Strategies for Teacher Support of Home Literacy Learning

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DELL-D Early Reading First Project (Illinois) 2007-2010

Disclaimer

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Agenda

• Introduction & overview
• Overview of family components of DELL-D
• Classroom-home linkages
• Lessons learned
• Evaluation

About Danville

• Population of 33,000 (2005)
• County seat of Vermilion County, population 84,000
• Old fur-trading road between Lake Michigan and the south
• Irish and Eastern European immigrants, as well as African-Americans, came in the late 1800s to work in the mines.
• With the coming of large GM plant, it became a vibrant blue-collar community that easily switched from mining to manufacturing.
• With the closure of GM in the 1990s, Danville and Vermilion County went into an economic slide.
• The 11.3% poverty rate in Illinois in 2002 compares to the county's rate of 14.1%
• The 15.3% Illinois child poverty rate compares to 19.3% in Vermilion County.
DELL-D Partners

• Developing Early Language and Literacy in Danville
  – University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
  – Danville District 118 Pre-K Program
  – Head Start Program at East Central Illinois Community
    Action Program
  – Danville Area Community College Child Care
  – Center for Children's Services Early Learning Center

About DELL-D

• 5 separate sites
• 12 teaching teams (25 teachers)
• 12 classrooms
  – 8 full-day
  – 4 half-day
• 16 groups of children
• 276 children (Year 1)

Why Focus on Families?

• Importance of home support of emergent literacy:
  – Link between family environment and child outcomes
    • Reason for ERF primarily based on link between poverty level in families and associated deficits in child learning
    • Families as THE primary learning environment for young children
  – Early childhood as a time to “hook” families into their children’s learning and schooling
    • Time when they are most open to thinking about their own parenting roles.

DELL-D Family Components

• Our approach…
  – Parent-child focus
    • Recognize own importance in child’s literacy learning
    • Increase competence in supporting child’s literacy learning
    • Build confidence in own ability to support child’s literacy learning
    • Strengthen parent-child relationship
  – Classroom-family connection
    • Linked through the classroom and through teachers versus directly to parents
    • Hook parents into the classroom-home collaboration
    • Build teacher knowledge of how to support families by providing opportunities for them to experience strategies for collaboration
  – Center-family connection
    • Experience different ways of supporting connections
    • Fit center’s needs - location, schedule, family preferences
DELL-D Family Components

- Overview of Components
  - Family Center
  - Library Days
  - Family Events
  - Theme Newsletters
  - Monthly Take-Home Activities
  - One-on-one Visits (some families)

Supporting Activities

- Marketing to families and children
  - Backpack sent home by teachers at beginning of school year
    - Invitations, flyer, calendar of events, incentive system
  - Monthly materials sent home by teachers
    - Flyers, reminders of events
    - Theme newsletters
    - Parent-child activities
  - Principles
    - Attractive, colorful, easy to read
    - Consistent, recognizable format
    - Parent-child focus

Supporting Activities

- Incentive system
  - Links family center, events, and classroom activities
  - Promotes participation in multiple parent-child activities
  - More participation = more take-home literacy goodies

Upcoming DELL-D Family Events in 2009

- Jan. 23
  - Clifford Party
    - 6:30 - 7:30 pm at
      - Kent Deutsch Library
- Feb. 28
  - Shreemant Shree
    - 10:00 am - 12:00 pm at
      - Dania Child Dev. Center
- March 14
  - Dr. Seuss Party
    - 10:00 am - 12:00 pm at
      - Dania Public Library
- May 16
  - End of School Year Celebration
    - 6:30 - 7:30 pm at
      - Laura Lee Fellowship Hall
- June
  - Field Trip
    - Date to be announced TBA
- July
  - More information about all events will be in the monthly newsletter from your child’s teacher.
  - You may also contact Sandy Dietz at
    - 466-1860 ext. 113 or
    - sdietz@lpsk.org for more information!

FREE GIFTS
When you attend any DELL-D Family Event, you will be eligible for free books, writing supplies or magazines!
Supporting Activities

• Family Liaison-Classroom Connection
  – Family Liaison makes regular drop-in visits to classrooms to deliver materials
  – Family Center offered as a resource center for teachers
  – Family events rotate among centers or use sites selected by centers
  – Family Liaison takes Family Center directly to centers
  – Family Liaison makes connections with individual families while at the center
  – Teachers collaborate in planning and implementing family events

Illustrating the Classroom-Home Link

• Family Center

• Family Events

• Theme Newsletters

• Monthly Take-Home Activities

DELL-D 2008-2009 Family Events

June:
  - F.U.D.G.E. Day

July:
  - Field Trip to Prairie Farms (Petting Zoo)

August:
  - Reading Fun with Danville Dan’s (Baseball Team)

September:
  - Family Fun and Reading Night

October:
  - Harvest Time with Nursery Rhymes

November:
  - Miss Spider Party

January:
  - Clifford Party

February:
  - Sweetheart Dance

March:
  - Dr. Seuss Fun

April:
  - Week of the Young Child

May:
  - End of School Year Celebration
Take-Home Activities from Events

- Take the perspective of child
  - What we did today
  - How it helped me become a better reader
  - Fun books we can read together
  - Ideas for things we can do at home including a coloring, drawing, or writing sheet

Teacher Participation in Monthly Family Events

- Teacher Participation in the Events
  - Part of planning process for each event
    - One teacher from each center on planning team
  - Provide support to parent-child activities during each event
    - Several teachers from each center come to support parents as they participate in activities with their children
How It Works

• Planning Process
  – “Cute is not enough”
  – Planning form
  – Planning process

• Teacher Roles during Events
  – Support parents
    • Provide encouragement, support
    • Don’t take over!
Teacher Cue Cards

Make a Snack/Craft with Me

Teachers
- Encourage the parents to help their children read the recipe strip and make the snack/craft. (“We have a recipe for you to follow. Why don’t you help CHILD’S NAME read the recipe and make the snack/craft for you.”)

