf

3.3.7 Successful Initiatives Create Opportunities for Learning and Reflection.

One of the most compelling questions that funders and practitioners ask is: Does this work make a difference?

> While sound research is a necessary step in the process of finding practicable solutions, equally important is the ability to communicate the results in a way that engages community support. Social marketing and community learning processes are two approaches these organizations are using as they attempt to involve the community in efforts to reduce poverty. (Torjman et al., 2004, p. 21)

> Because so much is still unknown about what kind of change is possible and how to implement the strategies for change, developmental approaches to research and evaluation should be given high priority in the community change field for the foreseeable future. The challenge is to organize these research endeavors so that they produce immediate benefits to practitioners and also develop a cumulative body of learning about practice that can inform other efforts. Being able to systematize the knowledge is key. (Auspos & Kubisch, 2004, p. 9)

Traditional approaches to community initiative evaluation have not been helpful in answering this question.

Auspos and Kubisch (2004) write that there is a need for "other sources and methods for learning about community change and community building that are more in keeping with the principles and values of how the work is done" (p. 9).

Such models exist, but the information produced is hard to find in published reports.

Several characteristics of successful community initiatives make standard evaluations impractical.

The "challenge is to focus the research on meaningful and answerable questions" (Auspos & Kubisch, 2004, p. 36).

The time required for sustained change makes it difficult to meet short term targets.

The need for voluntary community involvement makes the imposition of a traditional evaluation design both impractical and ethically questionable. This is especially true of the randomized trial design.

"Instead, community-building initiatives and activities must be tailored to community circumstances and adapted over time" (Auspos & Kubisch, 2004, p. 24).

Finally, Auspos and Kubisch point out that community change initiatives are far more complex than most programs in social welfare and education.

> The community change field is highly decentralized and dependent on multiple, discrete funding streams, all of which have their own complex sets of rules and regulations. The body of policymakers whose actions can affect community builders is also more diffuse, including a wide array of philanthropies as well as an array of administrators and legislators at the federal, state, and local level. Finally, community change, community development, and community building are all done at the ground level by a diverse set of organizations and groups that are typically small and unaffiliated and work independently rather than as part of a larger network. There is, therefore, no route or mechanism that can easily leverage change throughout the field. (p. 24)

Auspos and Kubisch nevertheless offer some advice for community practitioners engaged in evaluation studies.

> Be as clear as possible about what you expect to achieve, over what period of time, and how you expect your work to lead to outcomes (i.e., your theory of change).
>
> If your work emphasizes community-building activities, be forthright about it so that aspect of the work can be legitimized and tracked in the evaluation. Define your community-building activities as precisely as possible, and be clear about the outcomes that you expect to occur as a result. (p. 36)

Among the new models for knowledge building are peer learning groups, study circles, action research (an approach that deliberatively sets out to produce knowledge of direct use to practitioners), pathways models such as "theory of change" and replication projects such as Action for Neighbourhood Change.

> ANC was designed as an action research project to better understand two interrelated aspects of the neighbourhood strengthening process: 1) building capacity of individuals, families and neighbourhoods; and 2) enhancing the responsiveness of government to neighbourhood concerns. Partners began with a base of common interests and ideas as well as an agreement to learn together. The commitment to be intentional and document our do-reflect-learn-course correct cycles has been an integral component of the project. (Gorman, 2007, p. 14)

Learning groups can be structured around interventions such as microenterprise development or employment strategies.

Action learning has a critical thinking component that requires people to weigh evidence and consider ideas from a variety of viewpoints. It also has an emotional component that involves "recognizing, respecting and using feelings – to acknowledge, for example, the hurt, abhorrence and outrage at the disadvantages, exclusions and oppressions that result from inequality and injustice" (Butcher et al., 2007, p. 60).

"Action learning" is one way to navigate through the constant change and uncertainty of community practice. However, even action learning requires participants to stop and reflect on action.

Connecting Literacy to Community: Building Community Capacity – Focus on Adult Literacy

The "Building Community Capacity" initiative set out to "look beyond the borders of the literacy field in order to connect literacy to all aspects of the community" (p. 6). In the *Connecting Literacy to Community: Building Community Capacity – Focus on Adult Literacy Handbook* the authors report that the initiative combined practical strategies with research-in-practice projects.

Three investigations occurred during the project.

Year One: The kinds of changes that occurred in ten organizations as a result of participating in the project. Each organization did a literacy audit and implemented their action plan with the help of the literacy specialist.

Year Two: The skills, competencies and prior knowledge required of a literacy specialist "plus the importance of learning while doing literacy specialist work."

Research in Practice: Reflection and questioning about issues such as how the team was offering literacy specialist services, what information to gather and how to use the information, understanding community development, capacity building, and literacy as social practice.

"Our approach to doing research-in-practice was lead by the practical needs of the project. We engaged in critical reflection for both the structured research, as well as all the other responsibilities of our role as literacy specialists. At every team meeting there was planned time to discuss how our work was unfolding. True to research in practice we were learning the art of integrating information, knowledge and action to be able to best serve those we were working with. (p. 52)

What did research-in-practice look like?
The project team scheduled 500 on-site visits with Community Services in six rural communities. Services were organized into several categories including information and partnership work.

Information work included participation at interagency meetings and introductory meetings at organizations, provision of verbal and written information on literacy issues and local programs, invitations to service providers to become involved in the project, and workshops on literacy awareness and sensitivity, plain language, and verbal communication. Literacy audits were also carried out in workshops. The purpose of a literacy audit was to produce an action plan.

