

K-3 Essential 10, Bullets 1-5 Teacher Interview Video

MAISA Literacy Essentials

https://youtu.be/aqZ2tYZLeM4?si=QQc_FqZHNI8mWmwS

Narrator: Collaboration between teachers and families supports children's literacy development. In these classrooms, teachers help families add to their repertoire of strategies for promoting literacy at home and also invite families into their classrooms to support literacy learning at school.

Teacher Somali: I think it's really important to have families come in as early as possible and share what they know.

Teacher Vanessa: Growing up as a Spanish speaker at home, it was always really interesting to see my parents interact with the school because they really just viewed the school as the experts and they viewed themselves as someone prepping me to get to school by clothing, me feeding me, making sure I slept and was present, but they didn't know that there were so many other things that they could actually be doing to help me in school.

Teacher Lisa: I'm very passionate about literacy development, obviously, because being a kindergarten teacher and I know that without parents, it's not the best it can be, and so I love having parents come in and I know that that's the bridge between school and home. We need the parents making that connection with us and being partners with us. It just helps us to get the most out of the kids.

Teacher Somali: I teach first grade and one of our earlier units in the year is called Storytellers. And in storytellers, students learn about why we tell stories. What's the point of a story, what can we learn from stories, and we invite families to come in and tell us their favorite stories. Sometimes these stories are in their native language, so not necessarily English, and sometimes it can be really personal and sometimes it can be a little more abstract, but these kids really value learning about each other in this way. And then thinking about, well, what kind of story do I want to share and write about? I think first of all, their kids are really proud that their parents are there and then it boosts their confidence as a reader, as a writer. So then after we have all written our stories, we have a publication party and families are invited to come back again and see the stories that their child has written and we share it with each other. So that's one way we have families come in.

Teacher Vanessa: There's been times where families have been invited to come into the classroom and read aloud in their native language and bring in their expertise. I had a family, for instance, that was really into music and playing guitars, and the family asked if they could come in and sing their favorite folk song in Spanish and actually brought in a story that was connected to that song and why that song was important to their family. And so it's so fascinating to see not only parents coming in into that leadership in the classroom, but also seeing the kids' faces when they hear their native language kind of coming to the forefront from peers and their families. And it's such a great opportunity to make connections and really see themselves in our curriculum and in the ways that we teach that we really value their language and their histories and their stories, and that that's a way that we can all learn from each other, not just culturally, but also through literacy.

Just teaching families how to incorporate literacy into daily activities. For example, one of the times I actually recorded myself and my toddler with just a storybook and families were able to view me reading to my son as a toddler in Spanish and English and seeing that that's just a really natural way to

engage your child really early on in literacy. And we also showed examples of a student that was already fluently reading where their parent was reading to them again aloud, but perhaps it was a chapter book and showing families how you can incorporate literacy during cooking and reading recipes and following directions and writing with your students, making lists and to-dos. So I think it's just really finding the ways to help families find the strategies that are natural to them at home, not necessarily what they look like at school, but really helping them understand that there's so many things that you can do throughout your day with your child that really helps them become literate and better readers and writers. A lot

Teacher Lisa: Of it is me in the beginning just really figuring out my parents and figuring out my families and building relationships with them. So just now I walk my kids to the door talking with families, just finding out what their strengths are, what their interests are, and how we could capitalize on what they have and bring it into the classroom. So last year I just happened to be talking to a parent who said, oh yeah, I write books. I'm an author. So we brought him in when we were starting our narratives and he came in, we started a class story and he was in telling us how he jots his ideas down, what it looks like at home and when he's doing his writing. And he was with us during our brainstorming sessions and some of our writing sessions, and then another parent said, oh, I'm an editor.

It was just an amazing, it was very fortuitous. And so she came in and did some of the editing. We had a parent who was a cook in the local restaurant, and so that parent came in and we read recipes, they brought some recipes, they brought some food, and then the kids got all excited. So we ended up making a Family Favorites cookbook, and some of it was in Spanish, some was in English, and we had it translated and every kid got a copy, but it was this parent coming in and sharing what they have. I try to make it seamless so when they're in here, it doesn't feel like this awkward new space to them. They know that we honor what they have to bring.

