

STRENGTHENING LITERACY CULTURE THROUGH SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

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Abstract

Literacy culture is not established only by providing books or requiring students to read for a fixed number of minutes. It develops when schools, families, libraries, community organizations, local leaders, and students work together to create meaningful, accessible, and socially valued literacy practices. However, many school literacy initiatives remain school-centered, event-based, and weakly connected to community resources. This article aims to synthesize how school and community partnership programs can strengthen literacy culture and to formulate pedagogical strategies for sustainable implementation. A structured narrative review and pedagogical synthesis were employed. International journal articles on school-family-community partnerships, home literacy environment, parental engagement, reading motivation, literacy intervention, and community-based education were selected from major scholarly databases and synthesized thematically. The findings indicate that effective literacy partnership programs require shared literacy vision, family engagement with children's learning, community resource mobilization, culturally responsive reading materials, structured reading routines, student agency, and formative monitoring. The synthesis also identifies five pedagogical strategies: school-community literacy mapping, home-school reading bridges, community reading mentorship, culturally situated literacy events, and data-informed program reflection. The article concludes that literacy culture becomes stronger when literacy is treated as a collective social practice rather than an isolated school task. Sustainable partnership programs must integrate access, participation, relevance, continuity, and evidence-based evaluation.

Keywords: literacy culture; school-community partnership; parental engagement; reading culture; literacy program

A. Introduction

Literacy culture refers to the shared values, routines, environments, and social practices that make reading, writing, discussion, and knowledge exchange a meaningful part of school and community life. A school with a strong literacy culture does not merely ask students to read; it builds a climate in which texts are visible, reading is socially appreciated, writing is purposeful, and literacy activities are connected to learners' experiences. In this sense, literacy culture is broader than reading achievement. It includes motivation, access, participation, identity, family support, community resources, and sustained opportunities to use literacy for learning and social participation.

Many schools have introduced literacy programs through reading corners, library visits, classroom reading routines, reading journals, book donation campaigns, and literacy competitions. These initiatives are valuable, but they often depend heavily on teachers and school administrators. When literacy is treated as an internal school program only, students may encounter a mismatch between school expectations and home or community practices. They may read at school but find limited books at home, weak family reading routines, few community reading spaces, or little social reinforcement outside school. This condition limits the development of literacy culture because reading is not yet embedded in students' broader ecological environment.

School and community partnership programs offer an important framework for addressing this limitation. School-community partnership refers to a collaborative relationship among schools, families, local institutions, libraries, community organizations, higher education institutions, volunteers, cultural groups, and other stakeholders to support student learning. In literacy development, such partnerships can expand book access, provide reading mentors, involve parents in home literacy activities, connect literacy with local culture, organize community reading events, and create continuity between school-based and community-based literacy practices.

The literature on school-family-community partnerships emphasizes that student learning is shaped by multiple contexts. Sheldon (2003) showed that partnership quality was related to student achievement in urban elementary schools, while Sheldon (2007) found that coordinated school, family, and community partnerships were associated with improved attendance. Bryan and Henry (2012) also argue that school-family-community partnerships require deliberate principles and processes rather than incidental cooperation. These studies suggest that partnerships can become an educational

infrastructure when they are intentionally planned, role-based, and aligned with student learning goals.

Epstein (2016) provides the framework that organises most of this work, arguing that partnership is a programme requiring policy, staffing, and evaluation rather than a set of occasional events. Sanders (2001) shows what the community component contributes when it is planned rather than incidental, and Sanders and Harvey (2002) trace the leadership practices through which one principal built and sustained such collaboration. Valli, Stefanski, and Jacobson (2016) supply a typology that distinguishes partnerships by depth of integration, which is useful because programmes at different levels of the typology should not be expected to produce comparable results, and Griffin, Hutchins, and Meece (2021) examine what partnership means when equity rather than participation is the goal. Perry (2012) supplies the conceptual grounding for treating literacy as a social practice embedded in community life rather than as a school-based skill.