The research-in-practice questions included the following:

- What are all the different ways that people use literacy in their everyday lives?
- What is the responsibility of community services to make their reading and writing (and numeracy) material accessible for people who want to access their programs and services?
- How can we, as literacy specialists, do community development work that will contribute to community capacity and address the adult literacy needs of each of these unique communities?

What did they learn?

Much of what we learned about community development and capacity building came from actually doing the work. Participating in interagency meetings, providing presentations and workshops, and joining planning committees for community resource fairs, are examples of doing the work. (p. 25)

We also learned that an important way to build community capacity was to acknowledge the positive things people and organizations were doing instead of looking at what they were not doing.(p. 28)

Thinking about literacy beyond a skill set shifts the view from the page to the social context of everyday living. (p. 25)

Use the word "us" instead of "we and them" to demonstrate that all of us have a range of literacy skills, some stronger than others (e.g. reading text compared to doing calculus) and that no one has perfect literacy skills for every situation. (p. 30)

Relate literacy to other issues of equality and discrimination (e.g. disability, racism). This will help challenge the assumption that literacy is an individual problem, and show how it is a social issue. (p. 30)

> *Action for Neighbourhood Change*
>
> General stages are experienced in each community but this is rarely a linear process and the 'chunking and sequencing' of action is specific to each community. The same principles hold true for engaging and mobilizing the system of support. Change leadership skills and knowledge are essential. New approaches to learning are needed. Partners must take time to continuously do reflect-learn-course correct. These stages have implications for research and evaluation. (Gorman, 2007, p. 12)

Two innovative and asset-based approaches to planning and assessment are gaining momentum among community practitioners. They are "Appreciative Inquiry" and "Theory of Change" methodology.

Appreciative Inquiry
If initiatives are to focus on strengths, needs assessments and planning processes must also avoid deficit thinking. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an asset-based methodology for needs analysis and planning.

> The aim is to generate new knowledge of a collectively desired future. It carries forth the vision in ways that successfully translate images into possibilities, intentions into reality, and beliefs into practice. (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008, p. 5)

To date, "Appreciative Inquiry" has been employed most frequently by managers for the purposes of organizational change. David Cooperrider first developed the approach in his doctoral research work at the Cleveland Clinic. Cooperrider looked at "everything that served to give life to the system and to people when they were most alive, effective, committed, and empowered." Cooperrider et al. write, "The art of 'appreciation' is the art of discovering and valuing those factors that give life to a group or an organization" (2008, p. 3).

> The method of analysis was to systematically and deliberately "appreciate" everything of value, then use the positive analysis to speculate on the potentials and possibilities for the future. A theory of future possibility was created, and momentous stories were used to vivify the potentials" (p. xxvii).

"Appreciative Inquiry" seeks out the exceptional best of "what is" (*Discovery*) to help ignite the collective imagination of "what might be" (*Dream*). The aim is to generate new knowledge of a collectively desired future. It carries forth the vision in ways that successfully translate images into possibilities, intentions into reality, and beliefs into practice. (p. 5).

Theory of Change

"Theory of Change" is a tool for action learning. The reference to *theory* can be misleading since "Theory of Change" is actually a "concrete statement of plausible, testable pathways of change that can both guide actions and explain their impact" ((Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 74). It is more like a map than a theory in the traditional sense. All the *Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC)* initiatives employed the process.

A detailed description of the "Theory of Change" tool is beyond the scope of this report, but readers who want to learn more about the process can download a practical and accessible resource published by The Annie E. Casey Foundation entitled *Theory of Change Manual* (AECF, 2004).

> Every community needs a roadmap for change. Instead of bridges, avenues and freeways, this map would illustrate destinations of progress and the routes to travel on the way to achieving progress. The map would also provide commentary about assumptions, such as the final destination, the context for the map, the processes to engage in during the journey and the belief system that underlies the importance of traveling in a particular way. This type of map is called a "theory of change." (AECF, 2004, p. 1)

Engaging in the "Theory of Change" process offers two ways to help practitioners:

> (1) to develop a framework for planning and evaluation;
> (2) to articulate beliefs and assumptions about how change happens.

Theory of change maps are not of one kind. "The important thing is to listen to the views of your community so that your map reflects your community's view of how change occurs" (Auspos & Kubisch, 2004, p. 2).

The Theory of Change Manual lists ways that individual communities can use theories of change.

Plan:
- Define the scope and scale of the work.
- Focus attention on key outcomes and powerful strategies for achieving these outcomes.
- Provide a framework for sequencing and prioritizing the part of the "work" the community selects for its contribution to neighborhood transformation.

Improve and assure accountability:
- Provide a framework for gauging whether strategies are achieving tangible goals.
- Identify the prioritized outcomes and strategies the initiative intends to document and/or measure to gauge progress.
- Provide a tangible foundation for accountability.

Resource allocation decisions:
- Provide a framework for investing resources in strategies that are linked to the initiative's prioritized outcomes.
- Guide decision making about how to spend limited resources.
- Provide a basis for discontinuing or refocusing funding to the most effective areas.

Communicate and market the roadmap to community change:
- Communicate your roadmap to partners, stakeholders, investors and the community.
- Provide transparency to your work by clearly identifying your prioritized strategies and expected accomplishments.

