Literacy for Life:
An Intergenerational Literacy Program

A Handbook for Literacy Practitioners

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Preface

This handbook is the result of a two-year study of the implementation of an intergenerational *authentic* literacy program in two sites in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The Literacy for Life program was designed for low literate adults and their preschool children in a program that combined:

1) an adult-only *authentic* literacy program,

2) a child-only early literacy program with *authentic* activities similar to those that would be provided in homes with more literate adults, and

3) a family-time literacy component that focused on helping parents provide literacy activities for their children that would help to prepare them for the literacy expectations of school.

Ultimately, most of the families that registered in the program were recently arrived immigrants or refugees to Canada, for whom English was a second or additional language. For the majority of the participants, their literacy proficiency in their first language ranged from nonexistent to low. In addition, the majority of the participants had nonexistent to low levels of English literacy. Many family literacy programs are currently offered in Canada, and most share the common goal of helping parents and children experience literacy success. What differentiated the Literacy for Life program from the others was the emphasis on *authentic* literacy activities as part of the instruction and the *intergenerational* focus of the program.

In this project, we used *authentic* to describe real-life literacy activities for real-life purposes that occur in the context of literacy instruction. An example of this would be writing a grocery list in order to go shopping for groceries and then using that list to go shopping for groceries. In opposition to the term "authentic" is the term "school-only", which we use to describe literacy activities that occur in the context of instruction that have no purpose outside of a learning to read and write purpose. An example would be reading a story in order to answer oral or written questions in a workbook. We implemented activities that were highly *authentic*, in this program, in our two sites.

In addition, a crucial and unique component of the Literacy for Life program is its intergenerational orientation. Not only were parents encouraged to support their children's literacy development, but also parents were provided literacy support and instruction to develop their own literacy learning, for their own purposes. For a more comprehensive explanation of the research study, the program that was implemented, and the two sites with which we engaged, please refer to Appendix B.

1 – Introduction

Using the Handbook

This handbook grew out of our interest in the use of authentic literacy activities in the context of an intergenerational literacy program. It is intended for practitioners, including literacy tutors, literacy teachers, and those who administer literacy programs and develop literacy policy. It is informed by our experiences working with families and their young children, who want to improve their understanding and use of English literacy. The Literacy for Life project occurred in specific sites with particular people in interaction with each other. With this in mind, the suggestions for activities that are provided should be viewed as beginning points or suggestions, rather than recipes for implementation. This handbook should be helpful for literacy educators hoping to start programs or to reflect upon or refine already existing programs.

We begin this handbook with a section explaining the instructional model and theoretical orientation or perspectives from which we operate. In Chapter 2, we focus on describing authentic literacy and the kinds of activities that might be considered authentic. Next, in Chapter 3 we provide practical suggestions for activities that might be implemented in an intergenerational authentic literacy program. We describe the ways in which literacy skills can be taught within the contexts of an authentic literacy program in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, we provide some logistical considerations that might need to be considered before beginning an intergenerational program.

We recognize that for those that are already familiar with family literacy programs, these considerations may not provide any new information. The focus in Chapter 6 is on ways to assess progress within an intergenerational authentic literacy program. We end with Chapter 7, a summary of our most significant recommendations. In Appendix B, we provide a detailed description of the two-year research study.

Vignettes, which represent moments of the Literacy for Life program from the teachers' field notes, serve to illustrate points throughout the handbook. Vignettes are denoted by italicized text and pseudonyms are used throughout.

Authentic Literacy Research and Literacy Theory

The model that informs Literacy for Life (LFL) reflects a sociocultural perspective wherein learning is seen as primarily social and contextualized in day-to-day life (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). The program is based upon research about effective adult literacy instruction that entails authentic literacy activities and research that indicates that children from high literacy use homes enter school with considerable knowledge about print that facilitates learning to read. For example, Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson and Soler, (2002) found that adult literacy instruction that involves students more in reading and writing real-life (authentic) texts for real-life purposes is related to students reading and writing more often, and reading and writing more complex texts (e.g., newspapers and magazines versus coupons and flyers).

Research in emergent literacy indicates that adults' literacy practices are connected to the literacy practices of their children. In a study of 20 low Socio-Economic Status homes, Purcell-Gates (1996) found that children who lived in homes where the parents read and wrote more often and read and wrote more complex texts began school with higher levels of emergent literacy knowledge such as knowledge about books and print and understanding that print carries meaning. This focus on frequency and type of engagement with authentic forms of reading and writing for authentic purposes is key to the program we implemented and is a core tenet of this handbook. Figure 1 graphically depicts this model.

Sociocultural Theory of Print-literacy Development

Begins in the Social Practice of Literacy

Cognitive Skills in Authentic Education Contexts

Results in the Social/Cultural Practice of Literacy
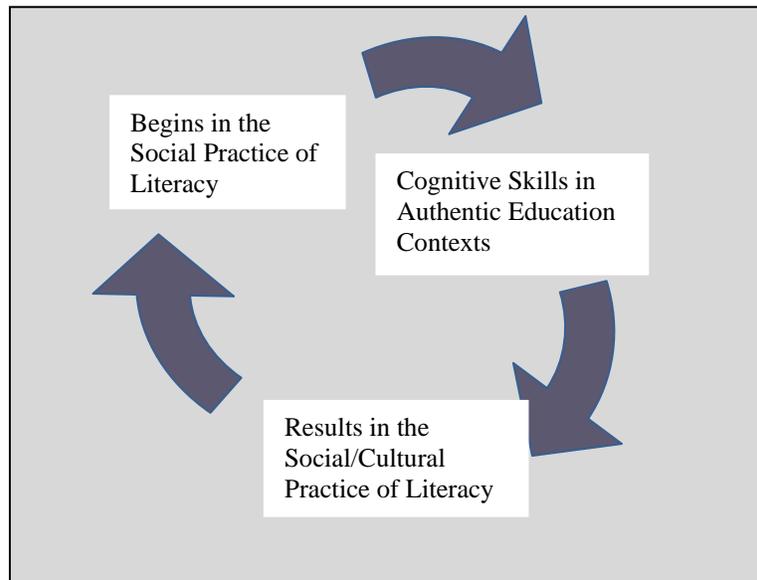
A Day at the Literacy for Life Program

The following vignette illustrates a typical session for the Literacy for Life project:

The teachers for the Early Literacy and Adult programs arrive early to set up for the day before the families arrive. The childcare worker, meanwhile, is setting up in another room.

At 12:00 noon parents start arriving, some carrying small children, some arriving with other families. As each family arrives, parents and children sign in. The parents stand next to their children while their children write their names. The parents write the date in the date box on the sign-in sheet after their children have signed in. While parents write the date, they refer to the calendar nearby.

Family Time Together

After parents and children had signed in, we started family time, which lasted for approximately twenty minutes.

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Texts from Home: We had asked parents to bring items related to Chinese New Year that had writing on them. All of the parents brought lucky money packets. I had them explain the concept of the packets and then we looked at the text on them. Some of the packets had Chinese characters only and some were bilingual. Most of them had Dong He Fat Choy in Chinese characters and some had it spelled phonetically in English.

Gina, a parent, had great fun repeating the phrase each time I picked up a new packet. I asked them if the direct translation of Dong He Fat Choy was Happy New Year. They said no, it was a wish for more money, better health, more happiness for the New Year but they weren't sure how exactly to say that. I introduced the word "prosperity" and they thought that could work. In the end, we all decided it meant Best Wishes for Prosperity and Happiness.

♦ ♦ ♦

Planning for Chinese New Year Activities: Next, I brought the calendar to the table and referred to it to show the date for Chinese New Year. I acknowledged the fact that the parents want to have a celebration during class on the 6th and told them that the other teacher and I were talking and thought that we could have food, do a craft project together, and do a writing activity together. I explained that we had found a website with some images of crafts and I asked if any of these looked like a good craft and that if we chose one or two, could the mothers work together to write out some instructions and a list of supplies. Together we decided on a frame using painted chopsticks and a hat.

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Birthdays on Calendar: I told Alice, one of the four-year-olds, that we hadn't yet added her birthday but wanted to be sure to do it. We did our usual run-through-the-months -

chant, naming each month starting with January until we got to the appropriate month for each of their birthdays. Each of the children wanted to see the place where their birthdays were written. We went through the calendar month by month and found each child's birthday.

I talked with parents about the fact that children learn the months of the year when they first start school and that pointing to the names of the months as we say them helps the children make the connection between spoken and written words. We added the following sentence to our notebooks, deciding to place it on the calendar page we had started earlier. [The parents and children had notebooks where they kept any reference materials, such as song lyrics, from the Family Time, which they might need again]

With parents, I talked about how we can look through the calendar with our children to find a date or event. We can start with January each time and say the months with our children as we turn the pages and point to the name of the month.

When Family Time together was over, the children stayed with one teacher in the same room while the parents went with the other teacher to a room nearby.

Early Literacy Instruction

When children were settled without parents, we started on the day's activities.

♦ ♦ ♦

Making Name Fridge Magnets*: Today we made another fridge magnet. We had done this in a previous session with children's first names. There were two purposes for this - we needed it to hold up the calendar we made on Friday and to help the children begin to learn to write their last names.*

I showed them the calendar from last time and suggested with a demonstration that it would stay on the fridge better with two magnets. The children sorted through a large pile of alphabet letters to find the letters of their first names. They did this independently. This was trickier for all of them this time.

Adult Literacy

Three parents were present today. Nobody knew where Anne was today. Joy had to do a shopping trip. She was intending to come but couldn't make it in time.

♦ ♦ ♦

Menu Planning: In order to plan for the [Chinese New Year] party, the parents wanted to write up a menu of who was going to bring which foods. Olivia was voted recorder as, apparently, she has the nicest writing. On a large piece of paper, she wrote the word 'menu' and all of our names beneath it. When we had decided who was bringing what, they wanted to call Joy to find out what she was going to bring. Olivia called her and put her on speakerphone.

After Joy explained why she couldn't come to class, we told her that we were doing up a menu and could she tell us which food she was bringing so we could add it to the list. She was unsure and said that she would tell us on Monday. Nobody had Anne's phone number so we couldn't call her.

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Reading Craft Instructions and Planning: We were only barely able to start this activity as the previous one had taken so much of the time. I told them that we had a list of supplies but we had to figure out, for the children, how to make the crafts. They looked at the pictures and chatted among themselves. On Monday, we will finish writing up the instructions.

Joanne thinks that, in May, we should all take a trip up to the university so they can see where we work. We had snacks and it was time to go meet the children and leave for the day. The vignettes above give the flavour of the kinds of activities that occurred during LFL sessions and the ways that the three components connected to each other and allowed for connections with new authentic literacy activities during subsequent sessions.

Instructional Model for an Intergenerational Authentic Literacy Program

Our model for intergenerational literacy instruction upon which this handbook is based includes three key components: adult instruction, early literacy instruction, and family-time instruction. This three-part approach is the most common model for family literacy programs (Purcell-Gates, 2000). In our two-year project, after some trial and error, we decided to begin each day with the family-time component. It is not common in family literacy programs to begin each session with family together time. More typical is to embed the family together time in the middle of each session or to use it as a wrap-up or concluding time. We elaborate more about how we came to this decision on page 23. Following family time, the parents and children separated into two groups for adult literacy instruction and early literacy instruction, respectively. Families attended the program two days a week for about two hours each day.

Organization of Activities during Intergenerational Literacy Sessions

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family time               →     early literacy
together instruction            instruction (child)
(parent + child)
                          →     adult literacy
                                instruction
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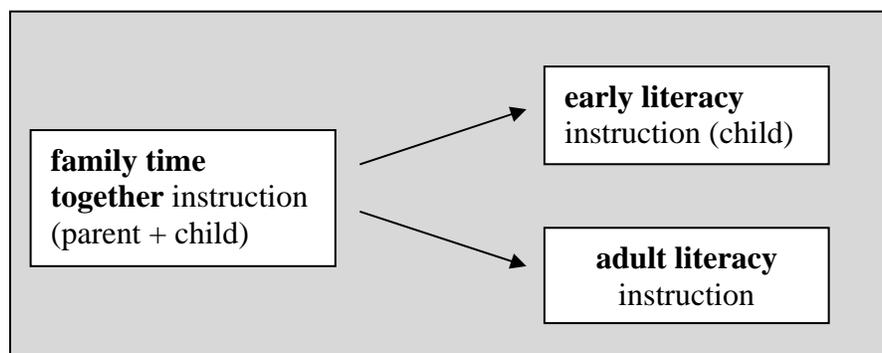
Based on what we learned in the two years we ran the Literacy for Life Program, in the section that follows, we begin to share ideas about how others might set up their own intergenerational literacy program.

Family Time Together Instruction

During this portion of each session, parents and children meet together with both the adult literacy teacher and the early literacy teacher. Both teachers work together to plan activities and take turns leading sessions. The primary purpose of the activities is to help parents to help their child in learning early literacy skills, in preparation for the expectations of school literacy. Teachers explicitly demonstrate for parents and explain to them the kinds of literacy skills and knowledge that Canadian Kindergarten children are expected to know and to do when they begin school. They also model age appropriate activities that will support children's knowledge and skill development.

Typical activities include learning to use scissors and pencils, and learning the names of colours, learning the letters of the alphabet, and counting to 10. Children and parents learn vocabulary for items of clothing and learn how to use household printed materials (e.g., cereal boxes) to learn about letters and print. Some of these activities are more authentic in that they help children and adults to understand print in their lives but, primarily, the activities in the family time focus on activities more similar to those practised in schools and early childhood education settings.

