

From the editors

In this issue of *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, Eufimia Tafa, Alanna Rochelle Dail, Lea M. McGee, Patricia A. Edwards, Catherine Compton-Lilly, and Elsa S. Billings present our readers with a set of important and consequential ways of conceptualizing early literacy learning and instructional support. Young children's engagement in early forms of both academic and social languages and genres, embedded in particular social practices, "are the stuff from which school-based and academic language flows" (Gee, 2001, p. 724). The four articles presented to you in this issue of *LTL* address crucial aspects of early literacy development embedded within expanded contexts and social practices.

Dail, McGee, and Edwards report that members in a Community Book Club developed new literacy practices when texts and activities were well matched to the interests, discourse patterns, and other cultural practices of participants and based on a broad definition of family literacy. The authors argue that schools should value and integrate the literacy knowledge and practices of not only families and communities, but teachers and schools as well. Dail, McGee, and Edwards acknowledge that many educational agencies, however, do not yet know how to do so effectively.

Compton-Lilly presents a study utilizing interviews conducted as "guided tours" while participants described the contents of their book bags, and the insights the data provided regarding a third space for meaningful and personally relevant learning opportunities. Although Compton-Lilly found that the content of adult book bags was firmly intertwined with participants' personal lives, those of the children in the study were "remarkably banal and impersonal." The study's findings suggest that children demonstrate little personal investment in their education, a finding that should cause educators to rethink many of the ways in which schooling is conducted for young children.

Billings investigated the effects on frequency and forms of family literacy practices associated with a pediatrician-based program that provided "reading prescriptions" to parents during well-baby visits. The author discusses important issues regarding the nature of expert literacy advice provided to parents as well as the ways in which such programs should build on literacy practices already engaged in by families of diverse cultural and linguistic traditions. Billings reminds all educators that the one-size-fits-all approach to literacy promotion, no matter how well intended, is not best suited to the establishment of solid and lasting connections to students, families, and communities.

Tafa describes her translation of the Concepts About Print observation task (Clay, 2005) into Greek and provides thorough evidence documenting the assessment's sound psychometric properties. With this study, Concepts About

Print has now been translated into at least 12 languages. This accomplishment validates the importance of systematic observation of learning:

I put a book into children's hands and as I read it I ask them to do something, to act. Most of the responses required are nonverbal ones to show what a child does with a book, not what s/he says about it. My position assumes that what is facilitating in learning to read is knowing where to attend, in what sequence, and how to pick up information perceptually. While this involves cognitive activity of a kind, it does not mean that children have to deal with the problem using words. (Clay, 1989, p. 274)

With her development and confirmation of the Greek language version of this observation task, Tafa emphasizes teachers' absolute need for assessment tools that reliably and validly differentiate children who know concepts about print and those who do not, and allows teachers to reliably identify those children who consequently need more teacher attention.

If we take the messages presented by these authors to heart, together they provide strong provocation for the educational community's revitalization of effective, differentiated, and culturally relevant instruction, as well as the reorganization and expansion of early literacy education for all children. *Literacy Teaching and Learning* remains committed to presenting thought-providing, high-quality articles of value and interest to those teachers and educational communities that remain dedicated to ensuring children's strong and effective early literacy development.

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