Direct link to action:
- Establish focus areas and direction for shaping programs, activities, policies, partnerships and other efforts that support neighborhood transformation.
- Act with a clear purpose in the context of the overall plan.
- Provide a reference point for measuring whether specific actions are effecting positive changes in the lives of children, families and neighborhoods.
- Maintain the "big picture" that guides your specific actions. (pp. 44 - 45)

SAMPLE "SO THAT" CHAIN

STRATEGY:
Formal establishment of a local collaboration committed to children's
school readiness and early learning
So That
A shared collective plan is developed to address young children's
health and school readiness needs [Influence]
So That
(1) A pilot program is implemented to provide families with access to
dental and health screening clinics and a WIC? office on-site at two
neighborhood schools [Influence] *and*
(2) Support programs for parents of young children are offered on-site
at the school in English and Spanish [Influence]
So That
(1) Children get their health needs addressed [Individual Impact] *and*
(2) Children have improved nutrition [Individual Impact] *and*
3) Parents are more aware of how to support their young child's brain
development [Individual Impact]
So That
Children enter school healthy [Population Impact]
So That
Children are more likely to do well in school [Population Impact] (p. 14)

Action for Neighbourhood Change: Making an impact and measuring change

The complexity of strengthening neighbourhoods does not lend itself to linear, cause
and effect research that uses control groups to test and confirm hypotheses. The
tension in the research community at large was also reflected within ANC.
Government sponsors understandably looked for quantitative changes in individual
well-being while community developers knew that it would take one to two years to
engage and mobilize residents. Government sponsors worked hard with the other
partners to develop an evaluation approach that would demonstrate appropriate
accountability while allowing those working in the neighbourhood to have the flexibility
needed to respond to changing circumstances. (Gorman, 2007, p. 11)

Action grant projects provided quick and important 'proof points' of change and
impact. They captured the interest of potential supporters. Government
sponsors/partners and practitioners need to continue exploring how to better package
raw results of these projects into language and formats that can be used for
accountability purposes.

> Despite these achievements, there is still a significant gap in expectations regarding evaluation. Due to internal system barriers, some government sponsors/partners are not in a position to accept process measures or those unrelated to their departmental mandate as legitimate short-term evaluation results. (Gorman, 2007, p. 13)

3.4   Concluding Remarks

This chapter has examined literature on the topic of community change. It presents findings from research on the topic and from reports of actual change projects. Taken together, the research literature and the reports reveal that community change initiatives are complex ecologies and that principles of good practice must be interpreted within the context of local conditions and with local needs as priorities.

The community change field is less contentious than the literacy field.

There is significant agreement that current evaluation practices are not adequate to the task of making success visible, nor are they adequate for making problems visible. It would seem as if something other than community change is being measured.

The ANC's "Neighbourhood Vitality Index" is a step forward, as are the action approaches to local research mentioned in section 3.3.7.

The key points made in Chapter Three echo the key points made in Chapter Two:

At their best, community literacy programs provide meaningful opportunities for citizens to gain access to a better quality of life as defined by them.

It is important to recognize that community change initiatives, like literacy programs, cannot be a panacea for intransigent social problems such as child poverty.

As in the case of family literacy initiatives. a large body of qualitative research and in-house evaluation reports on community change initiatives provides anecdotal accounts of successes, challenges and insights.

"Best practice" and "good practice" statements draw on a variety of data sources including practitioners' and participants' accounts and principles drawn up by

practitioners working in the field. They are best understood as guides rather than prescriptions.

In order to be of practical assistance to planners and practitioners, the term *research-based practices* needs to be defined broadly to include experiential accounts, but all evidence should be critically assessed. Research-informed action studies have the potential to support planning, implementation, assessment and evaluation.

Statements of "good practice" and "best practice" can be used as resources for developing funding criteria. They are also good starting points for critical conversations among stakeholders.

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Chapter Four
Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1   Introduction

> Rebecca. "I knew a lot about literacy but next to nothing about
> community development or even the concept of community
> capacity building. Now I am beginning to see the connection. I
> provide information and raise awareness, and the community
> makes the changes. (Day et al., 2005)

In *What Really Matters to Struggling Readers,* Richard Allington (2001) cites
empirical evidence that we are getting better and better at teaching children how
to read, but we are losing ground when it comes to "raising readers." Effective
literacy instruction is necessary, but not sufficient to raise a reader. More to the
point, what looks like effective literacy instruction in the short term sometimes
turns out to be quite inefficient in the long term -- unless the learner finds reasons
to use what's been learned. The old adage, u*se it or lose it*, applies to literacy.

One reason to promote literacy as a way of life, then, is that unless we promote
literacy as a way of life, the energy we spend on literacy instruction will be
wasted. This is not the only reason, but it is one that concerns policy makers and
funders.

Another reason to promote literacy as a way of life is that literacy as a way of life
supports social inclusion and neighbourhood vitality. When literacy is woven into
a web of support, the web becomes stronger and everyone benefits.

This chapter synthesizes key findings discussed in the first three chapters and
makes recommendations for the promotion of "literacy as a way of life" in the
context of a neighbourhood-based community change initiative.

Like Rebecca, I know more about literacy than I do about community
development, and like her, I appreciate its importance. I have examined a great
deal of research on literacy development and a great deal of research on
community development and conclude that some practical knowledge of the
principles of community development, especially knowledge of the principles of
critical community practice, is more helpful to the goals of a project that aims to

support literacy as a way of life than more knowledge about effective instructional strategies.

This conclusion must be tempered with two acknowledgments.

First, I acknowledge that I am immersed in literacy literature. Ideas that seem too obvious or too vague to me may appear helpful to someone who spends a lot of time immersed in another field of practice. That is one reason why I tried to lay out some basic "what works" information in Chapter One.

Second, I recognize that some people will experience difficulties with reading and writing in spite of a desire to read and write and a commitment to work at it. They deserve thoughtful, explicit and intentional instruction based on current research. Indeed, all learners should be able to participate in engaging and worthwhile lessons.

But issue at hand is a different one. If the goal is to build literacy awareness, one resident at a time, then straightforward, research-to-practice instructional recommendations are unlikely to succeed. We must expand the scope of what counts as research and the scope of what counts as literacy. In short, we must take into account the complex and culturally-shaped nature of everyday life.