Early Literacy Instruction

During early literacy instruction, teachers provide activities that mirror the kinds of literacy practices that occur in high literacy use homes. In such homes, children learn many emergent literacy concepts that prepare them for the expectations for school literacy (Purcell-Gates, 1995). These emergent concepts reflect the essential notion that print *says something* and are learned in the contexts of meaningful activities in the day-to-day literate lives of families. Children engage in activities where they might talk about environmental print, make or receive greeting cards for special occasions, or follow written directions read aloud by the teacher as when making something from a recipe. In the early childhood literacy component of our program, children engage in these kinds of activities while also guided and encouraged by the teachers to talk about the purposes of print and texts in explicit ways. The focus is on authentic activities, with real-life texts for real-life purposes.

Adult Literacy Instruction

Adults in the LFL program also receive instruction using authentic literacy activities. Examples of authentic literacy activities for adults include reading and writing for real life purposes such as reading a menu to order food from a restaurant, reading stories for entertainment, or writing lists in order to go shopping. As part of this instruction, activities that focus more specifically on reading and writing skills are embedded in meaningful activities. Especially for adults who are not literate in their first language, some decontextualised instruction is needed, where, for example, adults learn to form

letters, make letter sounds, and practice their names and short sentences. Wherever possible, literacy instruction is derived from the lives and literacy worlds of the students. It is the combination of these three components that we Think is most productive in an inter-generational literacy program.

2 – Authentic Literacy

As was indicated earlier, we use "authentic" to describe real-life literacy activities for real-life purposes as, for example, learning how to read a recipe to bake cookies. The construct of authenticity is used to create literacy activities within the classroom context. *Authentic literacy activities*, as opposed to *school-only literacy instruction*, focus on creating literacy activities by using real-life texts for real-life purposes. This section is intended to help teachers devise authentic literacy activities. The aim behind creating these types of activities is to get students to use print intentionally to serve a purpose in their world. The role of the teacher in such a program then, is to encourage the intentional and authentic use of print.

Text and Purpose

In order to determine the extent to which an activity is authentic or not, each activity can be broken down into two dimensions: *Text* and *purpose*. An authentic text is any text used in real-life. For example, a recipe for cookies or a grocery store flyer is considered authentic because people use it outside of a school context. This contrasts with school-only texts like grammar handouts or word banks. These types of texts are not used outside of a classroom context.

Once it is determined whether the text is authentic or not, it is also essential to determine whether the purpose for using that text is authentic. A text would be used for an authentic purpose if the purpose for using the text were the same as it is in real-life. Again, let us take the case of a recipe. It is certainly a text used in real-life but the purpose for using that text might not be authentic.

For example, if I used a cookie recipe to make cookies, then the purpose is authentic. However, if I used a cookie recipe to learn how to spell cookie and not to actually make cookies in the end, then it would not be considered an authentic purpose. Cookie recipes are not used to learn how to spell cookie outside of a school context. Both the *text* and the *purpose* need to be authentic for an activity to be deemed authentic.

When determining the authenticity of literacy activities during planning, it can

be very useful to begin by breaking down activities by text and purpose as in the example above, when initially looking for authentic activities. We found that as we worked in the program, determining the authenticity of the activities eventually became second-nature.

At first, the teachers in the LFL program sometimes found it difficult to separate their purpose from their students' purpose. Remember that teachers are looking for activities that are authentic for their students and therefore the purpose needs to be authentic from their perspective.

> "The aim behind these types of activities is to get students to use print *intentionally* to serve a purpose in their world"

Having said that, it is imperative in the instruction of authentic literacy activities, that the students are aware of why they are doing the activity. For example, perhaps students are given the task of writing essays about their immigration experiences for the local newspaper that

is going to publish a series of stories about immigration written by people who are recent immigrants and refugees. If they are *not* told that the essays are going to be used in the newspaper in order to share their story with others, and then the purpose of the activity is

not authentic for the students, it is simply an essay that they are writing for school.

To reiterate, the activity should be authentic in the eyes of the students. The following tables display some other typical examples of authentic activities for adult, early childhood, and family time, respectively.

Discussion Question: What kinds of authentic literacy activities can you think of in your world?

Authentic Literacy Activities for Family Time

Vignette: As they were finishing the pages, I told the group that it would be time to clean up soon. Remembering our usual routine, Mei Ling began singing the Clean-up song quietly. I told them I had noticed when we were singing the song on other days that not everyone was sure of the words and suggested we use the songbook today to help everyone learn all of the words. I held each book up and asked the owner to identify him/herself. All of the children recognized their own names. I asked them to look for the Clean-up song. Mei Ling found it early and announced to everyone that it began with C. We sang the song a couple of times from the book with the children spontaneously pointing to the words.

Authentic Literacy Activities for Family Time

Activity	Text	Purpose
Singing a song together	Song lyrics	To remember the words to the song
Making a craft	Craft book instructions	To know steps needed to make the craft
Organizing songs with a table of contents	Table of contents	To find a song faster
Going on a scavenger hunt	Scavenger hunt list	To find the items on the list in order to play the game
Playing a board game	Game instructions	To play the game
Decorating for a birthday party	Birthday party banner	To wish the birthday girl "Happy Birthday"
Sharing favourite recipes	Recipe	To learn how to make new dishes

Authentic Literacy Activities for Early Literacy

Vignette: *As I was handing out the cookies, I held up the Teddy Graham package and asked if anyone knew what was inside. Someone said bears and pointed to the picture of the bear. William said he knew it said Snak Pak and pointed to the words. The other children then began looking for these words on their packages. Connie exclaimed, "I broke my words, I can't find it!" referring to her torn package.*

Authentic Literacy Activities for Early Literacy Programs

Activity	Text	Purpose
Going on an outdoor field trip	Note for moms	To tell the moms where they went so they won't worry
Drawing a picture	Name label	To know who drew each picture
Choosing a juice	Juice box label	To know what juice flavours to choose from
Celebrating a birthday	Birthday cards	To give to the birthday boy/girl
Taking artwork created in class home	Names on the artwork	To find who the artwork belongs to
Making a craft	Craft instructions	To know what steps are needed to make the craft
Making fruit kabobs	Recipe and ingredient labels	To know how to make the fruit kabobs
Choosing play dough to play with	Play dough labels	To choose the colour of play dough wanted
Making necklaces	Craft instructions	To know how to make the craft
Playing a game	Game instructions	To know the rules of the game
Choosing a book for story time	Story book titles	To know which story book they want
Choosing library books	Library computer database	To find a book

Authentic Literacy Activities for Adults

Vignette: Somehow, we got into a discussion about buying things online. None of the parents had purchased items online before but they were interested in doing so. They wanted to know more about how Ebay worked so I turned on the computers and taught them about this genre. They read the list of categories and suggested things to look up. I explained to them how to find the item, the price, how long it would be on auction and how to purchase.

Authentic Literacy Activities for an Adult Program

Activity	Text	Purpose
Online shopping	Website used for shopping	To be able to buy things online
Studying for a driver's test	Driving manual	To pass the driver's test
Playing a new board game	Game instructions	To know how to play the game
Finding an apartment to rent	Tenant application form	To apply for an apartment
Having a conversation	Dictionary	To know the meaning of a new word from the conversation
Reading about diets	Magazine article	To find out about the best diet
Sending someone a letter in the mail	Envelope address	To be able to send a letter to someone
Researching what type of diaper bags to buy	Internet search	To find information on the best diaper bags
Planning the schedule for the month	Calendar	To organize and remember important dates
Finding transportation downtown	Bus schedule	To find out what bus travels downtown
Learning the national anthem	Song lyrics	To be able to sing the words to the song
Studying for the citizenship exam test	Citizen Exam Study Booklet	To gain knowledge to pass the test

How to Create Authentic Activities

There are different ways that teachers can create authentic activities in a program such as Literacy for Life that emphasizes instruction through authentic literacy activities. Not all opportunities for authentic literacy activities will arise "naturally" and teachers can arrange and create opportunities for authentic activities.

For example, if the students are interested in learning the national anthem "O Canada" then the teacher could bring song lyrics (authentic text) so that the students could learn how to sing the song (authentic purpose). The context could also be slightly more contrived than this. For example, the teacher "pretends" to need to borrow the O Canada CD from a friend and for this reason, as a class they need to write this friend a letter asking to borrow the CD. A staged activity such as this is still authentic, if the students believe it is authentic.

One of the goals of a program employing authentic literacy activities for instructional purposes is using real-life print from the worlds of the learners. This means that activities undertaken in such a program do not tend to resemble the traditional notion of school. Adult learners generally have an already established idea of what "school" should look like. Some students might start asking for more school-type work because it fits their traditional image of learning. For example, they might demand worksheets and dictations.

Discussion Question: What might students be interested in learning that would serve them in their lives?

It is important that we help participants to see the advantages of such a program that focuses on authentic literacy activities but where skill instruction still occurs when learners need to learn these skills. Later, we discuss the importance of including skill

instruction in authentic activities. Our experiences suggest that once adults realize they are still learning skills and improving, they are better able to see the reason for authentic literacy activities as the focus of the instruction.

Another goal of the program is to help students to notice and become more aware of print in their worlds and to use print for real-life purposes. This is an important goal of an authentic literacy program, especially for young children. To help individuals notice print, a teacher must be pointing out print in their lives and explaining why it is useful. The Literacy for Life teachers described this as speaking aloud and constantly explaining what they were reading (or writing) and why.

An example of this might be during "snack time". If a student wanted orange juice rather than grape juice, the teacher would hold up two juice boxes and say something like, "I need to read the

labels on these two boxes to know which juice is grape and which is orange…oh yes, this box says orange (gesturing to the print) so this is the juice you want." This dialogue illustrates the explicit way the teacher needs to help students notice and use print in their lives; however, it is not the only way.

Gradually, the teacher will begin to ask more questions rather than give the answers. For example, "You want orange juice? How do we know which box is orange and which is grape?" Although perhaps strange at first, this became second nature to the teachers in the LFL program after a while.

Daily Opportunities

Vignette # 1 – Child*: As soon as we entered the room and started working on our projects, we were continually interrupted by the children on the playground. They would knock on the door and run away, make rude hand gestures through the windows, open and close the door, etc. The children couldn't see them because the windows were too high, but they certainly wondered what was going on. After repeatedly telling the children on the playground to stop, I said in an exasperated voice, "That's it! I'm mad and I am going to write a letter to the principal!" I grabbed a piece of paper and a pencil, and started writing:*

"Dear Principal…."

At this point, the children became very interested and started dictating to me:
"There are lots of kids who are knocking on the door and bothering us during class. We would like it to stop. Could you help us please? Thank you."
I signed my name, Aminah wrote hers and I wrote the others.
I folded it and wrote the principal's name on the front. I put it on the shelf to remember to mail it later, when we went to deliver Sam's letter.

Vignette # 2 – Adult*: Grace was upset because she had just hit another car in the parking lot. The owner of the other car was angry and asked for her insurance number. She was nervous about the process of dealing with ICBC. I decided to do a session on dealing with ICBC. I pretended to be the insurance agent and asked questions. Because Grace has very little English this process required some assistance from Susan. We worked together to put together a description of what had happened and I wrote out sentences that they copied down in their notebooks.*

As the two vignettes illustrate, "teachable moments" offer opportunities for authentic literacy activities in the day-to-day life of the class. The teacher will often find moments when print can be incorporated into naturally occurring classroom situations. For example, perhaps a student is trying to find the women's washroom. The teacher would then emphasize the signs on the doors (authentic text) so that the student can know which washroom is the right one to use (authentic purpose). Perhaps a parent mentions in class that she is looking for a new stroller. The teacher might take the opportunity to help her to read the listings (authentic text) online so that they can see what options that she has (authentic purpose).

Atmosphere of Inquiry

Vignette 1: *Today Debbie arrived early. She brought in a small version of a human rights poster that someone gave to her at a multi-cultural fair. She had questions about the meaning of the words: discrimination, eliminate, justice and equality. I went over each one with her, going over the pronunciation first and then explaining the meanings.*

To capitalize on these opportunities for authentic literacy activities, teachers need to be aware of their students' needs and desires. Teachers then can create an atmosphere of inquiry, where students feel comfortable asking questions and requesting help with various daily life tasks. In order to accomplish this, teachers can regularly request this information from their students.

A classroom culture of inquiry that leads to authentic activities helps with student engagement because the ideas are coming from the students. In order for this to happen, teachers need to create a climate in which students are

comfortable in routinely sharing their real lives so that the teacher becomes more aware of the lived literacy experiences of the participants.

It is important to know the community in which families live and to create a space for open dialogue, keeping in mind that this may be more difficult with groups who have limited English abilities. Even if students have difficulty expressing themselves in English, it is important to

learn as much as possible about their lives and the place of literacy before creating authentic activities for and/or with them.

> ### In Authentic Literacy Activities:
>
> ❖ Both the text and the purpose for using that text are used outside of school…in our real lives.
>
> ❖ An activity is authentic if the *student* believes it is authentic.
>
> ❖ Helping students notice and become more aware of print in their worlds is an important goal.
>
> ❖ The day-to-day life of the class will provide rich opportunities for authentic literacy activities.

3 – Model Activities for Authentic Literacy

In this section, we present some of the activities that we implemented during family time, early literacy instruction, and adult literacy instruction. It should be stressed that these are examples that were successful in the contexts in which we implemented Literacy for Life; they probably will need to be adjusted to fit other contexts. We also acknowledge that the activities that follow may be similar to those in many other family literacy programs. Again, our focus was to emphasize real-life print for real-life purposes wherever possible. In some cases, we have provided a lesson plan where it seemed appropriate. In other cases, we have let the examples speak for themselves. Note that

we also point out the materials, context, processes, extensions, and real-life purposes for these activities.