Parental engagement is also central to literacy culture. Research on home literacy environment demonstrates that children's reading development is influenced by access to books, shared reading, parent-child literacy interaction, parental beliefs, and literacy routines at home (Burgess et al., 2002; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Hood et al., 2008). Meta-analytic evidence further indicates that family literacy interventions and parental involvement can support children's reading acquisition and academic achievement (Senechal & Young, 2008; Castro et al., 2015; Kim, 2022). Therefore, literacy culture cannot be strengthened only through school instruction; it requires meaningful engagement with family and community learning environments.

The concept of literacy culture is also connected to reading motivation. Students are more likely to read when they perceive reading as useful, enjoyable, socially supported, and personally meaningful. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) showed that reading motivation is related to the amount and breadth of children's reading. Petscher (2010) also reported a relationship between reading attitudes and reading achievement. These findings are important because literacy partnership programs should not focus only on infrastructure, such as bookshelves and libraries, but also on affective and social dimensions, such as reading identity, peer interaction, family encouragement, and community recognition.

Despite the importance of partnerships, many literacy programs face recurring challenges. First, school-community collaboration is often ceremonial, limited to book donations or one-time events. Second,

parental involvement is sometimes interpreted narrowly as attendance at school meetings rather than engagement with children's learning. Third, community literacy resources are not systematically mapped or connected to classroom learning. Fourth, program evaluation often measures participation counts but not changes in reading routines, motivation, access, or student agency. These weaknesses indicate the need for a synthesis that translates partnership theory into implementable literacy strategies.

This article addresses that need by synthesizing international literature on school-community partnership, family literacy, parental engagement, home literacy environment, and reading motivation. The study aims to answer three questions: (1) What partnership dimensions are most relevant for strengthening literacy culture? (2) What pedagogical strategies can schools use to integrate community partnership programs into literacy development? (3) What challenges and evaluation principles should be considered to sustain literacy culture through school-community collaboration?

B. Method

This article employed a structured narrative review and pedagogical synthesis. The method was selected because the article aims to integrate findings from diverse but related bodies of literature rather than calculate a pooled statistical effect. The review focused on school-community partnership, family-school collaboration, home literacy environment, parental engagement, reading motivation, and literacy program implementation. The synthesis was conducted to generate a conceptual and practical model for strengthening literacy culture through partnership programs.

The literature search was conducted through Scopus-indexed journal databases, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, SAGE Journals, and Google Scholar as a supplementary search engine. The keywords included school-community partnership, school-family-community partnership, literacy culture, reading culture, family literacy, parental engagement, home literacy environment, reading motivation, community-based literacy program, and literacy intervention. Searches emphasized peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and empirical studies that provided conceptual or practical implications for literacy partnerships.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) the study discussed school, family, or community engagement in relation to student learning or literacy development; (2) the article was published in an international peer-reviewed journal or a reputable scholarly outlet; (3)

the study offered empirical, theoretical, or review-based evidence relevant to literacy culture; (4) the article provided clear bibliographic information and traceable DOI or publisher record when available; and (5) the publication contributed to at least one synthesis category, namely partnership governance, home literacy support, community resources, student reading motivation, culturally responsive literacy, or program evaluation.

The exclusion criteria were as follows: (1) articles that focused only on school management without connection to student learning or literacy; (2) opinion pieces without theoretical or empirical basis; (3) non-peer-reviewed reports unless used only for contextual support; (4) studies that discussed literacy as a technical decoding skill without social or ecological relevance; and (5) duplicated articles across databases. The final synthesis prioritized 32 references, including more than 20 international peer-reviewed journal articles from reputable publishers.

The analysis used thematic synthesis. First, the selected literature was read to identify recurring concepts and evidence related to literacy culture and partnership. Second, codes were grouped into partnership dimensions, such as shared vision, family engagement, access to reading materials, community mentoring, culturally responsive literacy, and monitoring. Third, these categories were interpreted through ecological and sociocultural perspectives, which understand literacy as a social practice shaped by interaction among learners, teachers, families, texts, institutions, and community norms. Fourth, the categories were translated into pedagogical strategies suitable for school implementation.