4.2   Implications of "Literacy as a Way of Life" for Literacy Programs

It is hard to imagine literacy becoming a way of life in the absence of any instruction. Learning to read and write appears to come naturally to some lucky children, but there is nothing natural about it. And reading is not only a matter of learning to identify words. Written language is not just speech written down. A solid foundation of oral language helps beginning readers and writers, but written language places extra demands on readers and writers that require guided experiences with print.

Chapter One introduced two broad perspectives that inform literacy education. The first perspective is often referred to as the cognitive / information processing perspective. Researchers who take this perspective draw primarily on psychology research traditions, including psycholinguistics. In these traditions reading has been studied more often than writing and various developmental continua or stage theories have been proposed to describe literacy development. There is general agreement that readers and writers will not achieve their potential in the areas of comprehension and composition until they have a sound

grasp of the alphabetic principle – or another writing system. An ability to distinguish among the sounds in a word, what educators call phonemic awareness, is currently seen as foundational to decoding ability.

One group of cognitive researchers expressesparticularly strong views about what kinds of knowledge is necessary for reading and about how beginning reading and writing should be taught. This groups of scientifically-based reading researchers advocates research-based instruction, but limits what counts as research to experimental and quasi-experimental studies. A research-based practice is one that has been shown experimentally to increase literacy skills, usually decoding ability.

The second perspective views literacy as social practice. Informed by the ideas of social constructivist psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, and by research in anthropology and critical sociology, the second perspective conceptualizes literacy as a set of cultural tools and stresses the importance of social interaction in language and literacy learning. Social practices researchers claim that there are different kinds of literacy or literacies and that people call on different ways of being literate in different social contexts. They have pointed out that being literate in the traditional sense is valued in educational settings, but it is less valuable in out-of-school settings. They have also pointed out that outside of school, the screen is fast replacing the page and print is now embedded in visual design, animation, and other hallmarks the digital culture. Literacy as a way of life is more accurately described as literacies as ways of living.

Following Purcell-Gates et al. (2004) this report recommends that print literacy should be viewed through a widened lens. Literacy viewed through a widened lens recognizes that readers and writers need individualized, "in-the-head" skills that develop over time when the conditions are right, and usually with some instruction, but it asserts too that literacy development is always embedded, that is nested, within culturally shaped practices. Completing an income tax return and talking to friends on Face Book are examples of culturally shaped practices. So too is the task the Network has set itself -- supporting literacy within the valued, culturally shaped practices of a neighbourhood change initiative.

There is no dispute that most people need lessons of one kind or another to acquire literacy skills, but when literacy is treated only as skill development, it has a poor chance of sticking. The phenomenon of summer reading loss,in which children forget what they learned in school during the previous year, can be viewed as a consequence of lack of motivation, but it suggests too that reading

and writing are for some children activities that get done at school and only school.

Purcell-Gates et al. argue that two characteristics of literacy lessons help to make literacy learning "sticky" for learners.

The first quality is authenticity. Authenticity refers to the extent to which a literacy activity addresses a genuine purpose for the learner. Authenticity does not always mean pleasurable. Completing a tax form is a tedious business, but tax forms are usually completed for genuine reasons.

The second quality that makes a lesson sticky is learner involvement. The acclaimed second language researcher, Jim Cummins (Cummins et. al, 2007), uses the term "identity investment."

Participatory models of family literacy and community literacy address both criteria..

> Research shows that people learn new literacy skills best when these literacy skills are integrated in meaningful learning and everyday texts. Reading to children, getting a driver's license, putting together a radio program, finding and advocating for affordable housing, looking for work, and participating in the religious and cultural life of one's community are all contexts for literacy learning (Eldred, 2005). Rather than assuming that community members cannot participate in these activities until they develop the required literacy skills, an asset-based approach to literacy holds that people can learn as they engage in these practices, with the support of those who are more experienced. (Smythe, 2005, p. 5)

Viewing literacy and research through a widened lens has implications for what counts as a research-based practice. The goal of promoting literacy skill development is not quite the same as the goal of promoting literacy as a way of life. As Allington has shown, having literacy is not the same as using it. Therefore, the practices that encourage literacy as a way of life will not necessarily be those practices that improve individuals' scores on literacy tests.

4.3   Implications of Literacy as a Way of Life for Community Literacy Initiatives

> Case studies of literacy collaborations suggest that the way to promote language/literacy goals may be not by focusing directly on language and literacy, but rather by focusing on community-based activities identified by participants. [R]igid adherence to predetermined goals may actually undermine the efficacy of a partnership. (Auerbach, 2002, quoted in Smythe, 2005, p. 6)

In recognition of this research, a growing number of literacy initiatives are embedded into broad-based change initiatives that work to involve residents as agents rather than clients of human service agencies.

Tools for Community Building
A workbook published by the Northwest Territories Literacy Council (2002)

This resource is printed in large font, accessible English and contains lots of white space
The workshop shows readers how to think about literacy in communities, develop a plan for local literacy and develop a proposal for funding.

Community development happens when people come together to take action around common issues. It is a process that builds on existing strengths of the community and involves local people in deigning and making change, and learning from it. The most important outcome of community development is a better quality of life. (p. 14)

Capacity building can happen through change and learning.
Here are some examples:
- Finding out how much you know about a topic.
- Discovering a new piece of information.
- Trying out a new skill such as planning, organizing, public speaking, keeping records.
- Thinking in different ways.
- Learning how to take risks and do things you have not done before.

Assessment should be ongoing.
- Ask children what they think. Check in with your group on a regular basis.
- Talk to other people in the community about your project.
- Collect stories about what it was like to be a participant.

