

# Home Literacy Environment – read more 6

▪ *Family income*– most processes connecting home environment and school success have examined family socio-economic status (SES). Studies have generally reported that families with low income, low maternal education, low proficiency in English, experience greater hardships, have limited access to resources which compromises the children’s success in school (Farver, et. al., 2006). This is a reality of many African countries with mothers having low levels of education yet they are the most available parents/caregivers to the children. With low formal education, many of them do not know how to read. Even in cases where the mother/caregiver has attained some level of education sufficient to promote literacy in the home, they often find themselves juggling in income generating activities to sustain their livelihood thereby leaving limited time to actively engage in meaningful home literacy activities with their children. This challenges the literacy package that a child may receive from home. As such, the child depends entirely on the contribution of the school. This means that the potential interactions between the school and the home in providing a healthy literacy package for the child may be far-fetched for many children in Africa. McLoyd (1998) reported in a review of literature, that poverty status and SES were significant predictors of children’s early language skills, academic achievement and social competence. However, evidence shows that low-income and ethnic minority families do provide opportunities and

experiences which support children's early skill development (Aram & Levin, 2002; Delgado-Gaitini, 1992; Heath, 1983; Reece & Gallimore, 2000; Teale 1986). Most African countries are faced with economic hardships that see many schools with few resources. Compared to Western societies, where written language has a central place, no child even those from low income or ethnic minority families is entirely deprived of literacy exposure at the home (Auerbach, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Teale, 1986; van Stenseel, 2006). Although literacy resource is accessible to the children, these researchers acknowledge that differences exist in the range of literacy activities children engage in.

- **Family size.** Studies indicate that crowded homes are associated with disparities in children's vocabulary growth rates, cognitive abilities and social emotional functioning (Hart & Risley, 1995). Others found an inverse relationship of sibblingship size and academic achievement even when variables like race, SES and age were controlled for (Blake, 1989).