An Integrated Approach to ESL and Family Literacy

Handouts

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Rural Routes
Current Situation

ESL needs in our rural and small urban communities are noticeably increasing. There is strong linkage between ESL, Family Literacy, Community and Intercultural communication.

Challenge/Opportunity

- ESL parents are somewhat isolated from the mainstream culture
- ESL parents may be struggling with literacy issues
- ESL parents are learning a new language and strange customs
- Program funding
- Training for practitioners
- Adults and/or children who don’t want to participate

Family Literacy and ESL Best Practices

Brainstorm:
Following are excerpts from the Saskatchewan Literacy Network’s *Family Literacy Standards Checklist* and from Bow Valley’s *Literacy and Parenting Skills Good Practices*. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Literacy Standards Checklist</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>n/a</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You use strengths-based language in all aspects of your program. For example, one strengths-based message is, “Communities know best how to serve their needs” (p.13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>You regularly review your program vision to ensure that it accurately reflects participant and community goals (p.13)</td>
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<td>You validate the diversity of families, considering the following factors when planning programs:</td>
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<td>• Gender (Do your activities have a balance of perspectives and avoid stereotypes?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Family background, language, and values (Do you seek to understand and acknowledge the values and customs of each family? Do you honour the words that families use to describe themselves?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Culture (Do you encourage program participants to use or learn their family’s first language?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regional background (rural/remote, urban)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Learning styles</td>
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<td>• Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Personality styles</td>
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<tr>
<td>• School experiences (Are you sensitive to participants’ perspectives and attitudes about learning?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Familiarity with print and literacy levels (Do you use clear language in written and spoken communication?) (p.13-14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>You promote your program in a variety of ways in the community. Consider:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Personal contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social media – Facebook and Twitter</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Websites and email</td>
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<td>• Community organizations – school newsletters, churches, bingo hall, RCMP office, etc.</td>
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<td>• Word of mouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Key contacts – Elders, social service workers, etc. (p.25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>You actively recruit different cultures, genders, races, and special needs into your programs (p.25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your staff practices cultural competency:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• They encourage participants to share their cultural knowledge and skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• They include local culture and history in the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• They include traditional knowledge-keepers in programs, such as elders and artists, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• They participate in cross-cultural training.</td>
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1 [http://www.sk.literacy.ca/pdf_links/Family_Literacy_Standards.pdf](http://www.sk.literacy.ca/pdf_links/Family_Literacy_Standards.pdf)
Bow Valley’s Literacy and Parenting Skills Good Practices, p.5

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**Principle 1: Programming should honour each family’s culture and language**

*Hello World* by Manya Stejic, or *Ways to Say Hello*, by Hap Palmer.

MyLanguage.ca:

> “FACT: Work with immigrant families shows that family languages are too often at risk. This means that as immigrant children learn English, home languages take second place, are forgotten and lost.”

> “NEED FOR ACTION: Home languages are important. When they are forgotten a great deal is changed and lost. They need to be protected.”

Use materials that honor their languages. Provide the information, resources, and support that families need to have literacy-rich households in their own languages.

- Bring in a grandparent to come in do some oral story telling or teach the group a song in their language.
- Use multi-lingual books and songs: [http://www.ryerson.ca/mylanguage/resources/websites.html](http://www.ryerson.ca/mylanguage/resources/websites.html)
- Access resources for learners in their own languages, for example:
  - Tip sheets: *Using Your First Language is Best* and *Talk to Your Baby in Your Own Language* in a variety of languages [http://www.ryerson.ca/mylanguage/resources/documents.html](http://www.ryerson.ca/mylanguage/resources/documents.html)
  - How to videos for newcomers and their kids in different languages: [http://tvoparents.tvo.org/article/how-videos-your-language](http://tvoparents.tvo.org/article/how-videos-your-language)

Other ideas?

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2 [http://www.famlit.ca/resources/LAPS-Good-Practices.pdf](http://www.famlit.ca/resources/LAPS-Good-Practices.pdf)
Find out about your ELL families:

If you do not yet know this information about your ELLs, find out:

- What countries your families come from
- What languages they speak (which may be at least two or three!)
- What language do they speak most often with their friends?
- What language do they speak most often with their family?
- If families who speak the same language, such as Spanish, come from different countries or different regions within the same country
- The educational background of families and the school system of their countries
- If any of your ELLs are migrants, refugees, or students with interrupted formal education
- If your families have experienced war or another traumatic event such as a natural disaster

In order to learn more about your ELL families:

- Ask the families. You may want to include some questions in your home language survey or a very basic questionnaire that ELL parents fill out.
- If their English levels are low start with your ELL/bilingual volunteer, friend, family to help answer those questions. Also, they will appreciate the opportunity to share their expertise!
ELL
English Language Learners
Family Group

Location of Program: ___________________

Adult name: ____________________________________________________________

Address: ______________________________________________________________

Phone #: ___________________________ Email: __________________________

Names of children attending the program:

Name: ___________________________ Age: ___________________________

Name: ___________________________ Age: ___________________________

Name: ___________________________ Age: ___________________________

Languages spoken at home: ______________________________________________

When did you move to___________?__________________

How long have you lived in Canada? ________________________

In which country did you live before Canada? ________________________

In which country were you born? ________________________________

Do you or your children have any food allergies or foods you do not eat?