Family Time

During family time activities, when parents and children first entered the site for the day, the focus was on print-based activities that parents and children could engage in together. Wherever possible, these activities stemmed from participants' interests and events in their lives. The main purpose of family time was to help parents engage in activities with their children that would help prepare their children for the expectations they will meet when they enter Canadian schools.

Signing in, which involved parents and children practising their names in English, was an important routine at the beginning of every family time session. Often, parents and children engaged in planning for birthdays or for particular cultural celebrations such as Chinese New Year.

Parents and children played games together (often games that involved reading or writing or talking about print), learned about how to use and understand calendars, read and made books together, made crafts, sang songs, and talked. In the activities that follow, we start with a vignette and then a suggested activity.

Family Time	Activity 1	Celebrations
	Activity 2	Making Books
	Activity 3	Playing Games

Family Time – Activity 1

Celebrations – Example: Chinese New Year Party

[Over several sessions, we prepared for a Chinese New Year party. Most of the participants in this LFL group identified as Chinese.]

Mei and Janet (both parents) and children arrived early and helped with adding a few decorations and signs to the New Year bulletin board after the children signed in. I also left the calendar and some markers on the sign in table and invited the children to decorate the February page with pictures for Chinese New Year. Huan and Susan (children) added pictures of a pig and a rat. When they had finished, the other children had arrived and they all spent the next ten minutes before class started making New Year's drawings. June M. (child) drew not only the rat and the pig but also a monkey to symbolize the year that she was born.

I have been bringing articles on Chinese New Year (mostly about food) to the room and leaving them lying around. Last time Linda (a mom) picked it up and read it to herself before Family Time started.

As we started FT, I showed the group the Party Agenda I had written up. They read through it with me. One of the mothers laughingly commented on the food being last, saying that Mei was very hungry!

I showed them the article about Chinese New Year in today's <u>Vancouver Sun</u> and showed them the traditions listed. I read some of these traditions aloud. I noted which of the participants were wearing red. Some of them laughed when I read about [the tradition of] wearing red and said they had their red underwear on today. No one had been able to tell us the English name of the fruit considered lucky, I told them I had solved the mystery and showed them the place in the paper where it named Kumquats. I also referred to the little sign I had made and thanked them for helping me to be able to do that with the education they had been giving me about lunar New Year traditions.

REAL-LIFE TEXTS FOR REAL-LIFE PURPOSES: Participants engage in reading and writing *to celebrate and share traditions* that are integral to their lives with print forms that occur in these real-life contexts.

Planning: As was indicated earlier, it is important to become aware of the important events in the participants' lives. For the group in the excerpt above, Chinese heritage and an interest in the upcoming Chinese New Year united the group.

In other cases, teachers might plan a celebration for a birthday party, or possibly a multi-focus event where members share elements of celebrations from their particular backgrounds. For example, we celebrated birthday parties and traditional holidays.

If participants come from different cultural backgrounds, perhaps teachers could devise an event where participants share an aspect of their cultural heritage and invite family and community members. Consultation with the participants in these types of events is essential.

As is described in the example, it is sometimes advantageous and/or necessary to extend an event like this over several sessions; there are many possibilities for attention to print. For example, the group can plan the event, write to-do lists and letters, use phone books and postal services, write grocery lists and go shopping, walk through the neighbourhood to see what services might be used, create banners and cards for the event, and write thank you notes after the fact.

> Discussion Question: What type of party might occur in the lives of your students?

Materials:
➢ food (participants may be able to contribute
➢ Butcher paper, Bristol board (to make hats, decorations, banners...)
➢ markers, pens, pencils, crayons, coloured pencils
➢ Bristol board, Items such as hats, decorations, and banners
➢ newspapers, books (that connect to the planned event)

Process: Obviously, an upcoming holiday, feast, or festival that is important to the participants provides an ideal opportunity to engage in a range of authentic literacy activities. However, if no noteworthy event such as a holiday or birthday is occurring soon, conversations with participants may provide ideas for celebrations.

It is important to point out that while the activity or event is happening, it is important to bring attention to print for authentic reading and writing purposes, to extend the activities to related print activities and possibly, to follow up by introducing other connected sources of literacy materials.

As mentioned above, these events offer opportunities for introducing real-life print forms or genres such as letters, signs, and grocery flyers. Teachers can then draw attention to words, meanings, and modes of literate expression in the context of these real-life activities. For example, participants can explore the ways that meaning is embedded in the forms we use (i.e., letters, flyers) and in the various ways we use print (i.e., letter size, colour, graphics) for real-life purposes.

Family Time – Activity 2

Making Books: Examples: Weather books, Chinese New Year books

Weather books:

Following on the ongoing adult discussion (and challenge) about weather reporting, I told them we were going to make a weather book (dictionary). Because we would not have time to complete it in one class, we would do it over the course of a few weeks. I showed them the pages I had done, one paper with the sentence "Today it is snowing" and another paper with a snow scene. The other instruction asked the mothers if someone would volunteer to write the Chinese translation of the phrase underneath the English one. We posted these on the wall... [The weather book was re-visited during subsequent sessions.]

Discussion Question: What kinds of books might have an authentic purpose for the families in your program?

Chinese New Year books:

I reminded the families of the sentences we wrote last week and showed them the sheet where I had copied down the sentences they had chosen to use for the book. (At _____ house, s/he likes to _____ with her/his family for Chinese New Year.) We read the book together in unison. The parents pointed to the words for their children. On the second page, someone discovered a typo as we were reading and pointed it out. Pencils were handed out and a "to" was inserted. We read the rest of the book aloud together, pencils in hand and ready to fix any other typos. The first page required the characters for "gong hay fat choy" and the parents all added it in. I held the book up and asked what was missing from our book. It took a little while (the parents may not have understood my question) but finally Cindy said that it needed pictures. The parents all helped their children decide what to draw on the page.

REAL-LIFE TEXTS FOR REAL-LIFE PURPOSES: In the examples above, the activities have authentic literacy purposes in terms of learning about the weather or about important celebrations in people's lives. Although these activities have more of a school literacy form, they have an authentic purpose, which is to help parents help children to engage with print prior to going to school.

Planning: Although planning activities is obviously essential, it is also important to draw on opportunities that allow for elaboration on the experiences and interests of participants. Thus, it is important to have book-making materials such as those suggested below available to capture opportunities that arise in the day-to-day lives of the participants.

Materials:
➢ cardboard (cereal boxes make good book covers)
➢ paper
➢ scissors
➢ glue
➢ markers, pens, pencils, crayons, coloured pencils
➢ staplers
➢ magazines (to cut pictures from)

Process: Sometimes, it is appropriate to have blank books prepared ahead of time—with cardboard covers and plain paper in between. Alternatively, the teacher or facilitator can make books together with participants. It is also important to have models or examples of the type(s) of book(s) that the group will be making.

For example, if the group is going to make a recipe book, everyone could bring in examples of recipe books and discuss the attributes of this type of real-life texts (i.e., table of contents, index, abbreviations for measurements, book sub-sections, layout and organization of the recipes and so forth).

Family Time – Activity 3

Playing Games

Today we continued with our game theme [that we had] started on Monday in order to give the families opportunity to play games (such as Memory, Dora the Explorer) they had not played on Monday. To help sort families who had come Monday and those that had not, I handed out slips of paper and asked the parents to write, "We were here on Monday" or "We were not here on Monday" according to which category they fit into.

I then had them all stand up and sort themselves into groups, using only the writing [instructions for the games] on the slips (no talking). I reminded them to try to read the instructions aloud to their children and then discuss it with them in whichever language they were comfortable using. The parents seemed to follow this last instruction quite well and involved their children completely in the playing of the games.

[On another day] *I divided the parent/child duos into three different tables. I explained that we were going to play games today. I took out each of the three different games and asked if they could figure out which game it was by reading the box. When I held up the 'Memory' game, Huan and Janet said "Dora the Explorer" because her picture was on the front. I reoriented them to the game title at the top of the box. Once I had handed out the games, I explained that they were going to figure out how to play by reading the instructions. I held up the instruction sheet and explained its different parts, including 'Object' and 'How to Play'.*

I handed out the instruction sheets and they set about reading them. Sandra and I helped them out with the interpretation process. Sara and Amanda, in particular, were interested in the new vocabulary. They were unfamiliar with the word 'trolley' in place of 'shopping cart'. I explained that sometimes Canadians and Americans use different terms to describe the same things. Two of the three games (Shopping List and the ABC games) were over more quickly than was Memory. The groups playing the first two games rotated and, again, went through the process of reading the instructions and playing the game.

REAL-LIFE TEXTS FOR REAL-LIFE PURPOSES: Participants play games for authentic purposes such as enjoyment and building relationships, using print forms that make sense in that context – instructions and game cards.

Planning: Games in good condition are often available at thrift stores at very reasonable prices; alternatively, teachers might decide to have participants bring in games, or create games in class. It is important to take cues from participants about the kinds of games that will sustain their interest and provide opportunities for authentic uses of print.

Materials:
➢ board games
➢ cardboard
➢ paper
➢ scissors
➢ glue
➢ markers, pens, pencils, crayons, coloured pencils
➢ dice
➢ small objects to move on game boards

Process: As in the example above, we suggest starting with simple or familiar games. The teacher can play along and draw attention to print as everyone plays. Repeated sessions will allow the teacher to draw on the print elements of the games more as she or he observes what happens during initial sessions. For example, the teacher can talk about the rule sheets, the initial sounds of important elements of the game, familiar repeated words. In some cases, it might be preferable to make games, involving the participants to the greatest extent possible, and keeping in mind the interests of participants.

Early Literacy Instruction

In the early literacy component of the Literacy for Life program, the preschool children worked with a trained teacher for an hour immediately after the family time sessions with their parents or caregivers; during that hour, their parents worked with the adult literacy instructor in a separate classroom or area. We wanted to provide an age-appropriate pre-school program with an added focus on the ways that print facilitates and accompanies different activities. For example, play dough can be made by following a recipe; menus for snacks can be used to "order" food; letters can be written to complain about the lack of materials; and children's names can even be spelt with pretzels.

The early literacy component of the LFL program was not designed to teach the children to read and write. Rather, our goal was to provide the types of experiences with print that research has shown young children growing up in high-literacy-use homes have. We added a focus on modeling and talking about how print mediates ordinary life activities to encourage and support the children's development of early literacy knowledge and skills.

"Our goal was to provide the types of experiences with print that children growing up in high-literacy-use homes have"

Over the two years of the program, many interconnected activities, involving the use of reading and writing occurred, with one activity often inspired by a preceding one. For example, a neighbourhood walk led to a board game with "game text" on the board and a reconstruction of the neighbourhood through craft materials and included signs, logos, and other environmental print.

Consistently, the children were involved in producing meaningful print for the purposes of communicating messages to other people. They wrote or participated in composing thank you notes, emails, letters to the school administrator requesting changes to their play space and made and sent birthday cards, invitations, and get well cards. The teachers capitalized on authentic reasons for creating these texts (e.g., there was a birthday, they wanted a recycling bin) and taught concepts such as the names of the letters of the alphabet, spacing between words, and letter-sound correspondence, all in the context of these activities.

> **Discussion Question: What kinds of messages might children want to convey through print?**

Another prominent activity involved following instructions to make things. For example, children made play dough, followed recipes, and constructed kites, bubble blowers, puppets, and refrigerator magnets. While completing these projects with the children, the teachers emphasized and drew attention to the print children needed to follow instructions   As well as following recipes and creating cookbooks, children used print to organize plans for themselves and for others. They wrote planning lists, grocery lists, to-do lists, and menus for parties or celebrations they were having.

The children sang songs most days and developed their favourites that they sang repeatedly. These songs were usually printed in large text on butcher paper, again so that the teachers could point to the print as they and the children sang the songs. They engaged in environmental print walks, where the teacher drew their attention to signage, logos, notices, and other examples of outdoor print. They labelled objects, and talked about and read environmental print inside the building. Children wrote their own names, learned to recognize each other's names, and learned to use the library.

> **"The program was not designed to teach children to read and write…the focus is on modeling and talking about how print mediates ordinary life activities"**

Children and teachers made games when the need for games arose, and talked about the print on the objects they used in the classroom

such as food items. The children worked with play dough, did finger-painting, made and listened to books, played games, and used helper lists.

The activities that follow are based on specific lessons that occurred during our program and that can be used as ideas from which to start planning activities that are relevant to the children with whom each teacher works.

Early Literacy   Activity 1 Letter Writing
Activity 2 Writing Grocery Lists
Activity 3 Using Environmental Print

Early Literacy – Activity 1

Letter Writing

The children asked if we were going to go to the playground today. I said we couldn't because we weren't allowed [there was a sign saying "Private"] *but suggested that we write a letter to the principal of the school, stating we wanted to play there. We wrote the text together. As you can see, the text was the children's – they dictated, I wrote, and hence, the direct Yes/No question, and of course the only way to end any letter – Love.*

Dear Principal,

We want to play on your playground at your park. Could we please come and play?

> *Yes or No?*

> *Love,*

REAL-LIFE TEXTS FOR REAL-LIFE PURPOSES: Children write letters for real purposes, because they need to communicate something such as a request, a question, or a greeting.

Planning:

Children may have many reasons to write a letter, such as a special occasion in someone's life. As in the example above, occasions will arise where children have a concern that can be addressed through a letter (i.e., a problem with the classroom space, a question for a coordinator or a community member, a thank you for someone). It is important to be prepared to capitalize on opportunities that arise like the one described in the teacher's notes.

