7

Fostering Home-School Partnerships



We know that parental encouragement, activities and interest at home, and parental participation in schools and classrooms positively influence achievement. Moreover, it seems that the most useful variety of parent involvement is contact between parents and their children in the home, which encourages and aids school achievement. For example, students who read to their parents and who talk with their parents about reading (using either their home language and/or English) have markedly higher reading gains than students who do not have this opportunity. Research shows that small-group instruction during the school day by highly competent specialists **does not produce** reading gains comparable to those that result from parental involvement programs.

For the growing numbers of limited- or non-English-proficient parents, parent involvement of any kind in the school process is a new cultural concept. The overwhelming majority of language minority parents believe that the role of the family is to nurture their children, while the role of the school is to educate them. To involve language minority parents in their children's education, we must acculturate them to the meaning of parent involvement in their new social environment.

While most language minority parents do not have the English language proficiency to engage in many of the school's typical parent activities, they may be very successful at parent-school collaboration at home. These parents can learn to reinforce educational concepts in the native language and/or English. Whenever possible, bilingual community liaisons should help bridge language and cultural differences between home and school.

1. Categories of Involvement

Epstein (1995) has been one of the principal researchers of parental involvement and its effect on student achievement. She identified six categories of parent involvement in the education of children:

1. Providing for children's basic needs

By seeing that children are fed, clothed, have enough sleep, and enjoy a secure, loving environment, parents contribute to the well-being a child needs to focus attention on learning both at home and at school. One school-related example is ensuring that children have necessary school supplies and a place to study at home.

2. Communicating with school staff

All schools seek to communicate with parents in one form or another during the school year. Parents' understanding of such communication depends in part on their literacy level and proficiency in the language (usually English) used to send communications home. When schools can provide written communications the parents can understand, and can provide a person who speaks the parents' native language(s), cooperation between schools and language minority parents improves greatly.

3. Volunteering or providing assistance at their child's school

This kind of involvement was traditionally expected, particularly of mothers. However, in Epstein's study, such involvement rarely includes more than a few parents in any school. More than 70% of the parents surveyed had never assisted school staff. As more and more parents work outside the home during school hours, this traditional form of parent involvement has diminished.

4. Supporting and participating in learning activities with their children at home

Epstein looked, in particular, at parental activity that related directly to the children's work in class. She discovered the following:

- More than 85 percent of parents spend at least 15 minutes helping their child at home when asked to do so by the teacher; most said they would spend more time if they were told what to do and how to help.
- Elementary students whose teachers emphasize parent involvement gain more in reading and math achievement than students in classrooms where the teachers do not emphasize similar involvement.

5. Participating in governance and advocacy activities

"Governance" and "advocacy" refer to the avenues by which parents and the community can influence decision making in a school system. Epstein distinguishes the two in the following way: governance activities occur under the auspices of the school system, (e.g., school-appointed advisory committees). Advocacy activities are organized and conducted independent of the school system: one example would be a citizen's group formed to lobby the school board on changes in the curriculum. Each type of participation requires a certain level of understanding of the school's programs and confidence on the part of the parents. Each also requires a willingness and commitment on the part of educators to include families in the decision-making process in meaningful ways.

6. Collaborating with the community

Parents encourage partnerships with community resources and services.

2. Stages of Adjustment for Newcomers

Most of our language minority families are still adjusting to the mainstream culture and language of the United States. The lives of these families changed radically when they moved to this country. Relationships with kin and community were disrupted, as were culturally valued ways of connecting families to community life.

It helps to recognize that different stages of adjustment may elicit different responses from parents with respect to their willingness and/or availability to be actively involved in their children's education. For example, all newcomers to the school system need basic information about school requirements, routines, schedules, and the like. For language minority newcomers, such information may need to be given in the home language and in a setting where there can be personal, face-to-face exchange and clarification. As families become more settled in the community and feel more familiar with how the school system operates, they may be more willing to participate in governance and advocacy activities.

