SCENARIO

It is the end of May and Mr. Blackhawk has just completed his first year of teaching second grade. He reflects on the year by compiling two lists—one of triumphs and one of trials. He lists his triumphs first and is pleased with his accomplishments. Then he begins his list of trials. At the top he writes: PARENTS and LITERACY ISSUES. As an undergraduate he learned that teachers are responsible for students' cognitive growth and collaborating with parents so they engage with their children's education. He never expected, however, the wide of literacy abilities and the range of parents' personalities and their unpredictable reactions. In general, he has encountered four types of reading issues: (1) students who were excellent word callers, but did not comprehend texts, (2) student who lacked fluency as they struggled to identified words, (3) students who had a limited vocabulary that resulted in poor comprehension, and (4) students who read either too fast or to quietly to cover up their inability to read.

Mr. Blackhawk has encountered six approaches from parents and caregivers: (1) those who are concerned and want to do everything to aid their child; (2) those who appear not to care in the least about their child's education and seem to not want to be bothered with school; (3) those who refuse to believe that their child has any literacy problems; (4) those who cannot help their child because of a language barrier but do care about their child's progress; (5) those who are new to the United States and do not understand its educational system; and (6) those who seem to blame him for everything—these parents are frequently at the school interrupting his class.

Mr. Blackhawk decides his top priority for the summer is to research his community in order to find free effective tutoring programs and effective school-parents partnerships. He heard that there are a number of free after-school tutoring services in his community and a number of community library initiatives that focus on building partnerships between parents and schools. During the summer he plans to work on finding free tutoring for his students and visiting the community library to understand the programs they offer.

As you are reading the chapter, consider the following questions:

Guiding questions

1. What other resources from his community could Mr. Blackhawk use to help him?

2. What activities could Mr. Blackhawk initiate to encourage parent engagement?

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