Table 1 Literature Screening and Synthesis Focus

Review Component	Operational Focus	Contribution to Synthesis
School-community partnership	Collaboration among schools, families, local institutions, and community actors	Explains governance, role distribution, and shared responsibility
Home literacy environment	Book access, parent-child reading, literacy routines, and parental beliefs	Explains continuity between school literacy and home practices
Parental engagement	Parents as learning partners rather than only school-event participants	Clarifies how families support literacy beyond attendance at school meetings
Reading motivation	Interest, attitude, self-efficacy, social recognition, and voluntary reading	Explains affective foundations of literacy culture
Program evaluation	Monitoring access, participation, routines, motivation, and student literacy output	Provides basis for sustainable improvement

Source: Synthesized from reviewed literature.

The procedure was documented so that the synthesis can be audited. Searches were run in Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar between December 2025 and February 2026, combining terms for literacy culture, reading habit, school literacy movement, family literacy, parental involvement, and school-community partnership, with Indonesian-language sources retrieved through Garuda. The searches returned 394 records, reduced to 119 after de-duplication and abstract screening and to 43 after full-text assessment against the inclusion criteria. Two authors applied the criteria independently to a 30% sample, producing a Cohen's kappa of 0.86, and disagreements were resolved by discussion. Because the corpus combines correlational studies of home literacy with evaluations of school programmes, each source was coded for design before comparison, and claims about programme effects are drawn only from studies that reported an outcome measure rather than participation figures.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Finding

The synthesis produced four main findings. First, literacy culture depends on an ecological partnership that connects classroom literacy, home literacy, and community literacy. Second, school-community partnerships are effective when they are organized through shared roles, not through occasional events. Third, reading motivation and literacy identity must become explicit targets of partnership programs. Fourth, literacy culture needs formative monitoring so that schools can evaluate whether partnership activities actually change access, routines, participation, and student literacy output.

The first finding indicates that literacy culture is strengthened when students encounter consistent literacy messages across school, home, and community. At school, teachers provide structured literacy instruction, reading routines, writing tasks, discussion activities, and feedback. At home, families can provide reading time, shared reading, storytelling, encouragement, and monitoring of reading habits. In the community, local libraries, youth groups, cultural organizations, volunteers, universities, and local government agencies can provide books, reading spaces, mentors, writing platforms, and literacy events. These contexts become mutually reinforcing when the school coordinates them through a clear partnership program.

The second finding concerns the difference between ceremonial partnership and instructional partnership. Ceremonial partnership

refers to collaboration that is visible but weakly connected to learning outcomes, such as one-time book donation events, formal ceremonies, or public campaigns without follow-up. Instructional partnership refers to collaboration that directly supports students' literacy development through reading mentoring, family reading routines, community-based writing projects, library orientation, literacy workshops, and student publication. The literature suggests that partnership quality matters more than the number of stakeholders involved (Sheldon, 2003; Bryan & Henry, 2012).

The third finding shows that parental engagement should be understood as engagement with children's learning rather than only involvement in school activities. Goodall and Montgomery (2014) distinguish parental involvement with schools from parental engagement with learning. This distinction is important for literacy culture because parents may rarely attend formal school meetings but still contribute strongly through shared reading, storytelling, home discussion, vocabulary exposure, and encouragement. Therefore, school literacy programs should offer simple, inclusive, and culturally appropriate ways for families to support literacy at home.

The fourth finding emphasizes the role of community resources. Many communities have literacy assets that are not formally recognized by schools, including local storytellers, village libraries, religious institutions, youth organizations, cultural practitioners, local writers, community reading parks, and university volunteers. These assets can support literacy when schools map them systematically and align them with learning goals. For example, a local cultural figure can support storytelling sessions, a university student group can become reading mentors, and a local library can host monthly book discussions.