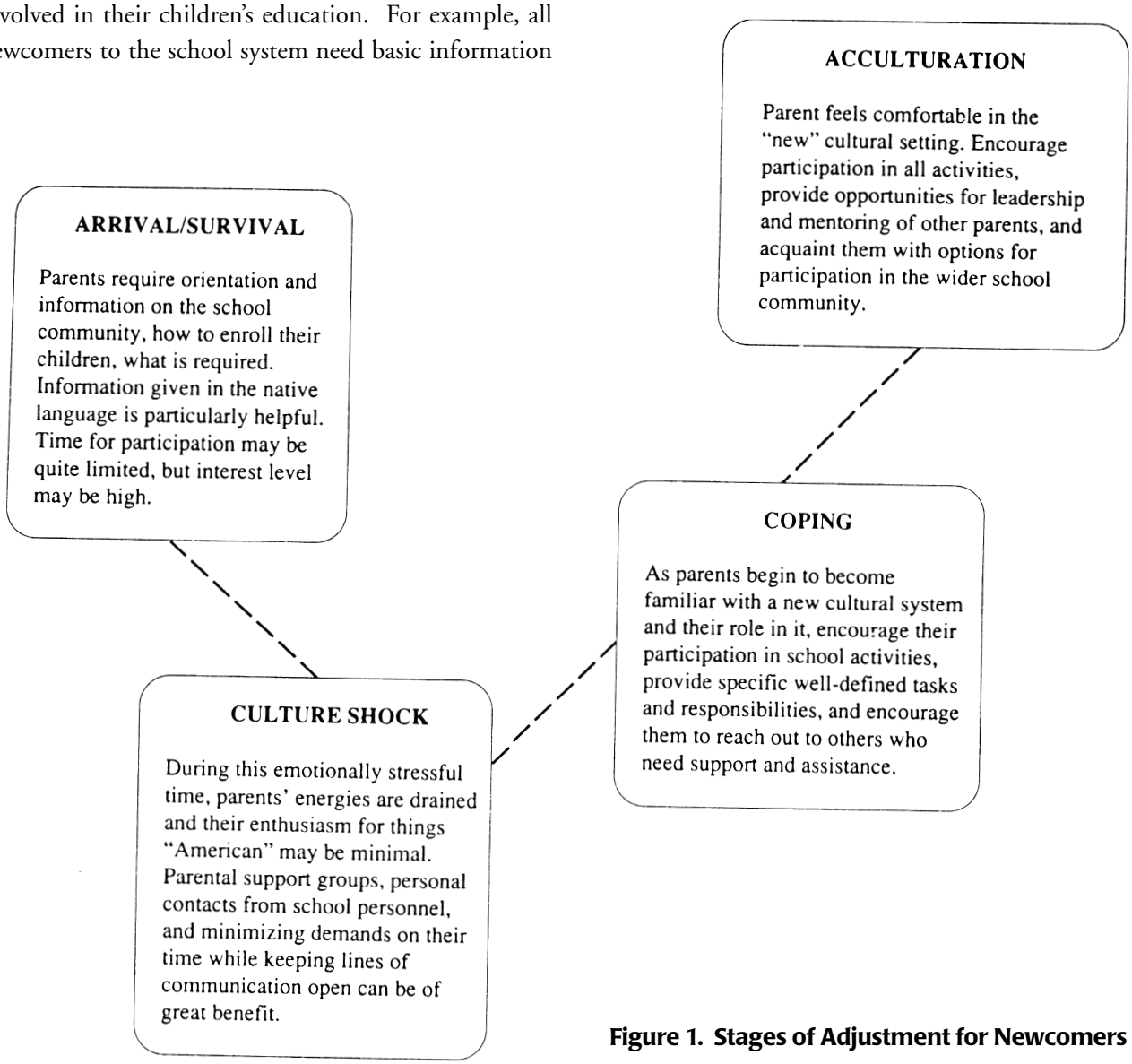


Figure 1. Stages of Adjustment for Newcomers

3. Implementing a Participation Model

How can a local school system encourage the participation of parents who are newly arrived and/or whose English proficiency is limited? Experience shows that these parents do care about their children's education and want to be involved in their local schools. When a school system provides caring, sensitive, and enlightened avenues for these parents, they become active partners in education.

Factors That Affect Parental Involvement

In designing appropriate support systems for parents in general, the experiences and resources of language minority parents should be acknowledged and respected. Although every family entering the school system is unique, some generalizations can be helpful. Differences in levels of involvement may be influenced by the following factors:

1. Length of residence in the United States

Newcomers to this country will most likely need considerable orientation and support in order to understand what their child's school expects in the way of participation and involvement. Native language communication, cultural orientation sessions, and the support of others who have been newcomers can be extremely helpful during what may be a stressful adjustment period.