Notice too that the Guiding Principles for the *Literacy Now* Communities program employs principles from community development. In addition to the guiding principles, I have included a sample literacy plan from a Vancouver neighbourhood.

Guiding Principles from the BC 2010 Legacies - *Literacy Now Communities* program

- ❖ Relationships and Collaboration
  Communities build and support networks, partnerships and mentoring relationships.

- ❖ Innovation
  Communities value new ways of viewing existing programs, new partnerships and new ideas for programs.

- ❖ Respect
  People are treated with respect and will be encouraged to freely share their ideas. Diversity is welcomed and valued.

- ❖ Capacity building
  Programs and projects promote and sustain lifelong learning for all participants and focus on improving the life chances of children and adults. People feel empowered to act.

- ❖ Access for all
  All community members have the opportunity to be part of the planning process and the programs. Community members respect the hopes and dreams of everyone and there is a place for all.

- ❖ Strength building
  Communities respect, build on and enhance past and current practices.

- ❖ Sustainability
  Success grows from long-term sustained commitment to literacy learning.

From: *2010 Legacies Literacy Now Community Literacy Planning Guide* (p. 4)
http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/fileadmin/user_upload/Embrace_Learning/PDF/LiteracyNow_Guide.pdf\

From the Mount Pleasant Literacy Now Community Plan
Mount Pleasant's Community Literacy Plan vision aligns with the goals identified by Mount Pleasant's Community Planning Committee, such as:

- Meet basic needs of low income families and seniors through community-based actions
- Increase community engagement and socialization opportunities for marginalized youth
- Enable new immigrants and marginalized populations to fully participate in society (through
- improvements to language skills, mobility, education, and health care)
- Increase job training and employment opportunities for marginalized adults

Appendix C – Community Literacy Defined by Mount Pleasant

Art and Music
- Expressed as having access to, ability to understand or interpret, and being able to express self with art and music.

Reading, Writing and Spoken Word
- Expressed as being functional and able to acquire and present supported by these foundational literacy abilities.

Math Literacy / Numeracy
- Expressed as being able to understand or interpret use of numbers in various ways including currency; ability to budget, understand bills, read graphs, and other day-to-day activities requiring math literacy.

Computer Literacy
- Expressed as knowing the basics and beyond to be proficient and efficient with applications and technology, to have sufficient skills that new technologies are not intimidating.

Media Literacy
- Expressed as the ability to source, decode and have access to multiple sources of information

Family Literacy
- Expressed as engagement of all family members in reading and writing seen as contributory to the literacy and learning of the whole family i.e., school-based learner, younger and older siblings, parents.

Civic Leadership
- Expressed as active participation in community and neighbourhood.

The full plan is available at:

4. 4   Marketing Literacy

For people who adopt literacy as a way of life, literacy itself may be taken for granted. Literacy is something we use to get other things done. It is not surprising, then, that many people who take literacy for granted have little awareness of what it might be like not to participate in that culture.

Promoting literacy awareness is not just a matter of promoting awareness of literacy problems or needs. It is about encouraging tpeople in diverse situations to spot the literacy opportunities or demands within their everyday routines. Promoting "literacy as a way of life" is as much about spreading literacy awareness to people who take literacy for granted as it is about spreading the word to potential program participants.

One initiative that set out to promote awareness was Audrey Gardner's (2003) *Building Capacity* project. Rebecca, whose comment opens this chapter, worked as a literacy specialist on the project in Alberta where she and the other literacy specialists carried out extensive outreach with local business people, community groups and organizations to make their communities more "literacy-friendly."

Changing to a larger font for signage, or adopting a colour code for job postings and brochures were two easy ways that local residents in the Alberta project enabled poor readers to be more independent and to take advantage of whatever was being advertised.   Kathy Day, recalls, "Eventually, we were able to articulate how literacy relates to every aspect of community life" (Day et al., 2005, p. 22). The process was not immediately measurable, however. It was more like making a snowball and the specialists learned to trust in the process. For example, Janet Quinn (Day et al., 2005) confesses that she had to slow her pace, get away from planning workshops (see e.g. Heyden & Sanders, 2002) and invest the time in talking with people about literacy in plain terms.

A similar story was told to me recently by my former student, Laura Nichols (personal communication). Laura was conducting a family literacy workshop to promote reading to young children. She knew that one mother would have difficulty reading to her child, so she took the opportunity to talk about the value of talking to young children instead. She said, "It's more important to me that this mom felt comfortable than it is to preach to the converted about storybooks."

Outreach and networking are core activities for community literacy organizations (Readers are referred to pages 86-89 for a list of strategies that literacy practitioners have successfully used to build networks with other organizations and in the community more generally.) Such strategies have been deployed informally for many years, but recently there has been a more concerted effort under the umbrella term, social marketing.

In *Marketing Ourselves* (Community Literacy of Ontario, 2008, p. 8) Karen Farrar describes two recently developed strands of marketing: relationship marketing and social marketing.

Farrar writes that not-for-profit agencies and services can adopt marketing principles to market what they do even though they are giving away their services and programs for free. The table below provides rough translations of marketing terms in the social marketing arena.

Business marketing	Relationship / Social marketing
Product	Programs & services
Price	Buy-in
Promotion	Getting the word out
Place	Location

Farrar writes that social marketing is usually carried out with clients and potential clients. Relationship marketing is carried out usually with volunteers, funders and community partners. The goal of relationship marketing with volunteers, funders and community partners and social marketing with clients the same: positive social change.

Some principles of marketing that apply to community practice are:

- Build a budget line for marketing (p. 17).

