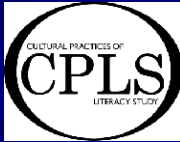


## An Invitation into Literacy



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## Learning about literacy practices in homes and community

## Research Context

- Study of southern Sudanese refugee families in Michigan, USA
  - Families experienced different levels of education in Sudan
  - Spoke Arabic, local Sudanese languages, and English
  - Young children in Kindergarten & 1<sup>st</sup> Grade
- Families encountered new texts and new practices in the U.S.

## Community Study Findings

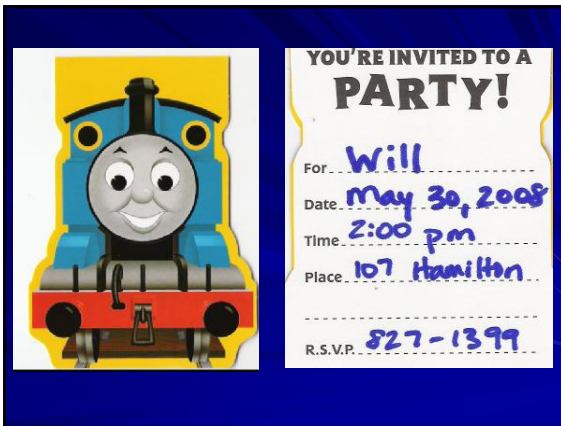
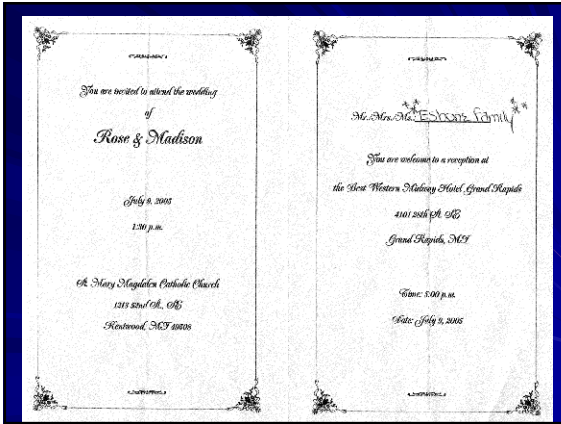
- Michigan presented refugees with a new literacy environment, including
  - New language
  - New written genres
  - New purposes for reading/writing
- **Literacy brokering:** Individuals rely upon others for informal help with texts and literacy practices
  - Refugees rely on a variety of brokers, including their own young children

## What happens in brokering?

- Brokering could involve:
  - Helping parents read, write or spell
  - Providing cultural knowledge
  - Teaching about new genres
- Adults asked questions like:
  - What does this mean?
  - What do I do with this?

## Commonly Brokered Texts

- Parents asked for help with:
  - Coupons
  - Forms
  - Invitations
  - Letters
  - Official documents
  - Phone books
  - Resumes
  - School notices
  - Websites
- Children encountered many texts:
  - Invitations
  - Newsletters
  - Permission forms
  - Websites
- Children brokered some texts:
  - Email
  - Permission forms
  - School notices
  - Websites



Sample Lesson:  
Using Invitations to Teach Sight Words

**Model Lesson: Invitations**

- Several brokering events in my data involved invitations
  - The Sudanese community were familiar with invitations...
  - BUT some genre features and practices appeared to be different in the Sudan and in the U.S.
- Viola: What does RSVP mean?
  - Son had received invitation to birthday party

**Creating Authentic Context**

- Teacher must create authentic context
  - This is the most important step!
  - Children must have a real reason to actually send a real invitation
- Plan an event to which others will be invited
  - Play or presentation
  - Special celebration
  - Open House or Parents' Night

## Teaching Literacy Skills

- Plan to introduce a literacy skill using the authentic text
- Invitations lend themselves to many skills:
  - Recognizing and writing high-frequency words
  - Capitalization
  - Concepts about print
  - Writing dates, times, addresses

## Pre-Assessment & Warm-Up

- Assess students' knowledge of high-frequency words used in invitations
  - Proper names, to, from, and, Mom, Dad
  - Where, when, date, time, place
- Invitation Warm-Up Activities
  - Ask children to brainstorm how their parents will find out about where and when the event will be
  - Ask children if they know what an invitation looks like

## Discussing Purpose

- Bring real invitations that you have collected ahead of time
  - Discuss and emphasize purpose of invitations
  - On chart paper, record children's ideas about differences between invitations and cards, letters, and other personal communications
  - Ask children to bring any invitations they might have at home

## Let's Practice:

- What is the purpose of an invitation?
  
- How are invitations different from cards or letters?

## Hands-on Exploration

- Distribute invitations around classroom
  - Ask children to look closely at them with the goals of:
    - Sharing two things they notice about invitations
    - Sharing words they can read
  - In class meeting:
    - Record children's observations on chart paper
    - Discuss essential features of invitations
    - List high-frequency words in invitations
    - Plan & model invitation for authentic class event

## Let's Practice:

- What are essential features of invitations?
  
- What features are optional?

## Create & Deliver Invitations

- Review with students what should be included in invitation
  - Look back at model on chart paper
  - Review high-frequency words
- Have children create their own invitations
- Deliver invitations...and enjoy event!

## Assessment

- Assess sight word recognition:
  - Ask students to locate target sight words in list
  - Ask students to write target words
- Assess learning about invitations:
  - Ask students to recall purpose and features of invitations
  - Ask what other types of events they could use an invitation for

## Why is this important?

- Teaching literacy skills in the context of authentic texts and literacy practices is engaging and motivating for children
- Young children can provide significant literacy support to parents
  - They can bring home important knowledge about genres and practices that may be new