2. English language proficiency

Parents whose English proficiency is limited may find it difficult or intimidating to communicate with school staff or to help in school activities without bilingual support. These parents can, of course, participate successfully and can help their children at home, so take care to see that they receive information and that their efforts are welcomed and encouraged.

Migrant farm workers often have a low level of literacy in their native language (usually Spanish) and a limited amount of schooling in their native country. Some of the adults from rural areas of Mexico and Central America speak an indigenous language that may limit their ability to communicate orally in Spanish. These factors make including migrant parents even more of a challenge because sending written materials home in Spanish (or in the indigenous language) is often not helpful.

3. Availability of support groups and bilingual staff

Native language parent groups and bilingual school personnel can make a crucial difference in fostering involvement among parents. Bilingual community liaisons can also translate the information provided to parents. These services ensure that information is understood, and demonstrate to parents that the school wants to involve them actively in the life of the school and in their children's academic development.

4. Prior experiences

Language minority parents differ widely in the extent to which they are familiar and comfortable with the concept of parental involvement in schools. Some newcomers may have been actively involved in their children's education in their native country, while others may come from cultures where the parent's role in education is understood in very different terms. Others, as indicated in Epstein's study, may need only some specific suggestions on how to "help" in order to participate more actively in education at home and at school.

5. Economic need

Parents who are barely surviving economically find that their children's school attendance is a hardship. Children could improve the family's income by working in the fields if they did not have to go to school.

4. How Can We Promote Home Language Use?

In school

1. Encourage educators to use a curriculum that reflects the culture, values, interests, experiences, and concerns of language minority children.

2. Help children feel pride in their home language and cultural heritage.

3. Introduce **all** students to the joys of cultural diversity and the desirability of learning more than one language.

4. Promote two-way bilingual programs.

5. Hire and develop culturally experienced and bilingual staff.

6. Raise teacher expectations of students who have a limited grasp of English.

7. Empower parents and communicate with them in their home language.

8. Provide students with interesting reading material in their native language.

9. Give students the opportunity to write in "journals" using their native language.

10. Ensure that educators promote communication in the family's home language, rather than sending a strong "English only" message to language minority students and their families.

In the home

1. Develop supportive program practices that strengthen family bonds and the parents' role in their child's development and education.

2. Educate parents about the importance of using the home language with their children and that the continuing development of the home language strengthens—rather than impedes—their child's ability to learn English.



5. Family Literacy

Family literacy programs can forge closer ties between homes and schools to increase student achievement. Family literacy is based on the notion that literacy—because it is social and cultural in nature—is best developed within the context of the family. Family literacy situates literacy learning within the context of the daily lives of participating families, acknowledges a broad range of culturally influenced ways of knowing, and provides greater access to schools and comfort in dealing with schools. It is extremely important to encourage parents to interact with their children in the language they feel most comfortable using. Some parents believe that using Spanish with their children will negatively affect their ability to learn English, but informing them that increased literacy in Spanish will also enhance a child's literacy in English usually puts their minds at ease.

There are four major areas of home literacy:

1. Literacy Modeling

Encouraging parents to model literacy uses for their children.

2. Literacy Opportunities

Increasing the range of literacy materials available in the home. (See end of chapter for a list of companies that publish bilingual books and books in Spanish)

3. Literacy Interactions

Demonstrating ways to engage in literacy activities with children.

4. Home-School Relationships

Providing opportunities for teacher-parent discussions and classroom observation.

Here are some ideas for sessions to help parents enrich their home literacy environment:

Creating Home Literacy Centers

Create and use a literacy activity center in a box: include pencils, crayons, paper, scissors, paste, magazines, pictures, etc.

Book Sharing

The most effective ways to share books with children. How to talk about books and share books according to the parents' literacy level.

Teaching the ABC's

Simple ways to teach letters and sounds. Emphasize language games, songs, and language experience activities.

Community Literacy

Parents can share their own literacy with children while at the market and during other daily activities.

Book Fairs

Parents buy (with coupons) English or Spanish-language books for their children.

Parents and Homework

Ways parents can monitor and help with children's homework even when they cannot do the homework themselves.