- Don't sell the product; solve the customer's problem. (p. 11)

E.g. Identify a community need first, then think about ways that literacy opportunities are embedded.

- Reflect on who you are and what you do (p. 12).

- Who do you want to buy in? Target marketing to specific segments of your market. (p. 18) Think: Which volunteers, funders, partners?

- Pay attention to people's wants as well as needs.(p. 21)
  Make your program exactly what your target wants. (p. 22)

- Aim to articulate features of your "product" as benefits. (p. 24)

- Develop strategies and tactics to reach your market. (the marketing mix). (p. 20) (E.g. Strategies for Effective Outreach, Recruitment and Retention. in Chapter Two - Section 2.6.2.)

To think about:

While the practical strategies of social marketing may appear to be aligned with the principles of participatory practice, they tend to position service providers and residents on opposite sides of a divide. "Buy in" implies that the marketer is controlling the agenda. Planners should consider the potential consequences. Social marketing has much to offer, but it also reflects a "power over" rather than a "power with" approach.

4. 5   Recommendations:

The findings of this literature review point to four overarching strategies for promoting literacy as a way of life.

> (5) Support language and literacy programs that address an identified community need.
>
> > a. Ensure that programs promote authentic literacy activities and use authentic materials. Ensure that program plans are guided by recognized good practice principles such as the Centre for Family Literacy's *Good Practice Statements* or the Action for Family Literacy's *A Guide to Best Practices*.
> >
> > b. Ensure that initiatives are guided by recognized principles of community practice such as those discussed in Chapter Three.

Successful initiatives:
- are Innovative,
- are sustainable,
- are inclusive,
- build capacity for residents and organizations,
- are collaborative,
- explicitly address power imbalances,
- create opportunities for learning and reflection

(6) Support initiatives that aim to weave literacy into change activities. Projects would begin with an identified community need, but would also embed opportunities for focused language and/or literacy use.

Priority should be given to projects that weave together strategies to strengthen literacy as a way of life and address one of the other goals of a comprehensive community change project such as promotion of health and/or reduction of poverty.

a. Ensure that initiatives are guided by recognized principles of community practice such as those discussed in Chapter Three. Successful initiatives:
- are Innovative,
- are sustainable,
- are inclusive,
- build capacity for residents and organizations,
- are collaborative,
- explicitly address power imbalances,
- create opportunities for learning and reflection.

b. Provide guidance to help groups identify language and/or literacy learning opportunities in the proposed projects..

c. Nurture collaboration among literacy practitioners and other community organizations..

(7) Employ network strategies to develop awareness of literacy issues and opportunities and to celebrate literacy. Developing awareness of literacy issues should include developing awareness of the ways in which digital culture makes new literacy demands on people. It is important to build awareness of digital literacy among potential funders

because small grants typically won't stretch to purchase computers and other technological tools.

(8) For a program or service that already meets the criteria laid out in strategy (1) or (2), provide support that strengthens aspects of the program or service. Where necessary, provide support for infrastructure development and/or coordination within the organization and with other organizations.

For example: Promoting awareness of literacy in the community may require organizations to devote extra time and resources to outreach. Marketing literacy involves more than reaching out to the people served by other organizations. Literacy-focused organizations can promote literacy as a way of life to the staff of other organizations so that staff can look for literacy learning opportunities within the services they provide. This kind of activity needs to be ongoing.

Opportunities and challenges: Strategy (1)

An example of Strategy (1) can be found in *Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC).*
As a result of residents' work, Bridgeview School in Surrey, BC was chosen as a site for the provincial government's literacy pilot project, *Strong Start*. Caregivers, including grandparents, connect with one another and participate with the children in literacy activities that include play, socializing and instruction.

There is nothing unusual about this program, but it fulfills the requirements for authenticity and collaboration. Programs such as *Strong Start* can fulfill authentic purposes for participants. Although they exist because money for literacy activities has flowed into the community from a government source, they can integrate literacy with opportunities to develop community attachment, something that Bridgeview badly needed. It is important to note that *Strong Start* was not imposed on Bridgeview.

Opportunities and challenges: Strategy (2)

Few reports from community-based initiatives such as *Promising Practices* explicitly discuss literacy goals. In order to pursue Strategy (2), planners and residents examine proposed activities and identify potential opportunities for literacy learning. Then they plan activities that can bring visibility to the literacy opportunities. Strategy (3) (literacy awareness) supports Strategy (2) activities. At the same time Strategy (2) activities support Strategy (3).

Strategy (2) is exactly what Purcell-Gates and her research assistants did in the context of early literacy instruction. See for example the excerpts from *Real-life Literacy Instruction, K-3: Handbook for Teacher*s in Chapter One, Section 1.4 The resource, *Real-life Literacy*, describes the research base for authentic literacy and contains practical plans that cover each element in a "good practice" framework for early literacy classrooms. For community initiatives, the framework could be adapted to read as follows:

(5) Get to know the literacy practices of your group. What do they use literacy for? What kinds of literacy activities do they engage in? This would be a good place to start.

(6) Work with your group to select or create real-life texts to read and write. That is, identify tasks that require reading and writing.

(7) Identify any explicit teaching of skills and strategies that will be needed.

(8) Work with your group to identify what the indicators of success might be, but stay open to surprises. This is new territory for everyone.

Opportunities and challenges: Strategy (3)

Identifying literacy opportunities in everyday activities is a new way of thinking for most of us. It might be helpful to look at the opportunities in other successful initiatives. Most of the activities described in community initiative reports directly address community needs rather than literacy goals. Even so, these descriptions warrant attention. The activities have been shaped within valued community practices and they embed potential literacy learning opportunities. Literacy activities integrated into such activities will promote literacy as a way of life.