Materials:
- markers, pens, pencils, crayons, coloured pencils
- many sizes and types of paper
- stamps
- envelopes

Process:

When an opportunity for writing a letter occurs, the teacher can begin by talking about the problem (if this is the type of opportunity), what the children are concerned about, what they would like to happen or change, and so on. When the teacher feels that there is general agreement about what the letter needs to include, the discussion can turn to the elements of a letter as the teacher models writing it on a whiteboard or poster paper.

It is useful to have examples of actual letters, perhaps enlarged for students to view easily and to discuss. The teacher can point out elements of a letter such as the greeting, the ending, the date, and the punctuation for sentences and questions. It is best to do this *as* the teacher writes the letter, with the children contributing language and thoughts. Students can sign their names to the letter themselves, put the stamp on the envelope, and then walk together as a group to the nearest post office or letter box to mail the letter. This is also an opportunity to talk about addresses and return addresses.
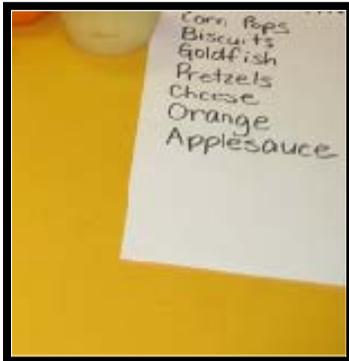
Early Literacy – Activity 2

Writing a Grocery List

Making shopping list for snack: We were low on snack supplies so we took inventory of what we had, and then made a list of what we needed and wanted. We gathered up our list, wrote a note to the mommies to tell them where we were going (because we didn't want to disturb them), left the note on the table and went shopping...and then...

Shopping trip: Once in the store, we consulted our list and went hunting for the foods we wanted. This was a print extravaganza. There was quite a fight over the type of juice we were to get, as I only would let them get REAL juice, NOT the Kool-aid type, so we had to use the print to find out what had real juice in it.

We also read packages and picked out cheese, but couldn't find the kind of crackers that we wanted on our list - the few that were on the shelf were not suitable, so we had to read the print and decide on another brand. We put our purchases on the counter, counted out our money and paid. We received the receipt and confirmed what we bought.

REAL-LIFE TEXTS FOR REAL-LIFE PURPOSES: Children create a list of what they need to buy so that when they get to the store, they will remember.

Planning: Again, it is important to be prepared to make lists for any shopping event. If possible, it is important to arrange to go shopping at that time or during the next

> "It is important to be explicit about the reason for making the list"

session. Lists can be made to plan an event, collect items, or for other reasons. As well, teachers can bring in examples of lists that they have used, as well as have participants bring in lists they have made as models.

Note that each shopping-list-writing event does not have to end in an actual shopping trip with the children. Often children will help to compose a shopping list and then entrust it with the teacher or an aide to actually go to the store and buy the items.

Materials:
➤ paper
➤ markers, pens, pencils, crayons, coloured pencils

Process: It is important to be explicit about the reason for making the list. Children should help to generate and write the list, wherever possible. On the way to the store, there are many opportunities for discussing print in the forms of street signs, shop signs, and various other meaningful examples of print. It is also important at times, to stop and focus on print (e.g., That's a STOP sign, Sidhu, the first letter in STOP is S, the same as in your name").

Upon arrival at the store, children can help to read labels, find items and cross items off the lists. While shopping, there are many possibilities for interacting with environmental print. For example, children can identify familiar brands and items, discuss prices of items, identify beginning letters and sounds of items, use flyers, and discuss larger signage within the store

Early Literacy – Activity 3

Using Environmental Print

I told the children that we would be going on a print walk. I began to read the graffiti that was on the apartment building wall that faced the school to the children. Then we walked around the grounds looking for print. When we walked over to the other side of the field, I noticed that there was some print on a sticker on the goal post so I stopped the children and pointed out the print and read it to them, explaining what it was and why it was there.

We continued our walk (very little print around) when suddenly Aminah went running towards the next field yelling "Miss Joanne! Look! I found a print!" Yes, indeed she had. We continued our walk looking for print, me pointing it out when they didn't see it and reading it out to them. Interesting how she classified (in this case) a sign as "a print."

[After neighbourhood walk] I showed the craft book I had found the project in and showed them the instructions for constructing the houses. Each girl made a house. Susan independently put her name on the back of her house. When we glued Susan's house to the painting, I made a point of being sorry that Susan's name would be covered up when we glued her house down. I asked if we should make a sign so that everyone would know it was her house. We drew/wrote a sign saying, "Susan's House" on the painting.

Then, of course, all of the girls wanted signs on their houses. Donna was flying a helicopter over the neighbourhood. I asked her if she wanted a landing pad for it...While they were playing with the mat, I showed Donna the photo we had taken last week of the stop sign outside and asked if we should make one for our neighbourhood. We did so together, with Donna doing the writing. Once again, not to be outdone by her friend, Susan asked to make a stop sign. Both girls copied the word "STOP" from an example I wrote on another piece of paper. We played a bit longer.

REAL-LIFE TEXTS FOR REAL-LIFE PURPOSES: In the context of going for a walk, the teacher draws children's attention to environmental print. Like many of our early literacy activities, we were concerned with preparing children for school. As an extension of this activity that combines elements of authentic literacy and school literacy, the children can use print in an imaginative activity where they create a neighbourhood.

Planning: When intending to use print in the environment as a teaching tool, it is important to become familiar with the neighbourhood and with the environmental texts that are available, and think about why people write them and read them. Take walks on the main streets and go inside local businesses. Teachers can also take photographs of the texts in their natural contexts, both to familiarize themselves with the area and to use in conversations and for teaching purposes later.

Materials:
➢ camera
➢ markers, pens, pencils, crayons, coloured pencils
➢ paper (to record instances of print)
➢ building materials (such as blocks)

Process: Teachers can take children on neighbourhood walks—exploring different areas at different times. Draw children's attention to print and its meanings and contexts. Children can often contribute to and initiate these discussions. Work in opportunities for the children to *use* these texts, e.g., stop at a stop sign until it is safe to cross, obey a 'Stay off the grass" sign, and so on. Store signs, road signs, street signs, and warning signs are all examples of print the group might see.

Teachers can also create opportunities for children to draw, write, and play with building materials such as blocks, following a walk like this. It is important to focus on the real-life purposes that environmental print serves.

Adult Literacy Instruction

During adult literacy instruction, LFL participants engaged in activities and tasks that helped them to develop their own competencies in reading and writing English texts. The adult literacy teachers encouraged parents who were at various levels in their literacy development to engage in whole group discussion about topics that were interesting to them such as use of the internet, issues related to their health and their children's health, and events in the news. Questions about grammatical or syntactic structure, usage and vocabulary often arose in the context of these discussions and were dealt with by the teacher through explanation, use of examples, and sometimes through direct instruction.

When the real-life occasions arose, adults learned to write thank you letters and get well cards. Sparked by an announcement in one of the local daily newspapers that the newspaper would publish immigrant stories, many participants engaged in writing about their journeys to Canada. They began with story starters that the teachers provided to support them. Adults made crafts and learned to read and follow instructions. They practiced listening to, and speaking English while they worked at activities and projects. We attempted to ensure that the needs and interests of the participants guided as many of the sessions as possible. Participants' interests, food labels, dieting plans, food guides, immunizations, and job interviews are examples of topics that arose.

As with all of the other activities presented here, these activities can be modified or applied in a range of ways, depending on the participants in different contexts. For example, individual or group letters or cards can be made, depending on the literacy levels of participants. Likewise, pairs of participants can work together to read brochures or plan for job interviews.

Adult Literacy	**Activity 1**	**Reading/Talking about Parenting Issues**
	Activity 2	**Reading Receipts**
	Activity 3	**Writing Personal Stories**

Adult Literacy – Activity 1

Reading/Talking about Parenting Issues

Getting your child to sleep*: This [issue] had come out of a conversation we had last week about how difficult some children are to get into bed. I [the teacher] said that, since I was about to become a new mom, I would need some advice on how to get a baby to sleep and that probably we would all benefit from each other's wisdom. I divided them into two groups and asked them to have a conversation on the topic and to write down their ideas. They discussed for a while and then started to write on the paper that I had given them. Periodically they would ask for words and I would write them on the blackboard. They copied them down on the paper.*

Linda and Alice came up with the ideas: Cuddle the baby, Turn off the lights, Make sure the baby has eaten enough. (I helped significantly with structure though they came up with most of the words.) Janet, Anna and Sue came up with: Say it's time to sleep, Read a story, Sing a song. They each took turns reading one of the phrases that they had written on their paper. I also explained that a song to help a baby sleep is often called a lullaby.

REAL-LIFE TEXTS FOR REAL-LIFE PURPOSES: Conversations about topics that are important to participants are a great starting point for reading and writing activities that connect with their daily lives. In addition to this conversation, participants can engage with magazines and newspapers—real-life texts, in order to find out more about the topic. The issue in this session just depicted had a real-life purpose—to share parenting ideas about how to get children to sleep.

Planning: Essentially**,** listen to participants' conversations and concerns and be prepared to find related print materials on the issues and/or concerns, or have participants find and bring to class print materials to share. If it is at all possible, classrooms should have an array of materials such as newspapers, magazines, books, brochures, computers, writing materials, booklets, and so forth that are appropriate for the particular participants with whom the teacher is working and which the students can access at will. Of course, it is also important that the teacher draw these to the participants' attention in authentic ways to the greatest extent possible.

Materials:
➢ magazines
➢ websites
➢ reference books
➢ writing materials: markers, pens, pencils

Process: Responding to participants' comments and discussion items with real-life reading and writing activities is what is often called 'a teachable moment'. Key to availing of teachable moments is an awareness oneself of how reading and writing mediate different life activities and issues. Learning to identify which text types are used by people for which purposes allows teachers to develop a 'text awareness' that can be drawn upon when teachable moments arise.

In the above example, the teacher paid attention to a topic of concern for parents, asked people to share their ideas in small groups and *to write them down*. Then they all shared the ideas with one another and told personal anecdotes.

On subsequent occasions, the teacher could revisit this topic, with suggestions for how to discover information on the topic, learn from 'experts', and so on. If possible, participants could search for information online in order to become aware of or comfortable with technology and digital texts. If they wish, participants, like those above for example, could create a parenting brochure that they would actually share with other parents.

Adult Literacy – Activity 2

Reading receipts

In response to our request for the students to tell us the types of literacy tasks they would like help with, or to learn, M___ reached into her purse and pulled out a fist of receipts. She reported that she was having trouble figuring out what to do with them. She has learned through trial and error that you needed to have one to return an item but she didn't know why or how the receipt related to returning things to stores. She had learned to save them, though!

We [both of the teachers and one of the university directors of the program] immediately looked in our purses for receipts as examples to use. We wrote on chart paper a 'model' of a receipt and named all of the parts, e.g., name of store, date of purchase, item bought, cost, tax, and so on. Then we handed out our receipts or each student used one of their own if it was available, and worked together to identify, and read, each of the elements.

As a part of this activity we described different purposes of receipts, e.g., the company keeps track of what has been sold so they can order more of that item if needed, the buyer can 'prove' that they bought the item so they can ask for their money back if they return it, and so on. We drew on everyone's experiences to think of the many ways that people use receipts and why. This focus on receipts continued over several days along with lessons on shopping flyers, which then led to coupons.

REAL-LIFE TEXTS FOR REAL-LIFE PURPOSES:

Spontaneous opportunities to talk about real-life texts often arise. In this case, participants were able to discuss forms of texts (i.e., receipts, and later, coupons) and the purposes for these texts that were important to them (i.e., how to proof and return purchases, how to save money).

Planning: To reiterate, it is important to be open to participants' concerns. Let them know that the program is intended to meet their literacy needs and participants will often generate their own suggestions for activities. In the above example, 'receipts' was the real-life text type and the participant needed to know what their purpose was.

Materials:

➤ real-life text examples

➤ writing tools

➤ paper or other space to record ideas

Process: In this case, participants generated a need for learning—what are receipts for and how do I read them. The teacher spent time describing elements of a receipt: date, item costs, taxes, banking card numbers, and other special information. This explanation was important in helping the participants learn what information was on the receipt and how the information was important. For example, the date of purchase is important because some stores only allow items to be returned for a refund within a relatively short time frame. The teacher and participants brought in receipts, the teacher recorded elements of these receipts, and the groups talked about their function. They elaborated on uses for the receipt as proof of purchase while at the store or, later on, if someone needs to return an item. And this literacy event is a good example of literacy instruction flowing from the needs of the participants.

Discussion Question: What type of text genres might the students in your program not have experience reading and writing?

Adult Literacy – Activity 3

Writing Personal Stories

Vancouver Sun story request: I brought out the Vancouver Sun article that requested immigrant stories. We read it together, each person taking a small paragraph. They told me the words that they didn't understand and I wrote them on the board and explained them. ('endless', 'stoked') I told them that we were going to do this as a writing assignment and, if they agreed, submit it to the newspaper. They looked nervous so I clarified that we would do it over the course of a few weeks. I talked a little bit about why I thought that the Sun might consider these stories important. To start, I asked them to talk a little bit about why they came to Canada. Janet said that she was the third generation to come. Her grandparents came first to work on the railway. They were discriminated against. They opened a restaurant but had to close it because it was seen as acceptable in white society to not pay in Chinese restaurants. They opened a grocery store and did quite well. Her parents came to Canada when they were married as did Janet and her husband.

To get them started on the story writing I wrote out sentence stems on the board for them to complete:
I came to Canada because _____ .
When I first got to Canada I noticed _____.
I felt _____ about living in a new country.
One story I tell people back home about Canada is _____ .

