**Snapshot: Examples of Library and Literacy Professional Development**

**Example #1: Establishing a learning community through journal writing during the orientation session of the 2013-2014 Julia Palmer project**

As facilitators, Bowne Program Officer Anne Lawrence and consultant Suzanne Marten immediately begin to establish a learning community among participants during the October 31, 2013 orientation session to the 9-month *Julia Palmer Library Development and Literacy Support Project*. Lawrence and Marten use three inter-related professional development activities to introduce the content of the professional development series (libraries and literacy), and at the same time to create a level of intimacy within the group: journal writing; personal reflection; and sharing of experiences.

Lawrence begins the session by asking participants how they use journals. A few people volunteer that children in their programs are expected to write in journals for pre-writing, assessment, and reflection. Others share their personal journal writing experiences. Lawrence then shares her own experience:

> *As a teacher I have used journals in all sorts of different ways. For [adult] beginning readers and writers, I would do dialogue journals. This is very motivating for them, and gives opportunities for asking and answering questions. It is also a wonderful assessment tool to keep track of their improvement, and a good pre-reading activity. When I taught [teachers], at the end of every class I had them reflect on their own experience with the activities, and then think about what ideas it gave them about they might do with their own students. Journals are flexible great tools.*

Immediately following this discussion, Lawrence hands out brightly colored notebooks and introduces a journal writing exercise:

> *Think about an experience you had with a library. Was it good or was it bad? Think about and write about one of your experiences growing up around libraries or with reading and writing.*

After several minutes of writing, Anne gives a new instruction:

> *Now we are going to ask you to pass your journal to someone else and they will pass their journal to you to read and respond. As soon as you have responded to what they wrote, hand it back to them, and they will respond to what you wrote. Back and forth.*

Throughout the room, people express discomfort: '*It's so dumb what I wrote,'* or '*Can you read it?'* and laughing nervously.

Co-facilitator Suzanne Marten takes advantage of the moment and asks people to reflect*:*

> *Let me pause you for a second. How many times have you seen kids have this reaction? 'Wait, you didn't tell me I had to show it to somebody.'*

Once the *dialogue journals* have been passed back and forth two or three times, Lawrence leads a discussion, asking such questions as: *How did it feel? How was it different to write than talk?* She tells participants that these journals will have several purposes. They are an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, to dialogue with peers, as well as to ask questions

and get feedback between sessions through written dialogue with the co-facilitators, Anne Lawrence and Suzanne Marten.

The facilitators' choice to open the first session with a written personal reflection and dialogue journal gave participants the opportunity to immediately experience a literacy activity, and, at the same time, to introduce a number of issues to be addressed in the series: personal connections to libraries, students' experiences with literacy, writing, the value of dialogue and reflection.

Lawrence then moves on to a group discussion where she encourages participants to talk about their experiences with libraries. As Marten listens to the conversation, she creates a chart that later is a starting point for discussions about program libraries.

Steven: *I wrote about my first visit to a public library. It was overwhelming. They had very tall ceilings, high walls, chandeliers, and were big buildings. I remember having a moment of wondering about what I was stepping into, and then seeing a lot of books of different genres.*

David: *I had the opportunity to dialogue with Steven. When he brought up the feeling of it being overwhelming, it allowed me to think about the emotional piece in my experiences. It's important to be mindful of that when we create libraries in our communities -- that it's also an emotional experience to use the library.*

Sapana: *I want to build on David's point about the emotional connection. When I came to this country from India I didn't speak English. The library and whoever is the librarian is a cultural guide. My organization is about cultural awareness as well as literacy.*

Danny: *Growing up uptown in the 80s and 90s was a difficult task. For me, the library was a safe, fun place, and there I had peers with similar interests. The library allowed me to have a support system and peer group that was as excited about books and comic books as I was. Library was a positive place for me.*

Faybienne: *I remember thinking very early that going to the library was about trust and responsibility. I thought it was amazing that you were trusted to take the books out, and that you were also responsible for returning them on time. It gave me a sense of reciprocity for borrowing and lending. Where else could you go and walk out with something you didn't have to pay for?*

Susan: *My school library was bright and sunny and we had a very helpful librarian. The public library was dark and scary and I couldn't wait to get out of there. I'm sitting here thinking about what made the differences between those two environments.*

During this orientation to a year-long seminar, facilitators Marten and Lawrence accomplish multiple objectives. The session engages participants in an interactive literacy activity, introduces dialogue journals as an instructional strategy, encourages reflection about the process being modeled, and lays the groundwork for a productive learning community. In response, participants share personal stories and emotional connections with clear relevance to the seminar topic and purpose – thereby beginning the process of building trusting relationships.


**Example #2: Building leadership capacity**

During an on-site consultation to a program participating in the *Julia Palmer Library Development and Literacy Support* seminars, co-facilitator Suzanne Marten encourages the Program Director to take on the role of literacy leadership and training for her afterschool program staff members. The Director has asked Marten to lead the next program staff meeting and introduce new literacy strategies.

Right away, Marten begins to encourage the Program Director to take initiative with her staff: "Here's my thinking. I love coming here, I love working with you and your staff. But if you do it, you own it, and when the next [new staff person] walks through the door, then you can do it again. … I am willing to think about whatever will get it off the ground, so it can become more part of your regular practice and it will live here."

At the Program Director's request, Marten first visits the classrooms, observing teachers in each room conducting literacy, as well as other hands-on activities. In the planning meeting following the observations, Marten and the Director discuss strengths and challenges within the classrooms regarding levels of student engagement in literacy activities.

Marten then reminds the Program Director that reading aloud is something she does extremely well, and encourages the Director to share her own enthusiasm for reading by modeling an effective read-aloud. Marten also reminds her that giving children jobs (such as summarizer, illustrator/sketcher, word catcher/vocabulary) would support engagement and comprehension during the read-aloud.

The meeting ends with the Director making a plan she feels confident and excited about for the next staff meeting. She will model *reading aloud* and demonstrate student engagement activities for staff members. Over the course of the site visit, Marten has supported the Program Director to lead literacy training at her program site by pointing out how the Director's own skills and knowledge could be used to train and inspire her staff.