One such project was the Spryfield (Nova Scotia) community garden project which appears to have been aimed at providing some fun, healthy and safe activities for youth and a new food source for the community. It was only when the need for information about gardening arose that participants were led to conduct research in the school library.

See also ANC Community Stories
http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/547ENG.pdf
http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/630ENG.pdf

The following table is adapted from Anne Makhoul's (2007) summary of ANC small-grant funded projects.

Makhoul reports that each of the initiatives featured in the summary was identified by a site manager as an initiative with potential to create long-term, transformational change. Building on this strong foundation, I propose some opportunities for literacy learning present in each initiative.

Title of the initiative	Brief description	Literacy opportunities
Greystone's Community Garden	Spryfield Urban Farm Museum establishes a community garden to supply a low income housing development with fresh produce and to provide activities for children.	Library research, Internet research Measuring and estimating distances between plants and rows Labeling rows Budgeting to buy tools and supplies Organizing work schedules & distribution
The Spryfield Business Directory	The Spryfield and District Business Commission establish a business directory to entice residents to shop locally and to encourage business owners to get more involved in the commission.	Local residents could participate in data input, information verification and promotion activities such as advertising copy – which could be in available in more than one language. Neighbourhood groups could take on short term contracts related to printing and distribution.
Community Animators	ANC staff members select and train nine residents from diverse language and cultural backgrounds to help reach non-English speaking and non-mainstream voices.	. Opportunities for multilingual literacy learning for trainers as well as trainees. The residents could create multilingual resources and Increase the amount of environmental print in local languages.

	ANC staff members help parents from several language groups to access school board officials and prepare a list of interested families in order to secure language classes for their children at a neighbourhood school.	Literacy outreach during heritage language classes can facilitate access to other educational opportunities. (See Family Literacy Outreach in Chapter Two.) Work with heritage language teachers to develop multiliteracies projects. E.g. "Kids with Cameras"
Establishing a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee	ANC guides a large group of residents as they struggle to define a process and structure which will transform them from interested residents into an effective neighbourhood revitalization convenor structure.	Documenting processes and activities Accessing information from other communities who've tried to do the same thing. Learn Internet searching, social media

Adapted from: ANC Sketches: Building a Neighbourhood Renewal Process (Makhoul, 2007, p. 8).

4.6   Small Grants Programs

Several initiatives discussed in this literature review, including *The Civic Engagement Project* and *Action for Neighbourhood Change*, created funding programs for small-scale projects. The funding programs allowed resident groups and other local, not-for-profit organizations to apply for small grants of approximately $1,000 to $5,000.

Some municipal authorities such as the East London Council in the United Kingdom maintain ongoing small grants programs; other authorities and foundations sponsor projects of limited duration, usually during the early phases of an initiative.

The small grants programs serve several purposes. First, they enable residents and organizations to address one or more community need. Additionally, they promote engagement and help to build capacity and social capital.

Gorman (2007) reports that the *Action for Neighbourhood Change* small grants program supported the development of "leadership and organizational skills in the residents who oversaw the grant process, brought residents closer together to talk about things they wanted and provided tangible improvements in the neighbourhood's physical, social/cultural and economic assets" (p. 4).
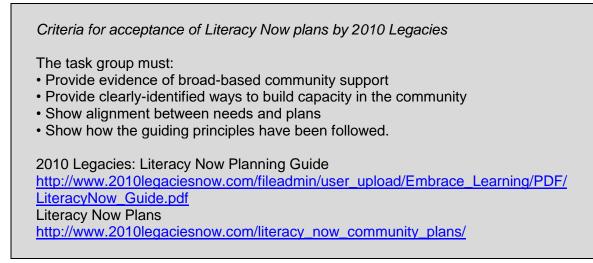
Recommendation
- The grant application process should build on several guiding principles and a set of success statements tied to the specific "literacy as a way of life" goal.

- The application form should require a description of the project followed by a series of open-ended "how?" questions -- each of them linked to a good practice / success statement. Several lists of good practice statements have been presented throughout this document. Any of the lists would provide a good starting point, but locally developed questions are the ideal.

4.6.1 Criteria for Funding

A small- scale project that aims to promote literacy as a way of life should demonstrate that it can meet expectations tied to the comprehensive community initiative through which the grant is administered.

The following set of broad criteria is adopted from BC's 2010 Legacies - Literacy Now Communities program.

Criteria for acceptance of Literacy Now plans by 2010 Legacies

The task group must:
• Provide evidence of broad-based community support
• Provide clearly-identified ways to build capacity in the community
• Show alignment between needs and plans
• Show how the guiding principles have been followed.

2010 Legacies: Literacy Now Planning Guide
http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/fileadmin/user_upload/Embrace_Learning/PDF/LiteracyNow_Guide.pdf
Literacy Now Plans
http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/literacy_now_community_plans/

In addition to criteria such as the Literacy Now criteria, several locally relevant criteria could be addressed.

For example:
Proposed activities should aim to meet these criteria for good community practice described in Chapter Three.

- be innovative
- be sustainable
- be inclusive,
- build capacity for residents and organizations,
- promote and engage in collaboration
- explicitly address power imbalances
- create opportunities for learning and reflection.

and / or

An activity will support "literacy as a way of life" to the extent that it integrates the following elements.*

1. creates opportunities for residents to engage in culturally and developmentally appropriate, authentic literacy activities
2. weaves literacy learning opportunities into the proposed activities
3. addresses a community need
4. is planned collaboratively with residents' input

Examples of specific criteria:

The following items apply to all community-based literacy initiatives. They are indicated by research or drawn from the *Best Practices* statements for Ontario or Alberta.