Parent/Child Literacy Behavior Checklist

	Pre			Post		
	N	S	O	N	S	O
1. The family has books in the home.						
2. A parent (or other) reads to the child.						
3. The parents play games with the child.						
4. The child has coloring books.						
5. The parents have taught the child songs and nursery rhymes.						
6. The child cooks with the parents.						
7. The child goes to the store with the parents.						
8. The parents read newspapers or magazines.						
9. The parents tell the child stories or folk tales.						

N Never
S Sometimes
O Often

SMART START

Reading at Home

There are many ways that we, as parents, can help our children get ready to read.

Having things to read around the house encourages our children to read. The language doesn't matter! Magazines, newspapers, coloring books with or without words, and books of all kinds contribute to the reading environment. Garage sales and swap meets are great places to find inexpensive books.

We can "read" picture books with our children and make up stories as they look at the pictures. Together we can invent anything that may be related to the pictures. The same book can be "read" over and over. Young children do not tire of the familiar and they like repetition. We are teaching more than we realize when we enjoy books with our children.

Good things happen when we read and talk to our children:

- Children develop their language, including listening and speaking
- When we read books from left to right we are reinforcing the direction of print (move your finger from left to right when you read to your children)
- As we read, our children learn that stories are sequential. They have order: a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- We are contributing to learning by simply relating our experiences (stories) in our own language.
- When we read together we communicate in a gentle and loving manner our expectation that our child will learn to read.
- Once a child begins to read, the family can listen enthusiastically and discuss the reading in their own language.

—by Frank Ludovina



Begin talking to your child from infancy. Make sounds. Call attention to sounds and connect them with objects and events. Talk to the child and explain activities as you perform them. Listen and encourage conversation with you. Answer questions patiently and as promptly as possible. Play listening games with your child. A good bedtime game is to listen quietly and identify as many sounds as possible—heartbeats, breathing, traffic. Listening attentively is essential in learning.

—from *"52 Ways to Help Your Child Learn"*
California Teachers Association

¡LISTOS!

La lectura en el hogar

¿Cómo podemos nosotros los padres estimular el interés de nuestros niños en la lectura?

El solo hecho de tener libros en casa estimula a los niños a leer. ¡No importa en que idioma estén escritos estos materiales! Las resvistas, los periódicos, los libros de colorear y toda clase de libros contribuyen a un ambiente de lectura. Usted puede comprar libros usados y baratos en algunos mercados (swap meets) o en ventas de garage.

Podemos "leer" con nuestros niños libros ilustrados. Mientras miramos juntos estos libros podemos contar o inventar historias sobre los dibujos. El mismo libro puede ser "leído" muchas veces ya que a los niños pequeños les gusta lo familiar y no se cansan de la repetición.

Nosotros enseñamos más de lo que creemos cuando gozamos juntos de la lectura.

Por ejemplo:

- Por medio de la lectura nuestros niños desarrollan el lenguaje, la habilidad para escuchar y para hablar.
- Al leer de izquierda a derecha estamos reforzando la manera que se debe leer - podemos apuntar con el dedo para mostrar la dirección de la lectura.



- Cuando les leemos a nuestros niños ellos están aprendiendo que las historias son hechos sucesivos y con un orden; el principio, el medio, y el final.
- Los niños observarán que nosotros aprendemos y gozamos al leer.
- A través de la repetición el niño aprende ideas y el lenguaje para expresarlos.
- Cuando relatamos historias de la famila en nuestro idioma los niños aprenden el lenguaje, la cultura y la sucesión de una historia.
- Al compartir la lectura comunicamos a nuestros niños de una manera suave y cariñosa nuestras expectatives de que ellos aprendan a leer.
- Cuando el niño empieza a leer, la famila podrá mostrarle su interés al escucharlo. Al platicar sobre el tema se desarrollarán las ideas y el vocabulario de los niños.