We reviewed the fact that when the readers read their stories they will better understand if there is no switching back and forth from the present to past tense. Anna read her story aloud and we dealt with some of the corrections. In her story, Anna wrote: "I felt lovely when I came to Canada because of the wonderful weather and nice people." This led into a discussion about Chinese culture – then and now. I made a chart on the board where we brainstormed things that used to happen in Chinese culture – the woman fed the family, cleaned up and then ate, boys were valued more than girls were – and the way things are now. I told them that we could possibly use some of these descriptions in their stories.

REAL-LIFE TEXTS FOR REAL-LIFE PURPOSES: In this activity, students write personal stories to share their ideas with real audiences—possibly their peers and a newspaper audience.

Planning: Participants may want to do some kind of personal sharing or writing after they have spent several sessions together. Be aware of sensitive issues, such as traumatic journeys from homelands to new places.

> **Materials:**
> ➢ pens or pencils
> ➢ word processors

Process: Some students may need another person to transcribe their ideas, some may express their stories in pictures, initially, and some may be able to write more independently. Talk prior to writing usually makes the writing a little easier. In order for the writing to be considered 'authentic' or 'real-life', students must set out from the beginning to share with real audiences beyond the teacher.

"Students *must* set out from the beginning with real audiences beyond the teacher."

As is evident in the description above, in LFL we recorded as much of the participants' talk as we could, such as writing down on large paper or the chalkboard, their ideas about what to write about. For young children and adults who have not had the opportunity to learn about print, writing down their words helps demonstrate the relationship between oral language or talk and writing.

4 - Skill Instruction

Vignette 1: We decided to embark on a process of labelling the photo albums they [the adults] *had created with their children. This process would help them understand that words went with pictures and that words had meaning. In order to assist them in writing, we would first go over the pictures and brainstorm some vocabulary that they might need.*

We went through each picture and I asked them to give me different words or sentences that would describe the picture. At first the sentences were only descriptive "The children decorated the cup cakes". After awhile, they became more interpretive "Joyce looks like she wants to eat the cupcake" or "Cynthia was not happy to play the game". Through this activity we worked on past tense- "held" is the past tense for "hold". We also worked on sentence structure.

♦ ♦ ♦

A misperception that teachers sometimes have when they start to learn about authentic literacy is that doing authentic activities means abandoning teaching the skills necessary to learn how to read and write. This is not the case. Teaching skills (such as recognizing the letters of the alphabet and verb tenses) is an important aspect of authentic literacy activities. The difference between traditional approaches to skill instruction and skill instruction in an authentic literacy framework is that skill instructions occur within authentic literacy instruction and is determined by the needs of the learner.

For example, perhaps some adult students want to know how to find out about the weather forecast from a newspaper. The teacher might bring in some newspapers for the students to read. As they are learning however, it might become apparent that much of the weather vocabulary used in the forecast is new to the students. For this reason, the teacher would need to help students develop meanings for the specialized vocabulary of weather reports.

Although this vocabulary instruction is in and of itself school-only, it is necessary in order to achieve the goal of learning how to read the forecast in a newspaper. That is to say, it occurs within the context of an authentic literacy activity and is not done as an isolated vocabulary lesson. Table 5 below gives more examples of skill teaching within an authentic literacy activity. Again, these are but some examples of embedded skill instruction. Many other skills will need to be taught within the context authentic literacy instruction.

In her authentic literacy handbook for teachers in Kindergarten to Grade 3, Purcell-Gates describes the ways in which authentic literacy can work together with skill instruction:

> Authentic literacy in the classroom does not preclude the systematic and explicit teaching of the skills and strategies that people need to learn in order to become fluent and effective readers and writers. Authentic literacy is not a full literacy program in itself. It is always meant to work alongside the intentional teaching of reading and writing skills to language learners. On the other hand, authentic literacy is not to be taken as 'supplementary' to literacy instruction, either. Literacy skills increase in concert with students' engagement with authentic reading and writing. In this way, it is instructional in itself (p. 120).

> "Skills teaching is an important aspect of authentic literacy activities"

However, it cannot be instructional by itself in that participating or engaging in literacy events and practices is not sufficient for most learners to become skilled, fluent readers and writers. Purcell-Gates emphasizes that "the effective literacy teacher must always include explicit and systematic teaching of skills in her instruction as needed by the learners with whom she is working" (p. 120). Purcell-Gates further explains that:

> systematic teaching of beginning reading and writing skills and strategies requires a "skills curriculum," and the ability to respond to teachable moments

requires a *deep knowledge* of which skills and strategies are required for which phases of literacy development (p. 123).

Later, in her handbook, Purcell-Gates points out the potential pitfall on using authentic literacy practice only in order to teach skills. She explains:

One of the challenges of using the embedded skills method for skills/authentic literacy teaching is the danger that the authentic literacy activity will become only 'practice' for the skill teaching. If this happens, the authentic aspect of the activity will be lost. With the loss of authenticity comes the loss of the benefit to students' growth that is related to authentic reading and writing. Teachers must be vigilant in maintaining their emphasis on the authentic literacy even while being strategic in choosing the skills and strategies to teach as part of and to support successful engagement in the authentic activity. This means that the students' real-life purposes for reading and writing should always come first. The embedded skills teaching should not drive or determine the lesson but should be part of the support structure that the teacher puts in place to help the students achieve their primary goal of using the text in the same ways that they are used in the world outside of a learning to read and write context (p. 139).

This balance between keeping authentic forms and purposes at the forefront, and using skills in the context of authentic literacy activities is crucial.

Authentic Activities with Skill Instruction

Activity	Text	Purpose	Embedded Skills
Class sign in	Attendance sheet	To provide information about attendance (i.e., name and date)	-How to write first and last names with capital letters -Writing the date
Mailing a letter	Envelope text (i.e., addresses)	To send a letter to the place you want it to go	-How to write out an address using the appropriate genre
Writing a 'letter to the editor'	Letter	To give an opinion about something	-Using modal verbs (should, would, could)
Reading a newspaper	Newspaper	To gain information on some topic	-Learning the vocabulary from the newspaper (for example, weather forecast vocabulary)
Writing Thank You cards	Thank you cards	To show someone you are thankful	-Learning different ways to say "Thank You"
Sending an email to someone	e-mail	To send a message online	-Different ways to start a letter. For example, "Dear…", "To Whom It May Concern"…etc.

Organizing for Different Student Ability Levels

Vignette: *I had the basic learners working on the alphabet. I asked Nema and Jung Suk to continue writing about their families for the brochure they were creating. After assigning these tasks, I worked with Nala and Marie. They showed me a big book on health and exercise. They said that they were working on losing weight, and that they would like to have help reading this type of information.*

One of the main challenges the teachers within the LFL program faced was accommodating students of different levels, especially in the adult program. In this section, we first attempt to give a sense of what authentic literacy activities look like when working with low-literacy level students and with high literacy level students and then provide some suggestions as to how a class might be managed while working with students of varying ability or skill levels.

Examples of Authentic Literacy Activities for Students from Varying Levels

Level	Activity	Text	Purpose
Lower	Class sign in	Attendance sheet to write name and date	To show that you attended the session
Lower	Reading a street sign	Sign	To know where to go
Lower	Labelling a container	Label	To remember what is inside
Intermediate	Making a cake	Recipe and food labels	To make the cake
Intermediate	Filling out a rental application	Application form	To apply for a place to live
Higher	Writing a letter to the editor	Letter	To express an opinion to the community
Higher	Writing a resume	Resume	To apply for a job
Higher	Creating a brochure about immigrating to Canada	Brochure	To provide other new Canadians with tips and advice for their transition

Strategies for Ability-Based Instruction

In classes where learners have a large range of reading and writing abilities, it can be challenging to manage different activities successfully and to provide authentic literacy experiences for everyone. Learning how to do this was an ongoing process in the LFL program, and there were certain techniques that we learned along the way:

❖ ***Group students roughly according to ability.*** Smaller work groups will allow the teacher to run different activities simultaneously without coordinating a large number of individual activities. For example, in a class with three different ability groups (beginning, intermediate, and advanced), the advanced group could be working on writing about their experience in immigrating to Canada (with the purpose of creating a brochure).

Meanwhile, the intermediate group may be working on how to write about their experience in immigrating to Canada by learning "feeling" words needed to write simple sentences that described their experience. The beginning group might still be working on the alphabet. The purpose or even the theme for each group can be the same, but the tasks are different. On the other hand, all three groups may not be working on the same theme as different groups might have different needs.

❖ ***Incorporate tools that help students become more self-sufficient in class and in their learning overall****.* A teacher cannot be working with all groups at once and tools such as these below were found to be effective in the LFL program in helping teachers to instruct the different groups. For example, more advanced students might use dictionaries to answer questions they have about vocabulary or to assist with spelling, and beginning students might have electronic alphabet devices to allow them to hear the words of the alphabet and practice on their own.

Authentic Literacy as a Solution

Interestingly, what we found consistently through the LFL program was that using authentic literacy was a way to respond to some of the challenges faced.

For example:

❖ When the families were not able to grasp what the intention was of family time, the teachers responded by pulling out and referring to the recruitment brochures we had designed with clear, easy language that explained the concept.

❖ When the early literacy program teachers were having difficulties getting the children to follow the rules surrounding the classroom behaviour, after they had discussed appropriate and inappropriate behaviour with the children, they constructed with the children and then posted appropriately sized signs with simple reminder messages (For example, "Don't hit" and "Share").

❖ To take into consideration the various dietary restrictions of some of the participants, the class created grocery lists together with the teachers that could be used to buy food for the program.

These are just a few of the examples in which the LFL teachers used authentic literacy activities as a response to the challenges they faced. Importantly, the use of authentic literacy activities did not surface as a challenge itself in the context of the LFL program but as a way to resolve them.

> Discussion Question: What challenges have you (or might you) face in a literacy program? How could you create an authentic literacy activity as part of the solution?

5 - Practical Considerations when Implementing an Intergenerational Literacy Project

- **Teachers**
- **Establishing Routines**
- **Childcare**
- **Family Time**
- **Program Purpose and Participant Goals**
- **Materials**
- **No Shared Language**

Teachers

Teachers are fundamental to the success of any program and programs like LFL are no different. They should be chosen carefully and substantial time and energy needs to be invested in their training. Finding teachers who are fully trained in authentic literacy instruction is not likely and therefore authentic literacy will be a focus of the training (authentic literacy and the teacher role will be described in more detail later).

Intergenerational programs are unique because of the need for qualified early childhood teachers and adult literacy teachers who will be working closely together in the different components of the program. For the program to be most effective, it is essential that teachers are trained in early childhood literacy and in adult literacy, respectively.

Teacher Development

Learning how to teach literacy through authentic reading and writing activities requires ample time. Few teachers understand all of the elements required for an authentic literacy program. In the case of the LFL program, the preparation for implementation included teacher training.

For example, before the participants were recruited, we were already discussing what the agenda for the first day of the program might look like. To ensure ongoing teacher training and development, we held weekly meetings. The first hour was spent on logistics and attending to issues and concerns that arose, and the second hour focused on teacher development.

looks like in practice, and by the end, focused on specific ideas and a structure for our program, including lesson planning.

In the case of early childhood literacy instruction, it became apparent to us that the teachers need to be skilled in a range of areas.

These skills include classroom management while working with three- and four-year-old children who have not had prior experiences in a formal educational setting, learning and attending to the cultural nuances of immigrant and refugee families, and helping each child to attend to and explore print in their world through authentic activities.

> "It is essential that teachers are trained in early childhood literacy and in adult literacy, respectively"

The teacher development component began with learning the theory behind authentic literacy, moving into what it

In addition to understanding adult learning and instruction, adult literacy teachers need to have a solid grasp of literacy development for learners who are at the beginning literacy stages with little or no knowledge of print, as well as learners who want to read and write more advanced texts. In the LFL program, we worked with non-schooled adults who had virtually no knowledge of print in English or their first language, learners who were at an intermediate level in their literacy development, and learners who were quite advanced in reading and writing in their first language and who wanted to improve their reading and writing in English.

Meeting the needs of this diverse group was quite challenging and we believe it is essential that teachers who work in programs such as LFL have knowledge and expertise in literacy teaching and learning in age appropriate and developmentally appropriate ways.

Teacher Support

Our experiences suggest that teachers will need ongoing support, from each other and from administrators, throughout the program. In the LFL program, teachers needed to be constantly debriefing, and planning together to solve problems. For some teachers, providing a program based on authentic literacy will be new.

In the LFL program, it became easier for the teachers to plan for authentic literacy activities as they gained experience, but they indicated that their understanding continued to expand over the two years. To provide ongoing support for the teachers over the two-year pilot phase, we held weekly meetings in which we debriefed what had been happening in the classes at each site, problem solving and addressing issues as we went. For example, we dealt with logistical issues such as the lack of space and resources, attendance issues and so forth.

Cultural understanding (and misunderstanding) was an issue that we discussed constantly, as was the issue

of authenticity of the activities. The teachers kept records of each session, which were then circulated to everyone involved in the program on a weekly basis via a listserv.

This was an effective way to discuss new issues while documenting the implementation of the program and dealing with issues that arose. It also allowed other members of the LFL team to respond with possible solutions as the issues came up.

Of course, we were implementing the program as part of a research project and busy teachers probably would not

> Regular meeting and notes on the program sessions were effective for debriefing, learning, planning, and problem-solving.

be able to sustain the level and intensity of reflection that we did. Nevertheless, the methods we used to promote reflection, to share ideas, and to solve problems, are workable, perhaps with some modification, in most contexts or situations.

Establishing Routines

It can be challenging to visualize what an actual program will look like day to day. Indeed, because the program will in many ways be framed by the social and cultural context in which it will be provided, planning is necessarily contingent. This section is intended to help envision what the skeleton of a program might look like.

