

Bridging School to Family Assignments

Summary

Families play a critical role in the educational success of their child. Research clearly indicates that when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to have a more positive attitude towards school, do better in school, and stay in school longer (*A New Wave of Evidence*, a report from Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002). However, historically there has been a cultural mismatch between schools and families.

Teachers must create opportunities for families to share their cultural wealth and knowledge with their children and utilize this information to make the curriculum both engaging and relevant to students' lives. Projects that engage families in activities with their children related to what is being learned in school provide extended opportunities for children to think about, talk about and learn about the content of thematic units. It offers them expanded perspectives and experiences related to the topics, and enables them to bridge the world of school and home. For these reasons, every SEAL thematic unit includes a set of projects and activities that families can do together.

Implementation

For each thematic unit, the teacher creates two or more opportunities for families to share their cultural knowledge and experiences with students. Projects and practices are related to the content discussed in the classroom. Teacher provides guidance and models for families and students. The teacher works with colleagues and/or the school administrator to ensure instructions for projects and practices are translated for families who speak languages other than English.

Projects and practices can range from simple Home/School Connections in which students are asked to share what they have learned in class with their families to more elaborate Thematic Projects in which families are expected to participate and work together with their children to write and/or create an artifact. Examples from Kindergarten Insect Unit:

"We are learning about insects. Take a walk with your family and draw the insects that you see."

"Tell your family about the insects we are learning about in class. Draw an insect and talk about its parts."

The teacher sets a date for when students are to bring Home/School Connections or Thematic Projects back to school. However, it is important to be flexible and find creative ways to support students and families who are not able to meet the deadline (this may include providing additional time, materials, making phone calls, or finding other adults at school who can work with the child). As needed, the teacher may



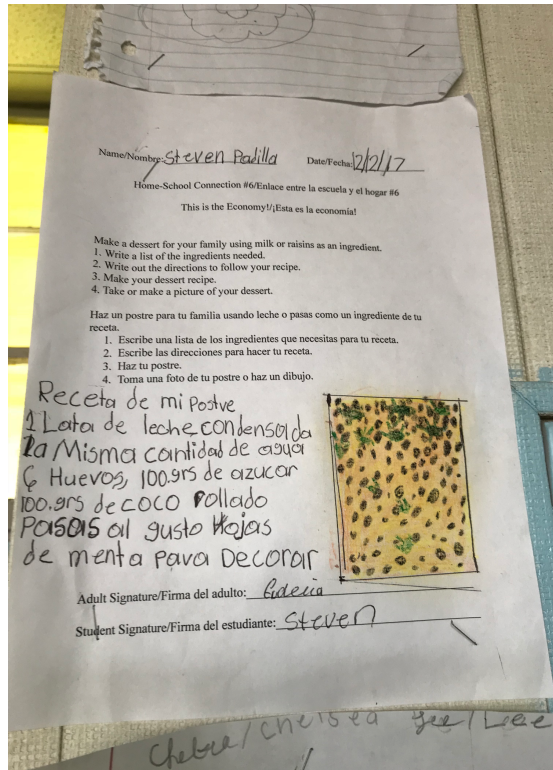
provide materials to families, ask for donations, or design a project that can be created with recycled items from home or nature.

Upon completion, teacher provides opportunities in class for students to share their project with a partner, in small groups, or whole class and invites families to attend.

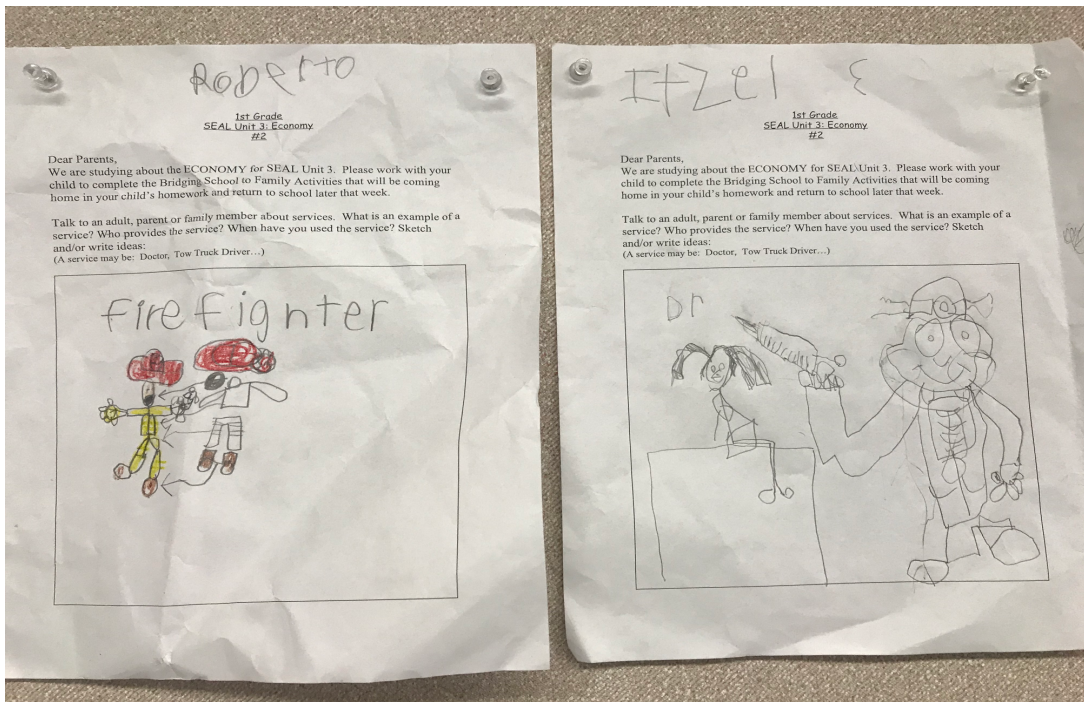
It is highly recommended that teachers have students share their projects at the end of the day so parents are able to be part of the event. A classroom gallery of projects can be created, offering a way for children to see the work they created with their family as a part of their learning environment.

Notes on Bridging School to Family Assignments

Photos of Home & School Connections



**3rd Grade Economy Unit*



**Kindergarten Community Workers Unit*