
‘The home is the child’s first school, the parent is the child’s first teacher, and reading is the child’s first subject’ (so said Barbara Bush, wife of former US President George Bush Snr). Helping adults learn to read is not the focus of this book. Crash Course in Family Literacy Programs provides an introduction and overview of family literacy, and successful family literacy programs.

A family literacy programme is a carefully planned sequence of events and meetings with access to resources that are helpful to a family. Family literacy programmes can be remarkably effective in helping families who struggle in various areas of literacy or in supporting their children's academic needs.

The first half of the book focuses on providing the reader with background information about family literacy by defining literacy and how it applies to family literacy. It then moves to research on literacy, information regarding the importance of reading to children, sources of funding, places to find information about literacy programmes and effective tips for working with culturally and linguistically diverse families.

The second half of the book delves into the ‘how-to’ information for public and school libraries to develop their own family literacy programming. Examples of successfully implemented programmes are provided with planning sheets and lesson templates included to add a practical aspect to the book.

While the programme examples are primarily school family literacy programmes, public libraries need to be aware of these programmes too so that they can identify where and how the public library can provide a supporting role, whether this be offering a venue, assisting in planning the programme or having resources on hand for those attending the programme.

A special addition to the book is interviews with public librarians, school principals, children's bookstore owners and school personnel who have successfully implemented family literacy programmes. This provides real-life examples and advice from those who have previously implemented family literacy programmes.

Quality education for children in schools is not enough to help children learn to be literate. Education begins at home, and public and school library professionals need to recognise this and provide programmes and resources to assist in giving children the start they need to become literate. Therefore, this book is a must read for school and public librarians and teachers wishing to extend their knowledge and expertise in literacy to include families as a whole.

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