The LFL program ran two-hour sessions twice a week. Perhaps as is typical of many literacy programs, the families requested that we meet more frequently and for longer classes. However, because of logistical and financial restraints, we were unable to do this, and we explained our inability to extend or expand the program to the participants.

In the table below, we provide an outline of the structure that we used; we believe it to be a workable model that can be used in other communities. Nevertheless, this schedule may need to be adjusted and indeed may look different from one site to another. We spent a great deal of time adjusting the schedule to the needs of the participants and to what the teachers felt worked best.

For example, "Family Time" was originally scheduled at the end of the two-hour session. The Family Time proved to be less disruptive to the flow of the day when it was scheduled at the beginning. This was adjusted so that parents and children did not see Family Time as wrap-up or wind-up time, but rather as an integral component of the program and not just an add-on.

Typical Two-hour LFL Session

Time	Activity	Description
12:00–12:05	Sign-in	Families arrived and as they did, the adults and children were expected to 'sign-in'. This was a way to keep track of attendance and also to incorporate functional and purposeful literacy into the routine. Children under the age of three go with the childcare provider.
12:05– 12:25	Family Time	Parents and children are engaged in activities together.
12:30-2:00	Separate Parent and Child Time	Parents and children go to their respective classrooms. The adult teacher works with the parents and the early childhood teacher works with the children.

Snack time was separate and at the discretion of each teacher. |
| 2:00 | Finish time | Parents and children are reunited, the childcare worker returns the youngest children to their parents, and the session ends. |

A few elements to keep in mind:

❖ *Flexibility is important.* When we commenced the program, some families arrived 45 minutes to one hour late. Cognizant of different cultural conventions around time and notions of what it means to participate in the program, the teachers reinforced in a sensitive and non-punitive manner, the importance of arriving on time and for the most part, families quickly learned to do so.

❖ *Be prepared to have a different group of learners each week for the first while.* A colleague once said that participants in literacy programs "vote with their feet" and if the program does not meet their needs, they will not come back.

We experienced the typical turnover initially but eventually, a core group of families who wanted to participate was established. Of course, such turnover creates challenges in terms of establishing routines and expectations for the teacher. However, it is a reality that we need

to come to expect and accept in literacy programs such as LFL.

❖ *Make expectations and rules explicit.* Certain rules and expectations were established in the LFL program to help maintain the integrity of the program. For example, we required that parents bring their children with them to each session and that parents also stay for each session, barring illness or some other legitimate reason. Because LFL was being funded as an *intergenerational* program, we felt morally obligated to ensure that this aspect of the program was maintained

Some of the three- to five-year-olds we worked with had great difficulty separating from their parents. Because of the intergenerational focus of the program and its emphasis on adult literacy and early literacy, we found it necessary to expect children to be able to separate from their parents without too much anxiety so that each group could avail of the respective instruction. We were unsure whether this issue

arose because the children were not developmentally ready to separate or because of cultural differences in parenting and child rearing practices.

Nevertheless, because of the disruption that these difficult transitions were causing both in the early literacy classroom and the adult literacy classroom, we found it necessary to ensure this expectation was met. Likely, expectations will vary from one context to another as issues arise and it is

especially important to discuss and explain expectations and rules to the participants.

It is important to emphasize that a certain amount of flexibility and adaptability is essential in literacy programs; too many rules and too much rigidity, we believe, will mean that participants will simply not attend. Of course, co-constructing expectations and rules with the participants is an excellent authentic literacy experience.

Childcare

The program will most likely be taking place on weekdays, during the day. Logistically, this is effective because older children are at school. In the case of LFL, children between three and five years old and not at school qualified for the program. However, children under the age of three years old did not qualify for the program because they were not developmentally ready for it.

Parents attending the program will need a place for their young children and infants to go while they are attending the program. The LFL program found that childcare for these children was

Discussion Question: How will children who do not qualify for the program be accommodated?

fundamental to the successful recruitment of participants to the program. The families participating are not likely to have the extra resources in order to find childcare on their own for the length of the program and this can become a major barrier to participation.

The LFL program was fortunate in that our host partners at each site provided childcare as their contribution to the program.

A few things to consider in looking for childcare:

❖ **What is the parent-child ratio?** Having an appropriate adult/child ratio is an important consideration for the safety of the children as well as the realistic workload of the childcare providers. There may only be a small number of parents, but if they each have more than one child under the age of three, then there may be a need for more childcare providers than first imagined.

❖ **Is there a space for the childcare?** Securing an appropriate space, suitably equipped for childcare should be a central consideration when establishing a site. As mentioned in the previous section on sites, a location not too distant from where the adult literacy instruction is taking place is ideal and something to consider.

❖ **Will the childcare provider be reliable?** A challenge at one of the sites in the LFL program was finding a dependable childcare provider who

we were certain would be there on time, every program day. Furthermore, the childcare worker must be flexible and understand the diverse needs of families. As was the case of some of the families in the LFL program, some families may not have had experiences having their children in formal childcare settings and were unaware of expectations such as bringing along a change of clothing for toddlers or arriving at the childcare setting on time. Without dependable and consistent childcare services, it becomes almost impossible to run this kind of program effectively.

❖ **What is an acceptable age for the early literacy program?** For developmental reasons, we made the decision that we would not be able to accommodate children under age three in the early childhood literacy program; these toddlers would be much better served in the supervised childcare that was being

provided. The parents, however, were not entirely convinced that their children under the ages of three years should not be allowed to participate in the early literacy program.

There were several instances where parents pressured the early literacy teachers to enrol their young children in the early literacy program. In other cases, toddlers would attempt to join the early literacy class from the adjoining childcare space and parents were sometimes quite reticent in helping us have the child return to the childcare space. But cognizant of the needs and abilities of toddlers and wanting to ensure that they received age appropriate childcare and that the four- and five-year-olds were able to benefit from the early literacy program to the greatest extent possible, we held firm.

Family Time

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges we faced in the LFL program was in Family Time, which is often promoted as an essential component of family literacy programs (e.g., Center for Family Literacy, 2009). From the onset of the programs, we dealt with a constant stream of Family Time 'issues'. The root of the Family Time difficulties seemed to be cultural in nature.

In the LFL program, it was quickly apparent that parent/child together time is a culturally-based concept constructed essentially around middle class, Eurocentric conceptions of family, childcare and parenting.

As we worked with the families, it became apparent that many of the assumptions undergirding family time in family literacy programs were very different from those held by the participants. As a result, teachers and parents saw different goals for Family Time and this manifested differently in each of the two sites.

For example, in one site, the parents indicated that they wanted more adult-only instruction and they saw the Family Time as taking away from the time available to them without their children. In another site, parents tended to complete the work for their children, instead of engaging them in the activity.

We hypothesized a few reasons for this:

> "It became apparent that many of the assumptions undergirding 'family time' in family literacy programs were very different from those held by the participants"

Again, it may have been that parents were challenged by the activity alone and were not at a point where they were able to complete the activity all the while engaging their child and helping their child with the activity. It also may have simply been that engaging in such Family Time activities was a foreign cultural concept not within the parenting practices to which they were accustomed.

In the context of the LFL programs, we constantly needed to make adjustments to Family Time. As we began to take

into account the cultural differences, we began to make changes to reflect the needs of the particular groups.

For example, we decided to shorten Family Time in the site where the parents said that it was taking time away from the adult literacy instruction. Their literacy levels were particularly low and it was agreed that a good use of their time would be in developing their own skills. We also increasingly became culturally aware of the types of parent/child interactions that were commonplace and adjusted Family Time to reflect that. Parents in some cultures might not normally engage in making crafts with their children. Other parents might have high expectations for perfection in early attempts at creating print texts.

We also took the stance of sharing with the parents the types of things that would be expected from their children once they entered the Canadian school system in terms of using a calendar for following along a picture storybook, for example. In essence, the solution to Family Time lay in a bi-directional approach. That is, the teachers had to strike a balance between drawing on the

cultural practices of the families while providing the knowledge and skills they saw as culturally relevant to children's transition to school in Canada.

Kate Pahl and Sally Kelly (2005) describe such negotiation and accommodation in Family Literacy programs as creating a "third space" in that practices from home and school are amalgamated, to the benefit of all. In order to remain flexible, teachers can also make modifications such as

progressing at a slower pace than originally intended, engaging in discussion about cultural differences in how parents might initiate children into school, or making their goals for having children and adults interact with print and texts more explicit.

> Discussion Question: What conceptions of family, child care, and parenting might the families in your program hold?

There were also a few key issues surrounding parents and children that are worth mentioning:

❖ *Parent/child combinations*: An underlying assumption of the LFL program is that children learn literacy as they engage in different literacy practices with parents and significant others in their daily lives. Thus, we required that adult-child dyads include at least one three- to five-year-old child and an adult who played a significant role in the child's life and spent considerable time with the child daily.

However, adults regularly showed up with children who were not their own. Parents who were caregivers for children other than their own had no choice but to bring them to the program as well.

We made the decision to broaden our notion of 'family' and, considering that these adults spent a significant amount of time with these children outside the program, it would be acceptable within the context of our LFL programs for these children to attend.

However, we also made the decision that an adult could not bring along a neighbour's child, unless he or she was spending a considerable portion of each day with that child. Of course, this decision, like all of the decisions here, is context specific and these types of decisions need to be made in a case-by-case manner.

❖ ***Parent/child separation:*** The adult literacy and early childhood literacy portions of the sessions naturally entail the parents and children going their separate ways for the length of the session. At both LFL program sites, there were regular struggles at this transition point when children were unable, unwilling or incredibly reluctant to leave their parents.

Although a certain amount of difficulty was expected at the beginning of the program, in certain circumstances and with certain families, it seemed to be more marked. Some children, for example, seemed to have had little experience separating from their mothers. What resulted was that energy was drawn away from the instruction time for all participants.

This challenge could be alleviated with more staff support and perhaps, better equipped, more inviting childcare spaces. However, these resources were not available in the case of our programs.

Program Purpose and Participant Goals

Participants did not always have the same reasons for attending the program that we had in providing the program. This was evident over the course of the program. The LFL program was designed to meet the needs of parents who had limited opportunities to learn to read and write in their first language. The program attracted participants who met these requirements and other participants who did not. Some parents were clearly highly literate in English and were attracted to the program for the sake of enriching the literacy experiences of their children.

Other participants were drawn to the program primarily for social reasons, perhaps because their friends were attending or they were interested in meeting new people. Other parents attended the program to increase their own literacy levels and as was discussed earlier, did not see the relevance or importance of the early childhood literacy component. Obviously, this latter group of parents tended to be highly focused on their own learning and less oriented towards developing their child's literacy.

Issues and conflict sometimes arose when participants did not see the relevance of aspects of the program that we considered important. For example, the parents who were primarily there to improve their own English literacy skills showed clear signs of resenting family time. They tended to view it as taking away from their instruction time. For the parents who were primarily attending for the sake of their children, they tended to lack focus and motivation in the adult instruction time. This oftentimes acted as a distraction for the entire adult literacy class.

The LFL program responded to these program-purpose conflicts in two ways.

First, we tried to be more explicit about the nature of the program, its expectations, and the learners for whom it was intended, suggesting alternative programs when it was clear that we did not have the capacity nor the resources to meet the particular needs of individuals that we saw as lying outside our mandate.

Second, we responded by adjusting the program when it was possible and necessary, without violating the fidelity or integrity of the program. For example, as we explained before, the family time was shortened to accommodate the adults at one of the sites who felt that their needs were better met by the adult literacy component. But to reiterate, we were being funded to provide an *intergenerational* literacy program and we felt legally and morally responsible to do so.

Materials

In an authentic literacy program, the teacher will use fewer funds for school-only materials because the focus will be on gathering real-life materials such as brochures and newspaper flyers which are generally free. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have access to some funds for materials and resources.

Both the early literacy program and the childcare program will need materials in order to run. The necessary materials range from pencils to toys and books. If the teacher is fortunate enough to have a site that is well equipped for children, then the task will be much less difficult. If not, then this will be an important consideration.

Some of the materials that our early literacy program teachers needed:

- ❖ Basic stationary: Rolls of paper, pencils, crayons, felt pens, child-friendly scissors, wipes, hand sanitizer, water cups, paints, construction paper.

- ❖ Other: Books, alphabet poster, large storage containers, child-sized tables, and chairs.

The adult literacy program also had access to the following materials:

- ❖ Basic stationary: Pens, pencils, paper

- ❖ Dictionary, thesaurus

- ❖ Other: Computers, tables, chairs,

Include many literacy materials, from a wide range of contexts and in many forms, in the literacy program environment.

> Discussion Question: Does your program site come equipped with the proper furniture, toys and other materials? If not, where will you get them?

No Shared Language

All of the families that were drawn to our programs had immigrated to Canada or had come as refugees. Many of them spoke little or no English. This was not expected as we had envisioned attracting adults with low literacy levels but whose first language was English. That most of the participants spoke

English as a second language presented a specific set of challenges because there was no shared language with which to communicate. This challenge was two-fold. Not only did the participants and teachers have difficulties communicating, but in the case of one of the sites where several languages were spoken, the participants also had challenges communicating with each other.

Because we had originally had envisioned working with adults with low-English literacy skills, we had not budgeted for translators and so we were forced to improvise. Because it is likely that the participants in any literacy program will come from different cultural and linguistic groups and will not only be looking to increase their literacy skills but their oral English language skills as well.

Therefore, program providers planning a program such as LFL should consider the need for translators and for English as a Second or Additional language instruction.

