

Learning Literacy Together

Jeffco Public Schools

Golden, CO



The Learning Literacy Together workshop was created as a way to provide outreach to Jeffco primary families with the purpose of building capacity in early literacy skills. It was specifically designed to be interactive and not a “sit and get” presentation. The Title I Family Engagement team designed the three-part series with the goal of building family knowledge around primary reading instruction, learning and understanding academic language, providing both modeling and interactive practice for several take-home literacy activities, and learning about the Colorado Read Act. Throughout the school year, eleven Jeffco Title I funded elementary schools participated in the three-week series.

Planning for Learning Literacy Together started at the district level with the goal being to build literacy knowledge for primary families. Once the goal was established and clear, author and former kindergarten teacher Kerry Zarlengo and Jeffco Family Engagement Coach Susie Kirvin created a three-part literacy series. It was important to build relationships between families attending, so each session started with a fun connecting activity. Family Engagement Liaisons (FEL’s) were integral to the implementation process by creating an advertising plan to invite families to participate. FEL’s personally invited families and were responsible for removing barriers such as providing childcare, so that families could participate.

This practice was designed for families to help their child become better readers by learning take home literacy activities. Families also learned literacy academic language. Each session focused on one or more of the five main components of reading - Vocabulary, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, and Comprehension. Families learned about the reading process, why young readers need to be proficient in each section of reading, and received take-home activities. Families also learned about the Colorado Read Act and why students need to make sufficient reading growth in each grade level.



Learning Literacy Together asked families to evaluate each session. FEL’s were also asked for feedback and ways to strengthen each learning session. The presenters addressed several challenges during implementation. First, by receiving feedback from families and FEL’s, the workshop was changed to create more clarity for families around the five main components of reading. Second, depending on the time of the year that the workshop was presented, content changed to reflect what students had already learned in class. Finally, with each new school presentation, observing how the adults received the information and applied their new skills required adjusting the workshop pace to meet the needs of families. Family comments included: “I really enjoyed learning the sounds of letters today. I needed a refresher!” and “Great ideas were presented to bring home and practice with my kids.”

To replicate Learning Literacy Together, several components need to be in place. Clearly state the goal of each workshop so families know what they will be learning. Learning the “why” behind giving “wait time” to families is important so that family voices are always heard. Keep in mind that “more” is not always best or productive. Listen to family feedback and be aware of what reading skills are being taught throughout the year.