



## English as an additional language: Building literacy learning partnerships

This resource is the first in a series of three that provide information about strategies for teachers to support children who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The series includes:

1. Building literacy learning partnerships
2. Intentional teaching strategies
3. Examples of observable behaviours.

It is recommended that you allocate approximately 30 minutes per resource to read and reflect on the information provided.

### Introduction

Teachers ... develop inclusive partnerships when they ... build exciting, interesting and challenging environments that invite children to participate and that reflect children's cultural identity and heritage.

*Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (2010, p. 24)*

From a very early age, children participate in literacy events at home and in the community. Some literacy events are part of everyday family life such as making a shopping list, while others are designed especially to help children learn, e.g. showing children their name.

Strong connections between kindergarten and home are important because literacy events vary with the cultural values and social relationships of different groups. Learning about the emergent literacy of children — in home language and Standard Australian English (SAE) — provides a foundation for fostering children's literacy capabilities in kindergarten.

### Strategies for building partnerships

#### Learn about children's literate worlds

Teachers can support children's emergent literacy by establishing a two-way flow of communication. Sending ideas and information about literacy from kindergarten to home creates one-way connections; bringing diverse literacy events from home into the kindergarten completes the connection. In two-way communication the teacher learns from the child and their family. This is especially important when the literate worlds of teacher and child are different (Kenner 2000, 2004).

Parents, families and teachers together promote children's wellbeing, and enthusiasm and success in learning by creating continuity between home and kindergarten.

*Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (2010, p. 22)*

## Create multilingual learning environments

Create multilingual learning environments with words and symbols in home languages and SAE:

- Ensure that your classroom has multilingual texts, including stories and poems in children's first languages in the book area.
- Invite parents to read with their child.
- Place familiar objects, which include words and symbols, in dramatic play and block areas.
- Put up multilingual labels as visual cues for children, e.g. hand washing and spaces for storing own belongings and kindergarten resources.

Use these as talking points with children and their parents/carers.

## Share information

During informal and formal discussions, ask questions about the child's literate experiences — in home language or SAE.

- What is your child's favourite TV program?
- What is their favourite app or website?
- What does your child attempt to read? Who do they read with? What stories do they like?

Work with the children to learn about their worlds and words.

- Encourage children and their parents/carers to bring in some images and other resources
- Use these resources to make a text.

## Observe and learn from the children

Encourage parents/carers to read and write with their child in the classroom — in home language or SAE.

- Watch the ways that children use and talk about texts.
- Ask parents/carers questions to help you understand how they interact with their child around texts.
- Observe children when they are engaged in literate play, for example, 'reading' to or 'teaching' a doll or one of their peers. Consider:
  - What materials do they use?
  - What do they do?
  - What do they say?
- Ask children to show you how people read or write at home. Ask them to teach you how to read or write like that.

## Connect with the local community

Find out about children's literate worlds.

- Where do they play?
- Where do they shop?

Then go for a literacy walk.

- What texts and images do you see? What sounds do you hear?
- What languages do you see and hear?

Take some photographs. Ask the children about the images.

- Who goes to these places?
- What happens there?

Create connections with community literacy events.

## References

C Kenner, 2004, *Becoming biliterate: Young children learning different writing systems*. Trentham Books, Stoke on Trent.

C Kenner, 2000, *Home pages: Literacy links for bilingual children*. Trentham Books, Stoke on Trent.

## More information

- *Queensland kindergarten learning guideline* available at [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/10192.html](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/10192.html).
- Further resources for teachers to support children who speak English as an additional language are available at [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/12974.html](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/12974.html) under 'Inclusion and diversity'.