As indicated, we attempted to deal with the challenges of no shared language in a number of ways. First, translators were sourced from various places and, at times, multicultural workers or research assistants pitched in. Typically, we availed of these translators at key points in the program when we found them to be essential. Whenever possible, translators were called upon in giving and receiving critical information from participants who could not communicate it themselves (i.e., research related consent forms, administration of tests, etc.).

When we did not have access to translators who could speak the languages of all of the participants, we usually tried to use what might be called a 'chain translation' system. That is, the translator would translate from English to the students who could understand.

Then, students who understood would translate to any other students in the class with whom they shared a common language. This improvisation, of course, was less than ideal in some ways, but given our lack of resources, it was one way of attempting to include everyone in the instruction and conversation.

6 - Assessing an Intergenerational Literacy Project

The LFL program was part of a pilot study and as such, we spent a substantial amount of time exploring and finally choosing appropriate assessments. Assessment was important to us so that we could demonstrate the impact of the program and document improvement in the literacy abilities of the participants. Clearly, these assessment results are important for the pilot study, but they are also important to record for the sake of retaining future funding for the program. If we were to continue the program, any future stakeholders would want to see evidence to indicate that funding the program is worthwhile.

Of course, we recognized that literacy program administrators and teachers will be guided by their reasons for assessment in deciding on the form of assessment that they use.

Assessment can take many different forms, ranging from quite formal and structured, to more informal and unstructured. In the LFL program, we used a variety of techniques across the continuum of formality. In the tables that follow, we describe both formal and informal types of assessment that can be used to measure literacy achievement of children, adults, and the whole program, respectively.

We found that different methods of assessment served different purposes for our program. For example, in the tables, we also indicate some of the advantages and disadvantages we found in the assessment process. Alongside the assessments used in our programs, we refer to examples of other measurement techniques that may be of use for the purposes of the program.

> "Assessments can take many different forms, ranging from quite formal and structured, to more informal and unstructured"

Strategies for Choosing Appropriate Assessments

❖ *How much does the assessment tool or test cost?:* Standardized assessments can be useful because they are usually backed by research that suggests that the results that you get are reliable and trustworthy. A major drawback to many of these types of tests is their cost, and in some cases, their ecological validity. These were factors that we considered and struggled with in the LFL program and are certainly things for any program to consider when deciding whether to use standardized tests or instruments.

❖ *What are the literacy levels of the participants?:* A major challenge we experienced in the LFL program was in not having an appropriate measure for the adults who were at the early stages of learning to read and to write. We could find no appropriate measure or test for that group.

❖ *Consider using different forms and strategies of assessment:*

Different assessments tools and techniques will measure different aspects of literacy development and program development. It is perhaps unrealistic to expect to find one assessment that will answer all questions. Also, there will certainly be hiccups in the assessment process. For example, some students will be absent on the assessment day. Again, flexibility is important.

❖ *Take participants into consideration:* In the LFL program, we had some participants who had not been in a testing situation in a very long time and in some cases, the participants had never been to school and had never taken a test. It might therefore be necessary to prepare students for test-taking, which is an authentic literacy activity. Furthermore, it will likely be counterproductive to assess participants before there has been sufficient time to build rapport and establish trust with them.

Thus, we recommend against conducting any formal assessment in the initial meetings, the first or even the second day they attend the program. In the LFL program, we made it a policy to wait until the third session that participants had attended before we did any formal assessment with them.

In the LFL program, we employed a variety of techniques to assess our program: A combination of standardized tests, meeting notes, teacher notes, artefacts, and interviews. Certainly, as mentioned above, it will depend on the group of students within each program and what the teacher is planning to assess. The following tables (Tables 7, 8, and 9) are designed to provide a sample of the types of assessment techniques that could be used.

Adult Assessment Options in an Authentic Literacy Program

Assessment	Description	Measures	Pros	Cons
Standardized Achievement Tests Examples: -Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) -Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)	These are formal assessments that can be given to students at the beginning and end of the program. (See Campbell, 2007 for more details.)	Test format	-Norm-referenced in Canada with immigrants and English language learners included. -Objective measure of change. -Easy to administer.	-Can be expensive. -Not always appropriate for adults with very low levels of literacy.
Competency-based Assessments Examples: -Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) -Common Assessment of Basic Skills (CABS)	Students are asked to demonstrate competency within a realistic context. (See Campbell, 2007 for more information on competency-based assessment.)	Prompted tasks based in reality	-Wide variety of styles to choose, from standardized and formal, to individualized and informal. -Great way to ensure that students can actually use their skills to complete a task rather than simply write a test.	-Competency defined in a variety of ways depending on the test. It might be a challenge to find an assessment that measures competency for your specific purposes.
Performance Assessments	Practice-based assessments that are woven seamlessly into classroom activities. (See Campbell, 2007.)	Can take many forms, but are generally activities related to recent learning and student experiences. For example, presentations, writing samples, peer teaching.	-Exceptional way to alleviate the stress of test-taking that is so common in adult learners.	-Generally developed by the teacher which can be time consuming. -Not normed on broader populations which makes it hard for comparisons.
Focus Group	In our program, this was an informal focus group to get feedback on the program from the participants.	Interview	-Non-threatening form of assessment. -All you need is someone to ask questions and a recording device.	-Difficult to get fully formed opinions and feedback from the adults with the lowest English levels.

Child Assessment Options in an Authentic Literacy Program

Assessment	Description	Measures	Pros	Cons
Standardized Achievement Tests -Test of Early Reading Ability III (TERA III) -The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised (WRMT-R)	A formal assessment of emergent literacy knowledge which can be given at the beginning and end of the program to measure growth.	Subtests: Alphabet knowledge, Conventions of print, and constructing meaning.	-They are norm-referenced on children ages three to five. -Validity was determined based on a number of factors.	-Need the proper materials. -Expensive.
Semi-Formal Observation -Clay (2002)- Writing Vocabulary Observation Task	This is a semi-formal observation survey in which you observe children as they write.	Language level, Message quality, and directional principles by analyzing a child's writing.	-Convenient; it can be done any place, at any time. -It is useful to assess emergent literacy.	-Stanine scores based only on a group of children in New Zealand.
Informal Assessment (Teacher-Designed Assessment)	These assessments, designed by teachers, can take the form of word lists, questioning, etc…(See Lipson & Wixson, 1991 for examples.)	N/A	-Tailored to the specific needs of assessments. -Does not require any formal materials.	-Must be created by the teacher. -Cannot measure their reliability.
Artefacts	This is an informal way to document improvement by collecting writing samples from the children.	N/A	-Convenient. -Does not take time away from the actual session.	-Harder to systematically analyze from improvement.

General (Parent/Child) Assessment Options in an Authentic Literacy Program

Assessment	Description	Measures	Pros	Cons
Field notes	Teachers took notes after each session, outlining the schedule of events and reflecting on both the challenges and lessons learned.	N/A	-An excellent way to document the overall rhythm of the program, the major challenges faced, and the solutions to those challenges.	-Time consuming. -Challenging to systematically analyze.
Meeting notes	Minutes were taken at every LFL program meeting to outline the discussions that took place and the policy decisions being made.	N/A	-A great way to get a sense of the reoccurring challenges and the ways in which we dealt with them.	-Again, challenging to analyze systematically.
Focus Group	In our program, this was an informal focus group to get feedback on the program from the participants.	Interview	-It was a non-threatening form of assessment. -All you need is someone to ask questions and a recording device.	-Difficult to get fully formed opinions and feedback from the adults with the lowest English levels.

7 – Recommendations

> "Cultural differences need to be reflected in program design and implementation"

We learned a great deal as challenges and issues arose, and we attempted to address them. Reflecting on our two years working in two culturally and linguistically diverse communities, we have extracted a number of recommendations below for others considering implementing programs such as ours.

- ❖ *Be flexible:* Moving forward in the LFL program was unquestionably about maintaining flexibility. This was demonstrated throughout the program as decisions were constantly being made to change, alter, and adjust different aspects of it. Program providers should be prepared for the constant evolution of the program; adaptation to fit the needs and desires of the participants seem to be the very essence of programs like this one.

- ❖ *Goal-setting:* While maintaining flexibility, we kept an eye focused on the goal of our program which was increasing the English literacy levels of the adult students and the early literacy levels of the children. Having a clear goal to refer back to in our constant state of problem-solving and adaptation was essential.

- ❖ **Dialogue***:* A perspective that we tried to uphold throughout the program was a sense of bi-directional communication. We maintained an open dialogue and a spirit of mutual learning with the participants throughout LFL in order to create a program in which common goals could be reached.

- ❖ '*Family' is a culturally-based concept***:** It became very clear within the context of our program that parents and children play different roles in different cultures. Indeed, we think it necessary to reiterate that conceptions of family, of childhood, of child development, of parenting, and of literacy are culturally constructed. Furthermore, it is essential that program providers understand these cultural

differences and reflect this understanding in how programs are designed and implemented.

Appendix A. Planning an Intergenerational Literacy Program

Most people reading this guide will have plenty of experience in the planning of programs and will not likely need much information on how to get started in planning such a program. Nevertheless, we decided it was worthwhile to include a section on the very basics of starting a program. This appendix provides some advice on planning an intergenerational literacy program based on our experiences.

Resources-Sites

A literacy program such as LFL begins long before the first day of classes for the adult and child participants. If there is not already a site arranged, finding a location for the program will be a crucial first step. Before securing a program site, it will be virtually impossible to begin recruiting participants or to begin any other concrete planning. A site and its location will largely determine who the participants will be. The following section will go through how to look for a site, what to look for in a site, and what to do after finding an appropriate site.

Finding a site:

Depending on the circumstances, it may be more or less difficult to procure a site. Finding a location can certainly be a challenge and our particular experiences suggest a great deal of patience and perseverance is necessary. First, cast a wide net by letting it be known that you are searching for a site in which to implement an intergenerational literacy program for low-literate adults and their children. In LFL, we approached organizations such as the YMCA, literacy groups, immigrant and refugee organizations, as well as school district administrators, school administrators, university affiliates and government affiliates. Within those organizations and elsewhere, formal and informal contacts can be invaluable. The strategy that proved most useful for the LFL program was essentially persistence. Allow a substantial amount of time to secure an appropriate

program site. The LFL program took between two and four months to find appropriate sites.

What to look for in a site:

❖ *Location demographics:* Different demographics are characteristic of certain parts of a city or community. If there is a very specific population to whom the program will be offered, then it will be necessary to make sure the program is offered in the appropriate locations. For example, if teachers are interested in working with families who are refugees, they will need to know the neighbourhoods where these families are living.

❖ *Accessibility:* If the site is easily accessible, then there will be more success in recruiting participants. We found that a barrier such as transportation or a strange location is all that was needed to deter potential participants. Finding a site that is easily accessible or even better, already accessed regularly by the families who will avail themselves of the program is essential. In addition, sites need to be welcoming and accommodating, especially since some families may have had very negative experiences with schools and other organizations and institutions.

❖ *Childcare for toddlers:* Many of the families who participate in intergenerational literacy programs will have toddlers. Therefore, it is essential that adequate childcare be provided for the younger children and that this service is free to the families.

❖ *Adequate space:* A program of this nature, which includes separate adult, early childhood, and childcare components, needs separate physical spaces for each. Three separate rooms or spaces are ideal although it might be possible, but not at all recommended, to manage with two separate rooms. In the case of one of the LFL sites, we only had access to two rooms. In this case, the childcare group had no consistent space and therefore, had to move around from day to day from one available space to another, precluding the possibility of the childcare workers providing a permanent, adequately furnished room with appropriate toys and other resources. Furthermore, this arrangement was only possible because of the small

number of children needing childcare at that particular site and we all recognized that this situation was far from ideal and would not be workable, had there been more toddlers.

❖ *Washroom facilities*: Easy access to a washroom [or preferably washrooms] is essential. This is especially so for the early childhood classroom and the toddler room. Programs such as LFL sometimes operate out of makeshift quarters, and oftentimes do not have access to properly designed classrooms or childcare spaces. As the early childhood teacher at one of our sites can attest, it is impossible to work with a group of children and have to accompany other children to the washroom in a separate location.

❖ *A child friendly environment:* Locations that have classrooms and/or childcare spaces that are already equipped for children are ideal, if they are available. If these are not available, it is important to obtain toys and play equipment, as well as child-size tables, chairs, and other furniture.

❖ *Time availability*: Most program sites will only be available during certain hours on certain days. It is therefore important to have potential dates and times in mind, that would be most suitable for the participants. For example in the Literacy for Life program, we chose an early afternoon time slot. We ruled out later in the day, as parents needed to pick up their older children from school. We ruled out the evening or later afternoon because the older children were in parents' care and it would be more difficult to attend, knowing that they would need to either bring or find childcare for the older children.

❖ *Community collaboration:* Communication with other literacy program providers in the area is an important facet of developing a program. Community members who have been in a similar position will likely have ideas and advice to offer. Communication with other program providers also helps to ensure that the program optimally benefits the community and that services are not duplicated. For example, if literacy programs that fulfill the same needs as this program already operate in a

community, it will be necessary to find a location where the need has not yet been met.

After finding site:

Once an appropriate site has been found, it will be important to clearly define the roles in the partnership with the host site. First, to what extent does the site organization expect or desire to be involved in the program? This should be clarified from the beginning. For the LFL program, we had a written agreement with our partners delineating the roles and responsibilities of each party in the partnership.

To establish further a relationship with the organization that will be providing the site, think about asking the teachers and others involved in the program to begin volunteering occasionally at the site prior to the start of the program. Volunteering like this serves to establish a positive relationship with the organization and the community it serves and builds familiarity with the community. It also aids in recruiting participants in the program.

