

# Family Story Time

*Los Angeles Unified School District—Local District 2  
North Hollywood, California*

The Los Angeles area is home to one of the most diverse populations of families in the United States. To create a vibrant school community, Los Angeles' Local District 2 has created a program that bridges language barriers among students and families. Family Story Time enhances the literacy skills of children by providing a quality family literacy program to Spanish-, Armenian-, and English-speaking parents with children ages 5 to 8. The program is designed to establish a family reading routine and provide books, literacy materials, and art projects that are culturally relevant to the lives of a diverse population. The program teaches parents strategies for sharing books at home and completing a family story album.

Trained Parent Center leaders from Parents as Learning Partners present this program once a week during a two-hour session. Parents receive a new, culturally relevant book at each session and discuss how to use it most effectively at home. Each book is accompanied by a writing and art activity that reflects the lives of the participants and will contribute to the making of a family album. During the session, parents also create a descriptive text of their family photos to use to complete a family album.

In receiving simple tools for reading with their children and establishing a family reading routine, parents become more skilled at helping their children in their literacy growth. As a result of attaining new skills and having a forum to discuss family reading experiences, participants feel more confident in their ability

to support and participate in literacy experiences at home. The writing exercises, family album creation, and group discussions are designed to allow parents to reflect on their parenting skills, family traditions, and family goals. The group environment becomes a natural place where parents can discuss their own parenting styles and exchange ideas with other participants.

Parent Center directors at 48 schools took the training and then provided classes at their schools for 12 parents at a time. Many of the Parent Center directors were novice presenters. Eight district facilitators served as coaches, partnering schools when needed.

This practice empowered over 1,000 parents to take an active, positive role in the academic life of their children. Participants felt confident in supporting literacy activities where their native language was seen as an asset rather than a deficit. One parent shared, "I am excited to be able to share stories about my grandmother with my children. I want my son and daughter to be proud of their family and their grandparents. My baby loves it when I bring out the book for the week. When I finish the story he always says, 'Again!'"

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