Teacher Somali: In terms of outside of the classroom, I have been involved with a writing workshop. We have parents and children coming together at our school and we have rotations or centers where they get to do a different writing activity, a different style of writing at each rotation. It's writing a grocery list or writing the lyrics to their favorite song or singing some poems or singing other songs that they might know in a different language. So that's all part of literacy and having parents understand that it's not a book report and it's not necessarily paragraph writing because that's different and that's something that we can do at school, but at home it can look different and it's okay that it looks different and that it feels different. We're

Teacher Vanessa: Designing a literacy event where families are able to come in and we're choosing culturally relevant text and creating workshops around them using languages from their native languages along with English and having texts that reflect both of those languages. And then also gifting those books to families. Typically, they happen after school and we try to have literacy events at least two or three times a year, and those events look differently. We invite families in to do some center type activities where families engage with their students in different activities that promote independent reading. For example, one Center might be having a set of technology tools like desktops or iPads where families can interact with their students and look at technology that helps students with reading and gives them access to programs that they may not know about. And we also might have another center where kids are creating book boxes that are libraries just to show families ways they can organize books in their homes and give access to kids on a daily basis. One of the other centers that was a great success was just creating a journal. Kids were so excited to create a journal where they could jot

down lists or ideas throughout the summer, and so that helped families see a really natural way that kids could continue writing. Over the summer,

Teacher Lisa: I do an afterschool program, which is the parents come in and work with the kids, and I set my room up. It's one day a week for four weeks after school for about an hour and a half, and I'll set my room up different rooms in the house, so I'll set up like a little living room, and I'll invite the parents in with the kids and we'll do things that they could possibly do in the living room at home that would be natural and simple, and they may not think of as something that's actually helping their kids' literacy development. So for example, we'll watch a little TV clip and then we'll have a conversation. I'll model a conversation with the parents and the kids how to talk about that TV show, so it's something that they could do at home. We'll also set up a little basket for and have a journal in it and offer suggestions on things that they could write about, almost scrapbooky kinds of ideas, just a quick thing, something that they did during the day, and then draw a picture and have a conversation about it.

So then the next week we will move to the kitchen. We give them magnetic letters and we'll go down to the actual kitchen here, show 'em how to build words on the refrigerator, show 'em how to read recipes and follow recipes. So it's just basically that program is set up to already use what they have at home and to have a conversation with their kids at home at natural moments in the day. So the purpose of it is for them to find natural ways to develop literacy at home and find those opportunities as they appear in their daily setting. In our weekly newsletter, we'll try to use language, so as we are thinking about our interactive read alouds in the classroom, maybe this week I'm focusing on readers. Notice how characters change in a story. So in the newsletter, I'll put that exact language and then say, as you're reading stories at home, see if your child can notice how the characters change in the story. So we're giving them our school language to use at home, so we try to just be on the same page.

Teacher Somali: One of the things that we really value at this school is literacy, and in order to ensure that kids are reading, we've made it a point to make sure that we give kids books to take home. Another thing that our school community has done is we've created a grant, and with that grant we've been able to purchase new books for all of our students K through five, and they get these new books at the end of the year. Our school community has connected with our outside community and we're able to get gently used books that the kids are then able to take home just before winter break and just before spring break, and at that giveaway, which is just before summer vacation, they get eight books that they have picked up themselves. I want them to be avid voracious readers. I want them to read something and then be curious and ask questions. I want them to be very passionate about reading. For

Teacher Vanessa: Me, it's so important to be able to reach out to families in ways that aren't typical, right, in ways that aren't just, here's a note, sign it. This is what I want you to do. But in really relevant, responsive ways that help them feel welcome and help them see themselves as partners in their children's literacy development. Schools need to value diversity in languages, and that we also need to make an effort to communicate to families and their native languages and also recognize the value in that as schools and as parents, and allow the parents to see the value in that diversity of language. I think often families view second language as a deficit and often tell their students, learn English, speak in English, and they really, honestly, some don't understand that there's such great power and knowing two languages that permeates through literacy on such a deep level.

Teacher Lisa: Some of it is just empowering the parents to see that they do these great things, and when they do these things and have these conversations and capitalize on these moments at home, that they

are the ones who are helping their child be a better reader and writer and become more literate. It's not just from me.

Teacher Somali: I want to demystify what happens at school. I know for some parents, they're not quite sure what exactly goes on, and so by having them come to the classroom, they can see firsthand the kinds of activities that we're working on, and then they're armed with things that they can do at home to help their child succeed at school.

Teacher Vanessa: At school. It's just a natural part of being a teacher. That's what we do all day. I mean, we're prompting kids. We're teaching, we're just thinking about what needs students have and partnering with parents allows them to see parenting as an opportunity to teach them in so many ways at home too, just in everyday activities or life.

Narrator: Learn more at literacyessentials.org.