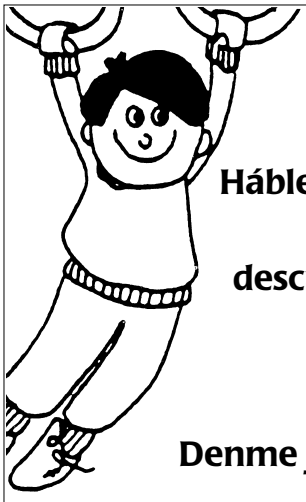
—Frank Ludovina

-Ideas de *"52 maneras de ayudar a aprender a su hijo"* por la asociacion de maestras de California

Convérsele a su niño aunque sea pequeñito. Enséñele a asociar ruidos con los objetos que lo producen. Mientras hace algo explíquele a su niño lo que está haciendo. Escúchelo y anímelo a conversar con Ud. Conteste a sus preguntas con paciencia y tan pronto como pueda. Juegue juegos que requieren escuchar. Por ejemplo cuando lo acueste a dormir, jueguen a escuchar e identificar ruidos—el latido del corazón, la respiración, o el tráfico. Cuando eschuchamos atentamente es cuando aprendemos mejor.

—from *"52 Ways to Help Your Child Learn"* California Teachers Association

Coordination Nac de Servicio Prescolar • San Diego, CA



Cuando Soy Pequeño

Háblenme cuando soy pequeño para que aprenda nuevas ideas y para que descubra cómo es nuestra lengua. Escúchenme cuando trato de hablar aunque sea difícil entenderme.

Denme juguetes con los que pueda aprender sobre colores, formas, tamaños y otras cosas importantes.

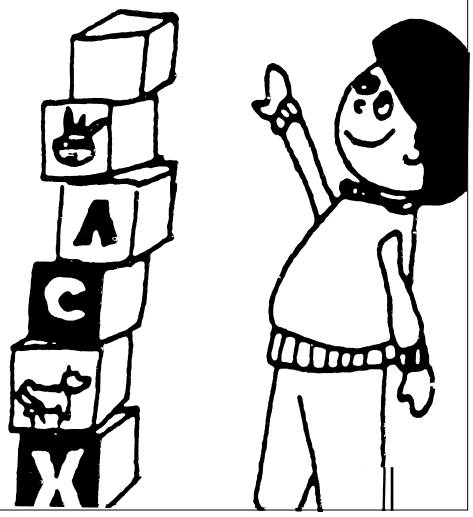
Déjenme correr y jugar con frecuencia para que todos mis músculos se desarrollen.

Léanme cuentos para que aprenda nuevas ideas y palabras, y para que descubra cómo los libros nos hablan.

Después, déjenme leer los libros e inventar historias sobre los dibujos: Así aprendo que los libros cuentan historias.

Déjenme aprender cosas sobre los libros a mi proprio ritmo. No intenten que aprenda a leer antes de que esté preparado para ello.

Sobre todo, ¡quiéranme mucho y ayúdenme a sentirme orgulloso de mí mismo!





Como Aprendo A Leer

Cuando empiezo a leer por primera vez,
invento la mayoría de las palabras,
porque ¡no sé para qué son esos
símbolos negros tan extraños!

Luego, invento palabras para contar los
cuentos, pero ¡ya empiezo a hablar
como hablan los libros!

En seguida, comienzo a fijarme en los
dibujos para ayudarme a contar el cuento.

Después de que alguien me ha leído un cuento
varias veces, ¡puedo leerlo sin abrir
el libro siquiera y mirar las hojas!

Muy pronto, aprendo a leer libros,
diciendo las palabras que están escritas
en las páginas. ¡Aprendo que los
símbolos negros cuentan la historia
y no los dibujos!



6A. Parental Responsibilities 1997-1998

Language minority parents often need to have school rules and expectations clarified. Here are some examples of areas that parents may need help to understand:

Attendance

1. Parents must enroll in school any child who turns five years old on or before September 30th of any school year.

2. The child must attend school on a regular basis—arriving at school on time and attending every day that school is in session unless the child has a legitimate excuse such as illness.

Safety/Discipline

3. It is important—for each child's safety—for the school to be notified of the reason for a child's absence from school. If a child leaves home and doesn't arrive at school, he or she may be in danger. The school recommends that parents call or drop by the school with the reason for a child's absence. **Spanish-speaking parents may call 662-7656 after 8:30 a.m. and ask to speak with "Daisy."**

4. There are strict guidelines in the United States for disciplining children. **If a child is physically, emotionally, or sexually abused at home, the child may be taken away from the parents by a local child protection agency.**

   The guidelines for disciplining are as follows:
   (a) No child may be hit with a closed fist.
   (b) No child may be struck with an object such as a belt, wooden stick, etc.

