

Principles of Family Literacy

The idea of families learning together exists around the world. In the 1980s research began to include the role of the family in the context of literacy development. Denny Taylor advocated for change in how family literacy programs are defined. In the book *Many Families, Many Literacies: An International Declaration of Principles (1997)* she outlined principles of family literacy that still hold true today.

- Families are diverse and should not be narrowly defined.
- Families are both biological and social, span generations, and include members who live apart from their biological family.
- Literacy is found in everyday activities that are a part of family life and is not usually the focus of the activity, but a result of things that are done.
- Families should be supported in their role as a child's first and most important teacher.
- Family members, both adults and children, should have an opportunity to learn in their first language.
- Literacy cannot be taught in isolation from the functions it serves in the lives of the families who participate in family literacy programs.
- When planning literacy programs, parents and caregivers should be active in the decision-making process.
- The wisdom and strength of each family is shaped by their culture, language, and home life.
- The acceptance of different languages and cultures leads to greater understanding and celebration of creativity.
- When every family is valued, society benefits.

Denny Taylor is a family literacy researcher and author whose goal was to describe the practices occurring in families. She first coined the term 'family literacy' in 1997.

Many Families, Many Literacies: an international declaration of principles
Denny Taylor, (1997).



Saskatchewan Literacy Network

Toll-free: 1-888-511-2111 • www.saskliteracy.ca