Curriculum Theme Newsletters

Overview of newsletters
- Matched to TROPHIES themes (25 themes)
  - Letter + Letter Talk
    - F = Straight line down. Go to the top of this line. Straight line across. Go to the middle and draw straight line across (Theme: It’s Me!)
  - Songs and Rhymes
    - One Potato, Two Potato (Theme: Foods)
  - Concepts
    - Sentences and Words (Theme: Making Things)
  - Books related to the theme
    - TROPHIES Book: I Can’t Get My Turtle to Move (Theme: Pets)
    - Book Pick: Whose Tail?
    - Additional books: Pet Show and Arthur’s New Puppy
  - Discover Danville
    - Farmer’s Market (Theme: Neighborhod)
- Tips for the Home
  - Play a guessing game using things related to night or day. You might say, “What is it in the sky at night and twinkles?” and your child would guess, “Star!” (Theme: Night and Day)
How Classrooms Use the Theme Newsletters

- Sent home by teachers in conjunction with beginning new theme in curriculum
- Let parents know what is being worked on in the new theme
- Give parents ideas about what they can do at home to support the new theme

Monthly Take-Home Activities

- Overview of monthly take-home activities
  - Related to season or celebrations associated with the month
    - January = Snowflakes
    - July = Birthdays
    - October = Autumn Walk
- One activity that can be completed in a day
  - “The Case of the Missing Letter”
    - Parent and child search through magazines and newspapers for pictures that begin with the letter "B"
    - Collect pictures and place them in the "evidence bag"
    - Bring back to school
Dear Family,

The month of July is when we celebrate our country’s birthday. Take this opportunity to talk to your child about birthdays!

For this month’s activity, complete this poem with your child:

“My birthday is so very great!
Here’s how I like to celebrate:

Ask your child “What is your favorite thing to do on your birthday?”
Talk about the different ways people celebrate, such as having a party at home, getting together with family and friends, or bringing cupcakes to school.
Have your child pictures or photographs of a birthday celebration and point out the different objects in the picture, such as a birthday cake, presents, and balloons.
Help your child to complete a sentence “At your birthday we ___________” (read a cake, went to the park, etc.)

When your picture is complete, have your child return it to class.

Your child will then receive a coupon for a special treat that you may redeem at the DELL-D Family Center located at 501 Kimball or the Danville Public Library on Monday nights from 5:00-8:00 in the Children’s Department.

Dear Family,

We are on a mission to solve “The Case of the Missing Letter”!

Please help your little detective by searching through magazines and newspapers to find pictures of things that begin with the letter “B”.

When you find a picture, repeat or exaggerate the sound (the word begins with b’s), and encourage your child to say it after you. Have your child say a thing like ball.

Ask your child what sound the word starts with. They may need your help, as think of other words that start with the same sound (bear, bike, heroes, banana, blanket).

Then, cut out the “B” pictures and place them in the evidence bag.

Have your child return the evidence bag to their teacher. Your child will then receive a coupon for a special treat that you may redeem at the DELL-D Family Center located at 501 Kimball or the Danville Public Library on Monday nights from 5:00-8:00 in the Children’s Department.

Thank you for helping crack the case!

My Special Day

My birthday is so very great!
Here’s how I like to celebrate:

Name

Bring this certificate to receive a FREE GIFT
at the DELL-D Family Center!

To redeem your gift, please come to the Family Center, 501 Kimball, on Monday—Friday 8:00—1:00 or 2:00—4:00.
If these times will not work, please call Sandy at 446-1800 x 113 to schedule an appointment!
How Classrooms Use the Monthly Take-Home Activities

- Teachers distribute the monthly take-home activities.
  - A note is attached for the teacher to prompt them to distribute and also give them ideas on how to use the monthly take-home activities.

- Teachers collect the completed activities and give each child a Family Center Coupon.
  - Coupon is redeemed by child and parent at the Family Center for a literacy treat (writing materials, books, etc.).

- Teachers are prompted to use the completed assignment in the classroom.
  - Use for “Show and Tell”
  - Engage children in conversation (oral language)
  - Hang in the classroom walls for parents and children to enjoy
  - Use the activities as samples for teachers to create their own take-home activities.

Evaluation: Attendance at Monthly Family Events

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Family Ratings of Monthly Family Events
(1-4 scale)

What Families Say

- “What surprised or delighted you?”
  - I observed him really paying attention to directions.

- I enjoyed watching him do the file folder activity. It really showed that he is learning at home and school.

- Seeing her interacting with kids, respecting adults, sharing and taking turns.

- Just enjoying herself writing and being around other kids.

- “Now I finally get what this is all about and what DELL-D is about!”
Lessons Learned

• Takes time to get the parent component going - be patient!

• Be flexible, responsive to parents and centers (e.g., time and day of activities, transportation, location of activities)

• Try different ways to connect with parents at different centers, with different needs

• Marketing and incentives
  – Get them to the first event - and keep them coming back
  – Link involvement components together through incentive system and through classroom participation
  – Find a creative “designer” for your flyers, etc. – we got really lucky with ours!

DELL-D Contact Information

http://www.dell-d.uiuc.edu/index.html

• Alissa Cohorst helps facilitate the business operations involved with the grant and communication between project members and participants.

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