5. Parents must keep their child safe by providing adequate supervision at all times. **All children under 10 years old must be supervised by an adult or older sibling.** A child may not be kept home from school in order to babysit.

6. If the school must bring a child home during the school day for any reason, the child must be left with a responsible adult (e.g., parent or babysitter). No child may be left home alone. For this reason, **it is essential that the parents provide the school with a reliable emergency contact number** so that the school can contact someone during the school day in case of an accident or other emergency.

In Case of Illness

7. If the school recommends medical treatment for a child, the parents must do what is required (e.g., visit a doctor and/or obtain a certain medicine). If, for some reason, the parents cannot follow up on the recommended treatment, they should notify the school so that we can be of help.

Emergency Contact Number_____

When does the father leave for work? _____ mother? _____
Is there someone we can leave the child with if the parents are not home?

_____

Parent Signature_____ **Date**_____

6B. Responsabilidades de los Padres (Spanish Version) 1997-98

Asistencia

1. Los padres deben inscribir a un hijo que cumple cinco años en o antes del día 30 de septiembre del año escolar.

2. El hijo debe asistir a la escuela todos los días—llegando a tiempo y asistiendo cada día a menos que haya excusa legítima como enfermedad.

Seguridad/Disciplina

3. Es importante—para la seguridad de cada hijo—que los padres avisen la escuela cuando un hijo se queda en casa. Si un niño sale de su casa y no llega a la escuela puede estar un peligro. La escuela recomienda que los padres llamen o pasen por la escuela para decirles por qué su hijo no está. **Los padres que hablan español pueden llamar 662-7656 después de las 8:30 a.m. y preguntar por "Daisy."**

4. En los Estados Unidos hay reglas estrictas sobre las maneras aceptadas de disciplina. **Si un niño es abusado físicamente, emocionalmente, o sexualmente en casa, el niño será quitado de los padres por una agencia local de protección de niños.**

   Las reglas de disciplina son:
   (a) No se permite pegar a un niño con puño cerrado.
   (b) No se permite pegar a un niño con un objeto como cinturón, palo, etc.

5. Los padres deben dedicarse a la seguridad de su hijo por asegurar que alguien esté cuidándolo todo el tiempo. **Todos los niños de menos de diez años de edad deben estar acompañados por un adulto o hermano mayor.** No se puede pedir que un hijo falte un día de escuela para cuidar a un niño joven.

6. Si la escuela tiene que llevar a un niño a casa durante el día escolar—será necesario dejarlo con un adulto responsable (por ejemplo: padre, madre o pariente). Por eso, **es muy importante que los padres nos den un número de teléfono que la escuela puede usar durante el día escolar en caso de emergencia.**

En Caso de Enfermedad

7. Si la escuela recomienda un tratamiento médico para un niño—los padres deben seguir el aviso, por ejemplo: visitar a un doctor o comprar una medicina. Si—por alguna razón—los padres no pueden cumplir con el tratamiento sugerido, deben avisar la escuela para que podamos auydarles.

Número En Caso De Emergencia _____

¿A qué hora sale el padre para el trabajo? _____ la madre? _____
¿Hay alguien con quién podemos dejar a su hijo si Uds. no están en casa?

_____

Firma del Padre o de la Madre _____ **Fecha** _____

7. Publishing Companies for Bilingual and Spanish Language Books

Bilingual Education Services
2514 South Grand Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007
1-800-448-6032
www.besbooks.com

Delta Systems Co., Inc.
1400 Miller Parkway
McHenry, IL 60050
1-800-323-8270
www.delta-systems.com

Hampton-Brown
P.O. Box 369
Marina, CA 93933
1-800-333-3510
www.hampton-brown.com

Lectorum
205 Chubb Avenue
Lyndhurst, NJ 07071
1-800-345-5946
www.lectorum.com

Oxford University Press
2002 Evans Rd.
Carey, NC 27513
1-800-445-9714
www.oup-usa.org

Rigby (part of Harcourt Achieve)
10801 N Mopac Expressway
Austin, TX 78759
1-800-531-5015
www.rigby.com