Do you have a library card? no yes

Have you taken this program before? no yes

How did you hear about this program? ________________________________
Principle 2: Provide a meeting place where community connections can be built.

Explore your role as a practitioner:

- Literacy or ESL practitioner
- Cultural bridge
- Community connector

For EAL or literacy practitioners the cultural bridge role is defined as a person who mediates the cultural distance between learners and community members and uses bridging processes to facilitate a shift in perspective when exploring the cultural perspectives of different groups.

As a Community Connector, you:
1. Provide opportunities for community members and newcomers to have positive and meaningful interactions
2. Are knowledgeable of local, provincial, and federal resources for newcomers
3. Are knowledgeable of aspects of the “Canadian system” (e.g., health care) beyond your personal experience

As a Cultural Bridge, you:
1. Recognize level of cultural distance
2. Are informed and provide cultural information/lens beyond personal experience
3. Notice and make sense of learner behaviour without judgment

Benefits to your community of connecting ESL families to your community:

Building partnerships in your local community:
What successes and challenges have you experienced?
Which social services do your families need most?
Have you built any relationships with organizations in the community? If so, what are they?
Principle 3: Provide programming the meets the particular language and cultural needs of ESL families.

Tips and strategies:

1. Help your learners make sense of what is going on:
   - Speak more slowly and clearly
   - Be sure that directions are clear
   - Use visuals, realia, actions, hands on demonstrations to help them understand
   - Use the board/flipchart paper -- write out things like directions, key words, song lyrics, etc.
   - Be mindful that your ELL parents did not grow up here and may have unexpected gaps or differences in knowledge, skills, attitudes, assumptions.

2. Encourage and facilitate your learners’ participation:
   - Give extra time to formulate answers to questions
   - Nominate ELLs and help them get turns to talk.
   - Allow ELLs to watch and listen if they don’t feel comfortable participating.
   - Include activities that require fewer English language skills (wordless picture books, books in their languages)
   - Be mindful that your ELL parents may have unexpected skills and knowledge – whenever possible, allow them to take the role of “knower” or “expert”.

3. Provide opportunity to improve language skills and cultural knowledge:
   - Select rhythmic and repetitive materials (songs, chants, rhymes, children’s stories).
   - Help ELLs with pronunciation of problem sounds, especially in words that are repeated over and over (in books/songs).
   - Teach key words prior to covering a theme: write them down; highlight them when they pop up in songs or stories, explain what they mean, and validate a learner when they attempt to use the word.
   - Give learners opportunity to use their oral language skills: Listening (follow directions, listening and making sense of what is said) Speaking (participating in a discussion, answering questions, choral reading).

Other?

Some don’ts:
   - Don’t correct grammar and pronunciation errors in front of the group or their children
   - Don’t over-enunciate
   - Don’t adjust your rhythm when speaking (speak slower, but with natural rhythm)
   - Other?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample activities</th>
<th>What would ELLs gain?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Words:</strong></td>
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<td>Discuss key words related to a theme (e.g., traditions). Display the words (perhaps laminate them). Refer back to the key words during the discussion and other activities.</td>
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<td><strong>Songs/rhymes:</strong></td>
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<td>Select repetitive songs and rhymes that are related to a theme you are covering. Choose songs that play with language and make use of repeated sounds. Write out the lyrics/words and highlight key words. Sing the songs.</td>
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<td><strong>Diaper tags:</strong></td>
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<td>Print out and laminate song and rhyme lyrics on cards that can be attached to a diaper bag. The goal is that parents can pull these out when their children are getting restless.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shared reading:</strong></td>
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<td>Read children’s stories aloud and have the group join in on the repeated parts. Or the facilitator reads one sentence and the group reads the next. Or the facilitator reads the narration, and the group reads one character’s part. Be creative!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family story pack:</strong></td>
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<td>Create a package including a book in English and another language along with props related to the book.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Talking Tools:</strong></td>
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<td>These are tips for parents to foster interaction and engagement with their children. Highlight one Talking Tool each session. Post the Talking Tool and have parents practice using it throughout the session (e.g., during the craft). Encouraged parents to try this out throughout the week. In the next session, ask parents “Did anyone try that last week? Give an example of what you did.”</td>
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</table>
**GRINS:**
Print this out in passport form (same number of pages as the number of weeks in the program). Parents take it home and fill it out at home (or fill it out in the group if their literacy skills are lower). The next week, this is used as a conversation opener (“So, what did you guys do this week”), and the items are stamped. Parents then receive an incentive for completed pages (e.g., a kids book, a sand pail, or something for the parents)

**Multicultural RAPP Pack**
http://www.klandskills.ca/famlit/resources/rappmulti.htm
These are packages of materials related to a children’s story. They include reading hints, language hints, and math hints. They also include poetry, a craft idea, and activity sheets related to the theme of the book.

**Application**

Using your RAPP pack, come up with a series of activities for a Family Literacy session including ELLs. Apply the principles and tips we have covered today.

What would ELLs gain from this series of activities?