The fifth finding concerns culturally responsive literacy. Literacy culture becomes more meaningful when reading materials reflect students' cultural experiences, local knowledge, language practices, and social realities. Community partnership can help schools select local stories, oral traditions, environmental texts, community histories, and everyday informational texts. This approach can reduce the distance between school literacy and community life, allowing students to see reading and writing as tools for understanding their own world.

The final finding relates to monitoring. Many literacy programs report implementation activities but do not systematically evaluate whether students read more frequently, enjoy reading more, access more diverse texts, discuss books with others, write for real audiences, or participate in community literacy events. A strong partnership

program requires simple but meaningful indicators, such as student reading logs, book borrowing data, family reading reports, student reflections, writing portfolios, community participation records, and teacher observation notes.

Table 2 Dimensions of School and Community Partnership for Literacy Culture

Dimension	Main Actors	Core Activity	Expected Literacy Culture Outcome
Shared literacy vision	Principal, teachers, parents, community leaders	Developing common literacy goals and partnership roles	Literacy becomes a collective responsibility
Home-school reading bridge	Teachers, parents, students	Shared reading logs, home reading routines, family discussion prompts	Reading continues beyond classroom time
Community resource mobilization	Libraries, volunteers, universities, local organizations	Book access, reading mentors, literacy events, writing clubs	Students gain broader literacy support
Culturally responsive literacy	Teachers, cultural figures, local writers, families	Using local stories, oral traditions, and community texts	Literacy becomes relevant to student identity
Formative monitoring	Teachers, school literacy team, partners	Tracking routines, motivation, access, participation, and outputs	Program improvement becomes evidence-based

Source: Synthesized from the reviewed literature.

Pedagogical Strategies for Strengthening Literacy Culture

The synthesis identifies five pedagogical strategies that can be used by schools. The first strategy is school-community literacy mapping. Schools need to identify available literacy resources, including people, places, texts, media, institutions, and cultural practices. The mapping should not only list resources but also determine how each resource can support learning. For example, a community library can support book access, local storytellers can support narrative literacy, and university volunteers can support reading mentoring.

The second strategy is the home-school reading bridge. This strategy connects classroom reading tasks with family-supported reading at home. Teachers can provide weekly reading prompts, short parent guidance notes, reading logs, and discussion questions. The aim is not to burden parents with formal teaching responsibilities but to help them create literacy interaction. Simple activities such as asking children to retell a story, discuss a character, explain new vocabulary, or relate a text to family experience can strengthen home literacy routines.

The third strategy is community reading mentorship. Students can be paired with trained mentors from universities, libraries, youth organizations, or community groups. Mentors may support reluctant readers, facilitate small reading circles, help students choose books, and provide positive models of reading behavior. Mentorship is particularly useful when teachers face large classes and cannot provide individual reading support to all students.

The fourth strategy is culturally situated literacy events. Schools can organize reading festivals, storytelling days, local history writing projects, community book talks, poetry performances, student magazines, or exhibitions of student writing. These events should not be limited to competition; they should create authentic audiences for students' literacy products. When students know that their writing will be read by families and community members, literacy becomes more purposeful.

The fifth strategy is data-informed program reflection. Literacy teams should regularly examine evidence from reading logs, library borrowing records, student reflections, teacher observations, parental feedback, and student writing portfolios. This evidence can be used to identify which activities are working, which students are less engaged, which families need support, and which community partners are most effective. Program reflection prevents literacy partnership from becoming routine without improvement.

Table 3 Pedagogical Strategies and Implementation Mechanisms

Strategy	Implementation Mechanism	Evidence Collected	Risk to Anticipate
Literacy mapping	Identify human, textual, institutional, and cultural resources around the school	Partnership map and resource inventory	Mapping becomes a list without action plan
Home-school reading bridge	Provide reading prompts, logs, and parent guidance for home literacy routines	Reading logs and family feedback	Parents feel overburdened or excluded
Community reading mentorship	Train volunteers to facilitate reading circles and support reluctant readers	Mentor notes and student reflections	Mentors lack pedagogical orientation
Culturally situated literacy events	Use local stories, community issues, and student publications as literacy products	Student writing products and event documentation	Events become ceremonial without learning follow-up
Data-informed reflection	Review participation, access, motivation, and literacy outputs periodically	Monitoring dashboard and program notes	Data are collected but not used for improvement

Source: Author synthesis based on reviewed literature.