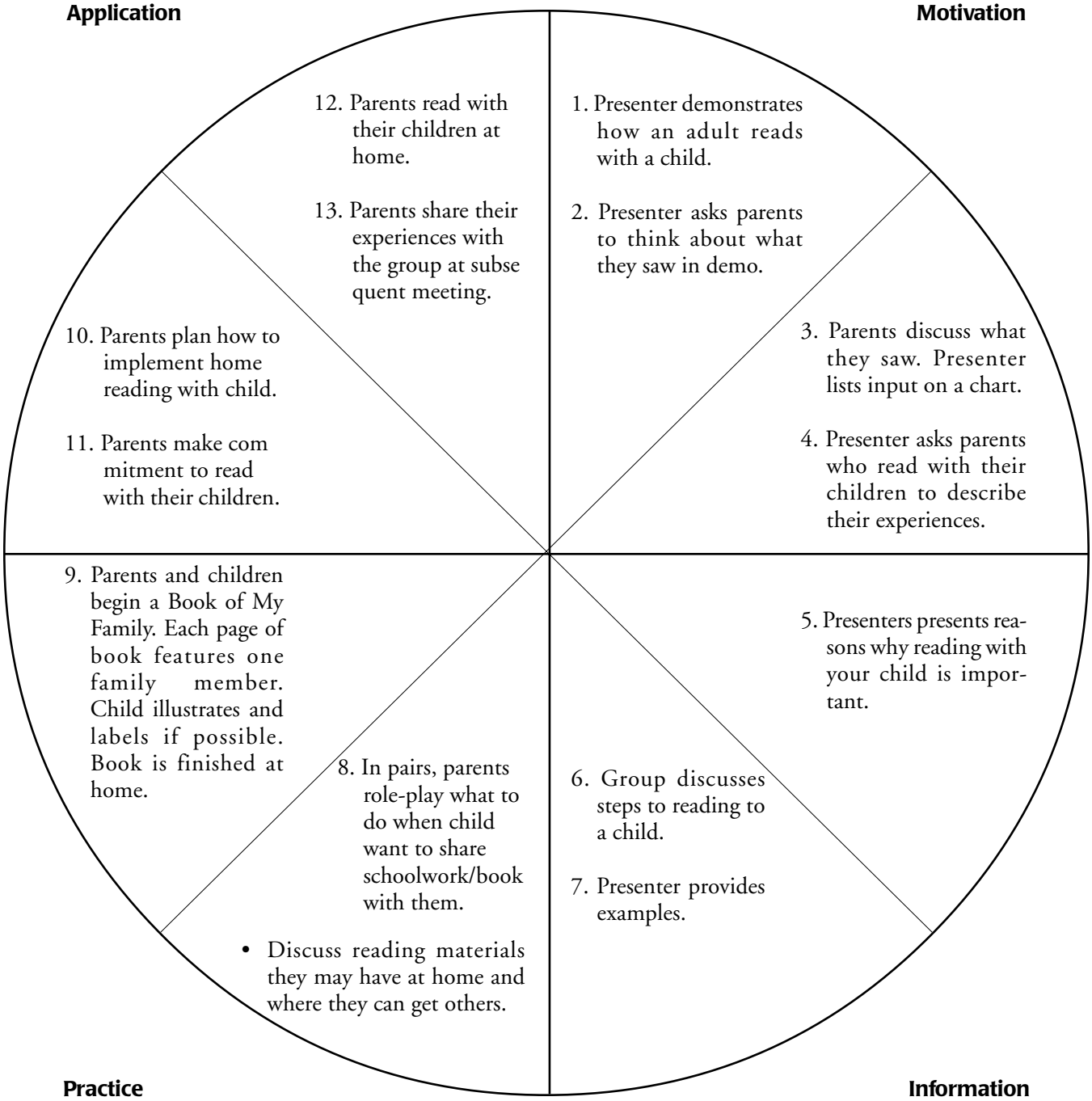
Scott Foresman
4350 Equity Drive
P.O. Box 2649
Columbus, OH 43216
1-800-552-2259
www.scottforesman.com

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Mulhern, M. et al. (1994). *Family Literacy for Language Minority Families: Issues for Program Implementation* (Program Information Guide #17). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Parent Workshop
Reading: A Shared Experience



Focus:

To help parents understand why it's important to read with their children.

To help parents identify what to read with their children.

To help parents understand how to read with their children.

Etta Johnson, ESOL/HILT
Arlington Public Schools, 1988