1. Successful programs stress real purposes for literacy and real texts, not workbooks.
   What are some purposes for literacy in your planned activities?

2. Successful projects integrate literacy with other kinds of activities.
   How does your project create opportunities for participants to practice literacy?
   How does your project weave literacy learning and literacy activities into project activities? (See examples.)

3. Successful programs ensure that families have the health and well being to carry out the literacy and developmental tasks of parenting and family life.
   How will you promote the health and well-being of your participants? How will you learn about participants' lives and maintain confidentiality..

4. Successful programs incorporate the cultures and languages of the participants. Successful programs adapt to the work and family lives of parents.
   How will your initiative accommodate cultural and linguistic diversity?

5. Successful projects fill a need for the community.
   What is the purpose of your project? What need or gap will it address? Who will it help? How will it help them?

6. Successful projects form part of a web of community literacy supports such as libraries and adult education programs. Successful projects are a part of a larger educational plan.
   How does your proposed project fit into the Huron Heights neighbourhood literacy plan?

7. Successful projects use community resources.
   What community resources (e.g. local meeting spaces, local businesses, local residents) will your proposed project employ?

8. Successful projects are collaborative.
   Who is on your team? What are their strengths? What tasks will each of them do?

9. Successful projects are the products of strong community partnerships.
   (For residents) Who is on your team? What role will each team member take?
   (For organizations) What kinds of input did residents give to your project? Did you share the project with residents? How will you make sure that residents continue to have input?

10. A successful program uses a participatory method to assess and document progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of different aspects of the program in helping participants meet their learning goals.
    How will your project include participants in assessment?

Another set of success statements refers specific to family literacy programs. Following the pattern above, applicants could be asked to show how their proposed program can demonstrate success.

a. Successful programs help parents understand the importance of their role. Parents are responsible for implementing the strategies. They also educate parents about quality early childhood programs.

b. In successful programs leaders support parents by teaching simple strategies..Leaders can help parents learn the strategies by sharing information, demonstrating simple activities, and providing opportunities for practice.

c. Successful programs for very young children provide opportunities for language learning. They focus on building vocabulary, literacy enjoyment, and comprehension of concepts and ideas The types of language and activities experienced at church, the zoo, when shopping, at a park, and visiting friends and relatives are all relevant.

d. Successful programs provide regular and intensive literacy support over long periods of time (16 weeks is better than 6.)

e. Successful family literacy programs support the learning efforts of all family members by using a wide variety of instructional methods, strategies and materials.

f. Successful programs can be modified. While a program model may be followed, modifications are made continually to meet the needs, interests and capabilities of program participants.

g. Successful family literacy programs are culturally sensitive, and use resources that are appropriate for specific participant groups.

h. Successful family literacy programs offer activities that celebrate and emphasize the joy of learning.

i. Successful family literacy programs follow sound educational practices, appropriate for the literacy development of children and adults. Practitioners select from a variety of research-based approaches according to the needs of each group.

j. Successful family literacy programs are held in accessible, welcoming locations. Support is given to overcome barriers to participation, such as lack of child care.

4.7   Concluding Remarks

Chapter Four drew on findings presented in the first three chapters to make recommendations for the promotion of literacy as a way of life in community-based initiatives. Four broad recommendations are implied by this synthesis.

1. Support authentic and collaborative programs.

   There is strong evidence that print literacy development depends on learners acquiring certain understandings about how print works, a rich vocabulary, phonemic awareness (the ability to hear the individual sounds in a word). Programs that aim to teach can support literacy as a way of life because most people benefit from some instruction.

2. Weave literacy into culturally shaped and valued activities.

   Literacy learning opportunities are embedded in culturally shaped practices. The task is to identify the opportunities and sometimes to nudge the practices into a literacy shape. (Chapters One and Two)

3. Build a web of support for residents and practitioners.

   Networking and marketing are necessary components of spreading the word, but the principles of critical community practice suggest that stakeholders with relatively more power should make spaces for those with less power to develop their voices. (Chapters Two and Three)

4. Be prepared to fund operating costs. The reluctance of funders to support the nasic operations of an organization is understandable, but there will be situations where the most appropriate action is to support infrastructure and operations. Each case should be treated on its own merits. (Chapters Two and Three)

In addition to the four recommendations the literature review points to a need to attend to digital technologies. New Literacy Studies research suggests that new technologies and digital culture are profoundly influencing the ways people communicate outside of formal educational settings. Educational practices lag behind the research and behind the out-of-school practices of most children and youth. Digital literacies are literacies in their own rights, not just a way into print.

Several lists or frameworks for g*ood, promising* and *best practice* statements were discussed in detail in the Chapters Two and Three and they employed in Chapter Four to develop a list of criteria for a small grants program.
A significant portion of Chapter Four has been devoted to criteria for small grants programs, that is criteria that funders might employ when reviewing proposals. As noted earlier, small grants can provide an incentive for residents' involvement in change processes. Small-scale projects help groups to focus energy on small, manageable tasks that can build momentum. In keeping with the principle of integration, a small grants program will be most effective where projects are integrated in a larger initiative.

It seems redundant to add that no single strategy can independently support literacy as a way of life in a neighbourhood. Instruction can support individuals and groups in developing literacy; everyday activities can be mined for literacy learning opportunities and enriched by the infusion of new literacy practices; awareness of literacy issues can be promoted through coordinated outreach from schools and literacy organizations to local organizations, the business community and resident-led neighbourhood-based groups.

Finally, outreach should be understood as multidirectional. Residents need to reach out to schools and organizations to say what they need. This ideal situation requires that a good deal of energy and substantial resources should be devoted to capacity building.

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