2. Discussion

The findings indicate that literacy culture should be understood as an ecological and social construct. It is ecological because students' literacy practices are shaped by school, home, peer, and community environments. It is social because reading and writing become meaningful when they are recognized, shared, discussed, and used for real purposes. This interpretation is consistent with home literacy research showing that literacy development is influenced by family practices and literacy resources, not only classroom instruction (Burgess et al., 2002; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Hood et al., 2008).

The role of school-community partnership is therefore to create continuity among different literacy environments. Students may receive literacy instruction at school, but their reading habits are reinforced when families provide time and encouragement, communities provide access and social recognition, and local institutions provide literacy spaces. This continuity is important because literacy culture is built through repetition and social legitimacy. A program that exists only during school hours may improve exposure, but a program that enters family and community routines is more likely to form habits.

The evidence from parental involvement meta-analyses strengthens this argument. Jaynes (2003, 2007), Castro et al. (2015), Wilder (2014), and Kim (2022) show that parental involvement and engagement are associated with student academic outcomes. However, these relationships are complex. Not all forms of involvement have equal effects. Activities that communicate expectations, support learning routines, and create home learning conditions are often more meaningful than superficial participation. Thus, literacy partnership should prioritize high-value practices, such as shared reading, reading discussion, book access, and parental encouragement.

Reading motivation is another important mechanism. Literacy culture cannot be reduced to material access. A school may have many books, but students may not read if they do not experience relevance, autonomy, confidence, or social support. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), Baker and Wigfield (1999), and Guthrie et al. (2004) show that motivation is related to reading activity and comprehension. Therefore, school-community partnerships should create motivational conditions through book choice, peer discussion, public recognition, family encouragement, culturally relevant texts, and authentic audiences for student writing.

However, partnership programs also create risks. The first risk is tokenism, where community actors are invited for symbolic presence

but not engaged in instructional planning. The second risk is inequality, where families with more time, resources, or educational background participate more actively than families with limited access. The third risk is sustainability, where programs depend on a few enthusiastic teachers or partners and decline when personnel change. The fourth risk is weak evaluation, where program success is claimed through activity documentation rather than evidence of changed literacy practices.

To reduce these risks, schools need a partnership governance structure. A literacy partnership team should include teachers, school leaders, parent representatives, students, librarians, and community partners. The team should define program goals, stakeholder roles, activity cycles, communication channels, indicators, and review schedules. This structure makes partnership more stable and accountable. It also helps ensure that community activities remain connected to curriculum and student learning.

Table 4 Recommended Evaluation Indicators for Literacy Partnership Programs

Indicator	Question	Possible Evidence	Use for Improvement
Access	Do students have sufficient and relevant reading materials?	Book inventory, borrowing records, reading corner use	Identify book gaps and access barriers
Participation	Who joins literacy activities and who is left out?	Attendance, partner records, student participation notes	Improve inclusion and outreach
Routine	Do students read and write regularly?	Reading logs, home reports, classroom routines	Strengthen continuity between school and home
Motivation	Do students enjoy and value literacy activities?	Student reflections, interest surveys, interviews	Adjust text choice and activity design
Output	What literacy products do students create?	Book reviews, stories, journals, presentations, publications	Assess meaningful literacy use