Resources-Money

Many literacy programs operate with limited funds and this was the case with the LFL program. Base on our experiences, we offer the following suggestions, realizing that funds will be limited and that the teacher will need to find ways to stretch or optimize these.

Food

Food is an important component of this type of literacy program and again, can be considered a program necessity. Aside from attracting program participants and adding a social dimension to the program, food preparation and purchasing can serve as a rich context in which to engage in authentic literacy activities.

Keep in mind:

❖ The program should probably provide snacks rather than meals, except on special occasions. Preparing hot meals takes the teachers away from their time and focus on running the program (unless, of course, preparing the meal is the program activity).

❖ Who will bring the food each session? Shopping for and gathering food for the program takes a surprising amount of time. Consider this when assigning this task to someone in the program. For example, if food is the responsibility of the teachers, make sure that sufficient time is set aside for this task and planned into the program. Otherwise, it becomes onerous for the teachers involved.

❖ What kind of food is on the menu? The LFL program found that the cultural makeup of the participants was an important consideration. For example, any pork or pork by-product was unacceptable for some participants because of religious/cultural beliefs.

Transportation

Many of the participants in LFL did not have automobiles. Public transportation is costly and might be just enough to deter families from showing up. Providing bus tickets to the families each week seemed to be a good way to ensure that coming to the program was not costing them. In one LFL site, we were lucky enough to have a worker from the site who drove participants to the program. Car pools were also an option at another site. Finding out the specific transportation needs for the group of families and finding ways to assist will help assure program attendance.

Recruiting

Our original intention was to embed LFL into an existing literacy program. This was not feasible for a number of reasons and so we then began recruiting participants on our own, in co-operation with various agencies and organizations. We still believe that embedding LFL into an already existing program would have been the most efficient way to proceed. If it is necessary for program providers to recruit participants, there are a number of important considerations to keep in mind.

First because the program is intended for adults with low literacy ability, the teacher will not be able to rely on print messages reaching potential participants. Indeed, in our experience, flyers and brochures were not very effective—people were, as we relied on contacts to advertise and promote the program by word of mouth. That is not to say that print materials should be discounted entirely in the recruitment process because they can be especially helpful in reaching the people who are in contact with the target population and who can assist with recruiting. For the LFL program, these important contact people came from community groups who were in direct contact with families, and included multicultural workers, social workers, other literacy program providers, and so forth. A few key points to remember in the recruitment process:

❖ ***Be clear from the beginning about the requirements and goals of the program.*** Because of its intergenerational focus, LFL requires at least one parent and at least one child between the ages of three and five. This is a point that had to be restated frequently to the people who assisted us with recruitment and the potential participants themselves. In our case, we sometimes had parents show up without any children and/or parents dropping off children but not interested in attending themselves. To preserve the intergenerational focus and integrity of the program, it is necessary to maintain the adult-child(ren) principle from the beginning and it should be clearly stated in brochures and flyers, at other forms of recruitment in the community, and to the families themselves when they enter the program.

❖ ***Prepare to start the program with low numbers***. It is important to begin the program once advertising has begun, even if numbers are low. Consistent with the experiences of other literacy program providers, we began with relatively low numbers and the program "grew" over time. To reiterate, the LFL program participants were recruited almost entirely through word of mouth. If the program is meeting the needs of the participants, they will tell others and other families will come!

❖ ***Recognize that a program might not attract the exact population initially expected***: In the LFL program, we originally set out to recruit families with adults who had low levels of literacy in English as a first language. As it turned out, the participants at both sites were either people who had immigrated or who were refugees, most of whom spoke limited or no English. Working with participants who were not fluent speakers of English added a new, complex dynamic and many challenges to the program. However, it quickly became apparent that the families with whom we worked needed this program and benefitted from it. Thus it is important that the potential participants be identified and defined as broadly as possible.

❖ ***Be aware that the teacher will need to work with different group dynamics.*** Participants from a range of social and cultural groups are often drawn to literacy

programs. For example, we were cautioned by literacy providers and multicultural workers in the beginning of our program that certain groups would simply not work well together. Our contacts explained that if we tried to place different ethnic groups together, we might encounter participants dropping out or having clashes with one another. We occasionally experienced such clashes and conflict in our work. We were mindful to be aware of, and to find ways to diffuse potentially tense situations. Thus it is important to be aware of the potential of conflicts arising and attempt to alleviate any tensions from the beginning, rather than allowing underlying issues to smoulder and undermine the success of the program.

❖ ***Be prepared for diversity in languages and literacy abilities and needs.*** In the LFL program, we had one site that attracted participants who had all immigrated from China fairly recently. The other sites were more diverse, and represented overall a refugee population, generally from countries in Africa. All of our participants varied considerably in their ability in written and oral English and it quickly became apparent that we would need translators to assist us in reaching potential participants as well as communicating our program message to them.

Because of our limited financial resources, we were forced to make use of whatever help was available and so the people who helped translate languages for our program were leaders from the community centers, multicultural workers, other participants and one of our research assistants. Identifying the need for translators and translation is an important step in planning to implement a program, especially in multicultural and multilingual communities such as those in which we worked. Although we were not fortunate enough to have full-time access to translators, it is something that we would highly recommend to any program that will have that capacity.

We hope that this handbook provides teachers and other readers with a glimpse into our program experiences. By sharing these experiences with running an intergenerational authentic literacy program, we intend that others will feel supported in the implementation of their own programs.

Appendix B. Executive Summary

**Implementing an Intergenerational Literacy Program
with Authentic Literacy Instruction:
Challenges, Responses, and Results**

Jim Anderson & Victoria Purcell-Gates

The purpose of this study was to document the implementation of an intergenerational literacy program that incorporated authentic literacy activity with the goal of raising low-English literacy levels of the parent and the English emergent literacy levels of their non-English speaking young children.

Framework

The LFL project was framed within socio-cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991) which posits that learning is social, as well as individual. These theories support the focus on families as centers of meaningful activity and on the ways that emerging literacy knowledge is supported by parents and other caregivers in social interaction with their children as instances of reading and writing for functional and purposeful reading and writing mediate their daily lives. Also, informing the research is the notion that literacy development is cyclical in that children who grow up in literacy rich environments successfully learn literacy and when they become adults and have families, engage in reading and writing in their own homes, thus producing a literacy rich environment for their children.

The project is also informed by research in the areas of early literacy, family literacy, and adult literacy. Researchers (e.g., Taylor, 1983; Mui & Anderson, 2008) have found that families can be sites for young children's early literacy development. Furthermore, children who are raised in high-literacy use homes are much more likely to enter Kindergarten with the literacy skills and knowledge that prepare them for instruction

than are children from low-literacy use homes (Purcell-Gates, 1996). Research in adult literacy has documented that instruction that involves students more in reading and writing real-life texts for real-life purposes is significantly related to students reading and writing more often in their lives and in students reading and writing more complex texts (Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson & Soler (2002).

Program description

Reflecting this body of knowledge, LFL was designed for low literate adults and their three- to five-year-old children. It ran for about two hours per day, two days per week from February, 2007 to May, 2007 in Year 1 and from October, 2007 to May, 2007 in Year 2. Two, two-hour sessions were provided each week, and each session had three components: adult literacy, early childhood literacy, and family together time. The program was based on a model that focused on authentic literacy instruction. Authentic literacy is the reading and writing of real-life texts for real-life purposes in the literacy learning classroom (e.g., reading recipes for the purpose of preparing a food dish, writing greeting cards to send to friends or family, or reading stories to enjoy and sometimes to discuss with friends). We also employed direct skill instruction to meet the needs of the participants as they engaged in authentic literacy activities. In the early literacy program, we embedded the literacy instruction in developmentally appropriate early childhood activities such as painting, playing games, making art projects, and listening to stories.

Method

We designed the study as a formative experiment (Reinking & Bradley, 2004). Formative experiments allow us to explore how educational interventions actually work in practice as they are developed, implemented, modified and in the context of different challenges and issues that arise in actual practice.

As mentioned previously, we ran the program for two years in two sites: Site 1 in an inner city area of a large urban area of western Canada and Site 2 in a rapidly growing

city to the south. The program operated from a community center in Site 1 for both years. At Site 2, in Year 1, we operated the program in a storefront center for refugees from Africa but because of inadequate space there, in Year 2, we moved the program to portable classrooms provided by a community school that was relatively close by.

In Site 1, 7 families participated in Year 1 and 9 families in Year 2; both years, the families were all recent Chinese immigrants with limited proficiency in English. In Site 2, 6 families participated in Year 1, all of them were refugees from Africa and all of the adults were low literate and were not proficient in English. In Year 2, 12 families participated; they were all immigrants or refugees, principally from the Middle East. This group varied both in terms of literacy ability in their first language (some were unable to read and write in their first language; two had undergraduate degrees) and in proficiency in English.

To determine growth in adult literacy, we compared pre- and post-test scores on the Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, and Spelling Subtests of the widely used Canadian Adult Achievement Tests (CAAT) using the norming group as a control. Similarly, to determine growth in children's literacy, we compared pre- and post-test scores on the Test of Early Reading Ability III (Reid, Hresko, & Hammill, 2001), a frequently used instrument in research in early literacy, using the norming group as a control.

Each teacher wrote meticulous notes immediately after each class, carefully documenting the literacy activities and events, noting particular challenges encountered, and reflecting on their instruction. The research team met weekly in Year 1 and bi-weekly in Year 2 during which the project manager kept elaborate notes. We circulated both the teachers' notes and the notes from the research meetings regularly; the PIs and the other team members regularly commented using the Track Changes feature of the word processing program. Using an iterative process, we coded this corpus of data, using Excel as a data management tool. Our analysis also included examining fidelity to treatment, identifying the challenges, and our responses to them, that confronted us as

we implemented the program, and examining the relationship between literacy growth and exposure to the authentic literacy activities.

Results

Literacy Growth

The results of the growth analysis are presented in Table 1 for the adults and children. Both parents and children registered statistically significant growth in their English literacy and emergent literacy abilities when compared to the norming groups.

Table 1. *Mean Change in Adult and Child Scores following the LFL program as indicated by the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.*

	Pre-Post Change
Adult-CAAT (N=10)	
Vocabulary Standard Score	2.19*
Reading Comprehension Standard Score	2.24*
Spelling Standard Score	2.24*
Child-TERA III (N=14)	
Alphabet Standard Score	1.69
Reading Conventions Standard Score	2.16*
Meaning Standard Score	0.6
Reading Quotient Score	2.17*

* significant at the p<.05 level

Fidelity to treatment

Our analysis revealed that we were able to maintain a high level of authentic literacy activity in all contexts, although there was some variability as would be expected, depending on the amount and type of skill instruction needed by individual students.

Literacy Growth and Exposure to Authentic Literacy Activity

An examination of relationships indicated that students who experienced more authentic literacy activity had higher growth scores on the assessments. The *N*'s were not high enough in this study to find statistical significance but the pattern looked promising for future research.

Challenges and responses

As noted previously, we employed a formative experiment (Reinking & Bradley, 2004) and thus documentation and addressing these consumed a great deal of our time and attention. We present examples of these challenges and attempted solutions in Table 2.

Table 2: *Challenges and attempted solutions*

Challenges	Attempted Solutions
Locating appropriate site	Working with various agencies/organizations; persevering; seeking out potential partners
Inadequate facilities	Adapting the program; moving to new location
Resources (Materials)	Sharing between sites; getting support from school district; borrowing from other projects; teachers bring in own materials; constructing materials
Resources (Teachers)	Having volunteer assist
Assessment	Trial alternative tests and instruments; use tests "out of norms" (e.g., using the TERA III designed for children who are beginning readers with adults who are just beginning to learn to read and write)
Teacher Qualification	Ongoing training, support and modeling; demonstrating and sharing various strategies; help with different ability groups
Different Cultural Perspectives	Attempt to make objectives explicit; modify family together time; shorten the family together component; adapt a more dialogic perspective

Table 2 (cont'd)

Lack of Adherence to Program Procedures	Make procedures explicit; construct brochure for families explaining the program in their first language
Program Purpose Conflict	Make goals/purpose more explicit; adapt to accommodate participants
No shared language	Attempt to have translators available whenever possible; have participants translate; use visuals and realia; have materials translated at home

Interestingly, we were able to use authentic literacy activities to respond to some of the challenges we encountered. For example, when the early literacy teacher at Site 2, was experiencing classroom management problems due to the different age levels and experience levels of her students, she wrote and modeled for her students a simple list of classroom behavior rules ("Don't hit"; "Share"; etc.). She then posted this list and referred to it when needed. This also became a source of memorized language, or text, from which the child, whose mother wanted her to begin reading, could begin to move to that stage.

Discussion/Conclusion

This is the first study that we know of that documented the development and implementation of an intergenerational program with immigrant and refugee families (adults and their pre-school children) using a model of authentic literacy instruction (i.e., reading real-life texts for real-life purposes). This study indicates both the effectiveness of this model and ways to implement it in culturally responsive ways with immigrant and refugee families. We also documented an array of challenges that we encountered and the ways we attempted to address and solve these challenges. Our findings should be informative and helpful to others implementing intergenerational literacy programs; the Handbook that we are producing explicates this for practitioners. The study also demonstrates the negative consequences of inadequate resources such as adequate classroom space, translation services, appropriate materials and so forth. Adult literacy

and family literacy programs are marginalized in that they are usually offered outside the established educational institutions and structures, often inadequately resourced, and by untrained or inadequately trained personnel. We believe our project demonstrated, yet again, for policy makers to recognize the need to provide the same level of support, financing, training and so forth for these programs as those that are offered in schools, colleges and universities. Finally, our analysis demonstrates the value of recognizing, understanding to the greatest extent possible, and respecting, the cultural backgrounds of the families with whom we work.

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