Book Review

Review of *Teaching and Learning about Family Literacy and Family Literacy Programs*

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Co-authored by Jacqueline Lynch and Esther Prins, *Teaching and Learning about Family Literacy and Family Literacy Programs* is a small book that packs a big punch. It is the most recent addition to a growing collection of family literacy literature and synthesizes decades of theoretical and program-level research into an insightful analysis of the current family literacy landscape. An informative read for read for academics and practitioners, this book has something for everyone.

Though a slim volume at just over 200 pages, the book comprehensively addresses current knowledge in family literacy programming from both a scholarly and practical lens. It is composed of 14 chapters, divided into four thematic sections: foundations of family literacy, diversity in family literacy, family literacy in practice, and other focused topics. The chapters in each section attend to both micro- and macro-level concerns of the field and pose recommendations at the family, program, research, and policy levels. From the beginning, the authors make clear that their analysis is positioned in a sociocultural perspective of literacy. They follow this thread throughout the book as they discuss the variety of ways that families and programs use literacies across the globe.

Section one provides a historic and theoretical overview of family literacy programming, as well as empirical research demonstrating the contribution of family literacy programming to literacy outcomes. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of *family literacy* and provides a brief history of its development, definitions of key terms within family literacy literature, and the most common issues within the field. The chapters that follow describe social theories of literacy, literacy needs of children, and literacy needs of adults. Notably, in Chapter 4, Lynch and Prins construct an argument that they sustain throughout the rest of the book: that quality programming must offer not only parent-child literacy activities but also literacy skills for parents *and* parental support for a child's transition to school.

Section two addresses topics of diversity and contains chapters about race, ethnicity and culture, and social class. Through a critical examination of relevant literature, the authors identify a need for family literacy programs to develop culturally responsive pedagogical practices that recognize racial, ethnic, and cultural identity, respect cultural variations in literacy practices, and oppose hegemonic practices that position middle class values as the standard. In Chapter 5, the authors
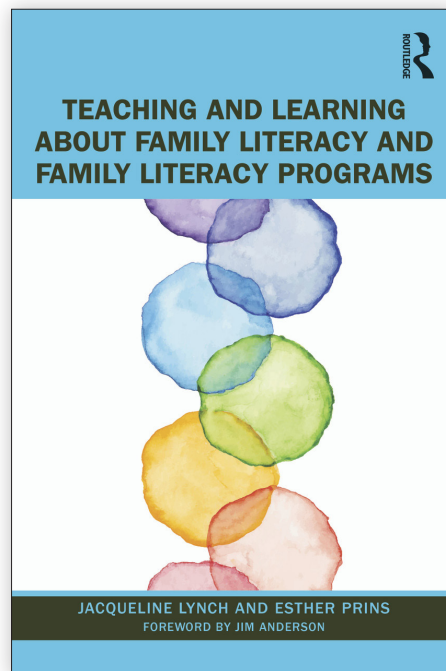
Lynch, J. & Prins, E. (2022). *Teaching and Learning about Family Literacy and Family Literacy Programs.* Routledge. 244 pages. $48.95 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-367-37130-2

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offer three conceptual tools that can help educators become aware of colonizing assumptions and behaviors: using cultural models, adopting a funds of knowledge framework, and instituting antiracist educational practices. Lynch and Prins encourage practitioners to analyze their own assumptions surrounding race and culture using suggested principles and strategies listed in Chapter 6.

Section three describes what family literacy looks like in practice. In Chapter 7, the authors outline typical program structures, conventional and unconventional program settings, and general program design features that may encourage success. Chapter 8 describes three exemplary family literacy programs in detail, focusing on their common characteristics: considering parental needs and interests, measuring learning outcomes, supplying free literacy resources, and maintaining long-term funding. Chapter 8 should be particularly interesting to anyone interested in researching or implementing interventions. Unfortunately, readers looking for international success stories will be disappointed; the exemplary programs are all located in North America.

The final section of the book is devoted to topics of concern in the field. One chapter examines father engagement in family literacy and family literacy programming while another chapter addresses the critical role played by other family members, such as grandparents and siblings, in emergent child literacy. In other chapters, the authors lead sensitive and nuanced discussions of current research on digital family literacies, and the problematical demands of program accountability. Finally, the book ends by outlining future directions for family literacy and family literacy programming. The topics of most concern to Lynch and Prins include the need to empirically examine the effects of recent social, economic, and political phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement on family literacy practices and programs.

This ambitious work will appeal to a broad range of interested audiences, including researchers and scholars, graduate students, and family literacy practitioners. Though it is certainly a large undertaking to address the needs of such diverse readers, Lynch and Prins manage to do so through careful organization. Not only is each section thematically structured, but every chapter is segmented into introduction, content, and conclusion, and includes a section for suggested activities, recommended further readings, as well as a References section. In particular, the Suggested Activities section includes several reflective questions that encourage readers to extrapolate research findings and theoretical initiatives to real-world contexts. Though researchers may not find these sections useful, their presence transforms the book into an ideal supplemental text for a graduate level literacy course. All in all, this book is an excellent resource for family literacy practitioners and others who are interested in understanding the many layers of this complex topic.