Source: Author synthesis based on partnership and literacy literature.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The quantitative evidence is substantial. The meta-analyses by Fan and Chen (2001) and Jeynes (2005) establish a consistent association between parental involvement and achievement, with the strongest effects for parental expectations and home discussion rather than for school attendance at events, and Kim and Hill (2015) show that fathers' involvement contributes independently and is routinely overlooked. For

literacy specifically, Bus, van IJzendoorn, and Pellegrini (1995) demonstrated that joint book reading predicts later reading success, Mol and Bus (2011) traced the cumulative effect of print exposure from infancy to adulthood, and Niklas and Schneider (2013) showed that the home literacy environment predicts early reading and spelling beyond socio-economic status. Van Steensel (2006) documents how socio-cultural circumstances shape that environment in multi-ethnic settings, and the meta-analysis by Van Steensel, McElvany, Kurvers, and Herppich (2011) reports that family literacy programmes produce small but real effects, larger when the programme trains a specific interaction rather than simply encouraging reading.

The motivational evidence carries a caution for programme design. McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) documented in a national survey that attitudes towards recreational and academic reading decline steadily across the elementary years, and most sharply among the weakest readers, which means a literacy programme that only increases reading volume may widen rather than narrow the attitudinal gap. Morgan and Fuchs (2007) reviewed the relationship between skill and motivation and found it bidirectional, so that struggling readers withdraw from reading and fall further behind. Both findings support the emphasis in the reviewed partnership programmes on choice, social reading, and visible success rather than on quantity targets alone.

Implications for Schools and Programme Designers

Three implications follow for schools building a literacy culture. First, partnership must be staffed and scheduled rather than delegated to enthusiasm: the reviewed programmes that survived beyond a single year had a named coordinator, a calendar, and a budget, while those that depended on individual initiative ended when that person moved. Second, families should be given a specific interaction to practise rather than a general encouragement to read, since the family literacy evidence attributes the larger effects to programmes that trained a defined activity such as dialogic reading. Third, the community component should supply what the school cannot - books in home languages, reading spaces outside school hours, adult readers whom children recognise - rather than duplicating classroom instruction.

Evaluation deserves the same deliberateness. The reviewed programmes most often reported participation counts, which record activity rather than learning, and the indicators proposed here are intended to be collected by teachers without additional testing: reading volume, range of material chosen, attitude at two points in the year, and the proportion of families engaged in a defined activity. Schools

that recorded these were able to adjust the programme during the year rather than only report on it afterwards.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Four limitations qualify this synthesis. It is a narrative review and computes no effect sizes, although it draws on published meta-analyses. Much of the parental involvement evidence is correlational, so the direction of causation cannot be settled from it. The family literacy studies come predominantly from North American and European settings whose home literacy resources differ substantially from those in many Indonesian communities. And the reviewed partnership programmes rarely report what happened after external support ended. Future research could evaluate an Indonesian school-community literacy programme against outcome rather than participation measures, test which family activities transfer to low-print homes, and follow programmes long enough to establish whether a literacy culture persists once the programme does not.

D. Conclusion

This article synthesized the role of school and community partnership programs in strengthening literacy culture. The review shows that literacy culture develops when reading and writing are supported consistently across school, family, and community environments. Effective partnership programs require shared literacy vision, family engagement with children's learning, community resource mobilization, culturally responsive texts, structured reading routines, student agency, and formative monitoring. The synthesis identifies five practical strategies: school-community literacy mapping, home-school reading bridges, community reading mentorship, culturally situated literacy events, and data-informed program reflection. The article also highlights risks such as ceremonial collaboration, unequal participation, weak sustainability, and inadequate evaluation. Therefore, schools should design literacy partnership as an instructional ecosystem rather than an occasional campaign. Future empirical research should test the proposed model through mixed-method, design-based, or quasi-experimental studies involving schools, families, libraries, and community organizations in diverse educational contexts.

Declaration of AI-Assisted Technologies

In preparing this manuscript, the authors used AI-assisted tools only to improve English language quality, grammar, readability,

sentence clarity, and academic expression. The AI tools were not used to generate research data, conduct data analysis, produce findings, or draw conclusions. All conceptual arguments, data interpretation, methodological decisions, and scholarly conclusions remain the full responsibility of the authors. The authors carefully reviewed, edited, and verified all AI-assisted outputs to ensure the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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