

Strengths-based Approach

Family literacy practices uses a strengths-based approach, which acknowledges that everyone has knowledge, experience, and skills that can be drawn from and shared with others. Successful family literacy programs build on literacy behaviors and strengths that families already have, and introduce additional strategies to enrich literacy activities in the home. The approach acknowledges each family's unique set of strengths and challenges.

The strengths-based approach recognizes that all families value and use literacy in their everyday lives, and engages the family as a partner in developing and implementing family literacy initiatives. Finding out what families are already doing to weave literacy in their daily lives is an important step. Encouraging families to expand their knowledge through participation in family literacy programs is a way to complement and support their existing strengths. The fact that families' strengths are based on their own knowledge and cultural expectations means that they are in the best position to define their own goals for literacy development.

A strengths-based approach also recognizes and makes connections to community assets. Different groups and organizations have diverse skills, knowledge, and experience that can be drawn upon and shared.

The strengths-based approach also requires family literacy practitioners to engage in ongoing reflective practice. Reflective practice is a process in which practitioners examine how their own values and practices impact the families they work with. It involves analyzing approaches and programs to determine what is worth keeping and what needs improvements or adjustments.



International research has found that a strengths-based approach is associated with increased service engagement, increased parenting competency and enhanced interaction among family members.

Green et al., 2004; Whitley, 1999; Huebner, Jones, Miller, Custer, & Critchfield, 2006.



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