

WHAT'S NEW WITH KIDS?

May 2006

Site of the Month

This month's Web site features the Harvard Graduate School of Education Harvard Family Research Project. Storybook Corner, one of the sections on the site, provides various resources including a bibliography of storybooks with family-involvement themes and information (tools) on how to use them. Geared towards children ages four to eight, the English-language, hard-cover books depict "families engaging in activities at home, at school, or in the community with the purpose of supporting children's school education or more general learning."

I selected the description for *Halmoni and the Picnic* by Sook Nyul Choi (1993, Houghton Mifflin) to share with you.

Plot Summary: A Korean American girl in elementary school is worried that her grandmother, a recent immigrant to the U.S., is lonely in a new country. The grandmother is embarrassed about her lack of English skills and finds it difficult to adjust to American culture. Through the encouragement of her friends and teacher, the girl invites her grandmother to chaperone a trip to the park. The grandmother joins the class for the day and gets to know her granddaughter's friends and teacher. She contributes special foods and traditions from Korean culture to the class picnic.

Family Involvement Summary: This book demonstrates how school is not only a separate sphere of development of a child's life, but also a place where connections take place every day among families, teachers, and community members. The teacher reaches out to her student's family by inviting the grandmother to chaperone a school trip. She also demonstrates openness to diversity when she becomes the first person to try the grandmother's Korean dish, kimbap. Through a school-sponsored activity, the student finds that her peers and teacher appreciate her grandmother's culture. The grandmother feels more confident about being involved in her granddaughter's school activities and experiences the power of cultural exchange.

The site also provides resources that parents or teachers can use to get the most out of reading the books to children. Parents, for example, could use the Reference Desk section of the site to access the Reading Activities List, which provides activities that involve the child. One such activity is to ask a child what he/she thinks will happen in the story before reading the book and if the book title and the picture on the front give him/her any ideas.

Teachers may also find the Family Harvard Research Project useful. For more information, go to: <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/storybook/index.html>.

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