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ABSTRACT

This document is designed to help literacy practitioners and others promote and establish family literacy programs to prepare adult learners in South Carolina for their roles as parents, workers, health consumers, and citizens. The rationale for promoting family literacy is explained. The following topics are discussed: a design for family literacy programs; ways leaders might modify the original program design; and results of effective family literacy programs for parents, children, and families. A section on how to get started lists 18 planning steps for starting family literacy programs, details 10 principles of effective family literacy development practice, and offers advice from the field. The following are among the aspects of program development and delivery that are covered: collaborative planning; active, ongoing recruitment; support services to overcome physical and emotional barriers to access; important staff credentials and personal characteristics; collaboration; retention; staff training; meaningful curriculum; funding; and ongoing evaluation. A section on ways of measuring success lists 28 possible outcomes of family literacy programs. A section on resources presents an annotated list of 17 programs and curricula. Explanations of the National Adult Literacy Survey levels of literacy and 12 guidelines for using effective adult education principles are appended. (Contains 12 tables and 26 endnotes.) (MN)

Promoting Family Literacy

A Report of the
Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life at Clemson University

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Promoting Family Literacy

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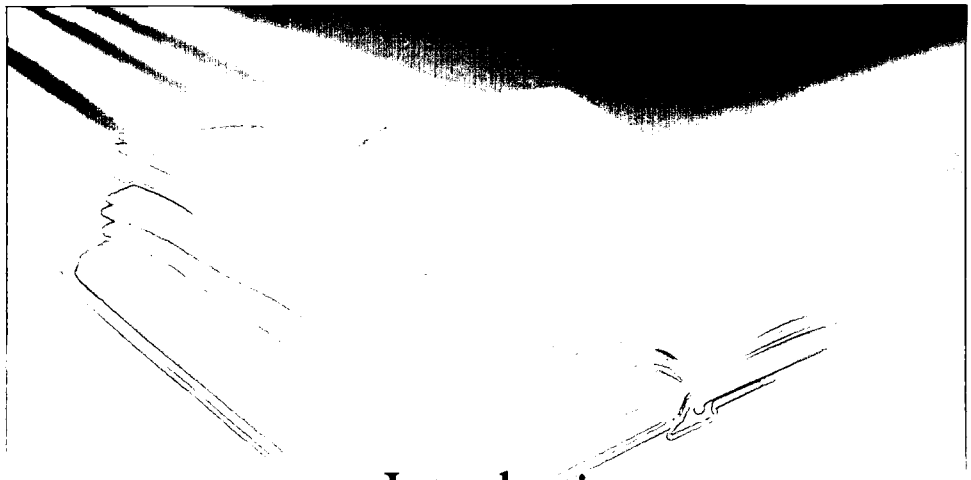


Introduction

We are a nation divided. On one side, adults have the skills and knowledge to find and keep good jobs, help their children in school and at home, and play active roles in their communities. Adults on the other side lack those skills, and they and their families are falling further and further behind.

Now is the time to deal with this growing divide, to focus on the education of adults. Our society and economy grow more complex with every passing day, and all adults in the U.S. must have opportunities to continue learning throughout their lives.

Literacy encompasses the basic skills that pave the way to lifelong learning.

National Literacy 2000 Summit Steering Committee[1]

The skills adults need as parents/family members, workers, and citizens go beyond the basic academic skills that have traditionally been targeted by adult education programs. Equipped for the Future (EFF) is the National Institute for Literacy's standards-based system reform initiative aimed at improving the literacy system's capacity to equip adults with the skills needed to fulfill these roles.

Literacy is the ability to read, write, and speak English proficiently, to compute and solve problems, and to use technology in order to become a life-long learner and to be effective in the family, in the workplace and in the community.[2] It involves gaining proficiency in 4 primary skill areas. Table 1 identifies these four areas. As is evident, being a literate individual involves more than being able to read and write.

Table 1. Basic Literacy Skills Needed By All People

Communication Skills

- Read with understanding
- Convey ideas in writing
- Speak so others can understand
- Listen actively
- Observe critically

Decision Making Skills

- Solve problems and make decisions
- Plan
- Use math to solve problems and communicate

Interpersonal Skills

- Cooperate with others
- Guide Others
- Advocate and Influence
- Resolve conflict and negotiate

Lifelong Learning Skills

- Take responsibility for learning
- Learn through research
- Reflect and evaluate
- Use information and communications technology

Because adults tend to learn things that are important to them and learn when they need to, the EFF initiative organized literacy education around the basic roles adults play. Four roles are primary to most adults: parent/family member, worker, health consumer/provider and citizen. EFF, in their report on content standards for literacy education, recommends that the teaching of the 4 literacy skill areas noted above should be done within the context of the key roles adults play and the pervasive literacy-related tasks they perform in these roles. Table 2 describes the role at parent and family member and tasks associated with this role. The EFF web site provides information on the standards and skills associated with this role, as well as that of worker and citizen. (See http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff.html.)[3]

Table 2. **Equipped For the Future – Parent and Family Member Role Map**

The Equipped for the Future Role Maps describe what adults do when they are effective in their roles as parents/family members, workers, and citizens/community members. EFF partners developed the role maps by asking adults from many different walks of life to describe what they needed to be able to do to fulfill these four roles. Each role map includes the following parts: the key purpose or central aim of the role, broad areas of responsibility that are the critical functions adults perform, and key activities through which the role is performed. We can use the role maps to identify what it is important for us to teach and learn.

Key purpose of the role: Effective family members contribute to building and maintaining a strong family system that promotes growth and development.[4]

Broad Area of Responsibility: Promote Family Members' Growth and Development

Key Activities

- Make and pursue plans for self-improvement.
- Guide and mentor other family members
- Foster informal education of children
- Support children's formal education
- Direct and discipline children

Broad Area of Responsibility: Strengthen the Family System

Key Activities

- Create a vision for the family and work to achieve it
- Promote values, ethics, and cultural heritage within the family
- Form and maintain supportive family relationships
- Provide opportunities for each family member to experience success
- Encourage open communication among the generations

Broad Area of Responsibility: Meet Family Needs and Responsibilities

Key Activities

- Provide for safety and physical needs
- Manage family resources
- Balance priorities to meet multiple needs and responsibilities
- Give and receive support outside the immediate family

The National Institute for Literacy is charged by the U.S. Congress to develop standards for leaders to use to equip adults with needed literacy skills. For each role, key everyday literacy-related tasks were identified. These tasks endure through time and across the various roles. They are the building blocks of being a literate adult. The 13 everyday tasks are found in Table 3. They are primary competencies used to parent and relate effectively to family members. Educators are encouraged to use them as the basis for developing learning opportunities for adults who need to increase their literacy proficiency. You will see that these tasks are a further amplification of the role maps described above.

Table 3. **13 Everyday Literacy-related Parenting and Family Member Tasks**

- **Gather, analyze and use parenting and family goods and services information**
  (Find and analyze information from diverse sources. Use it to form opinions, make decisions, and take action.)
  - Monitor and gather information form a variety of sources
  - Establish criteria for the quality and appropriateness of the information
  - Assess the value of the information
  - Use the information to make informed decisions

- **Manage resources**
  (Find, manage, share, and allocate time, money, and material resources in a way that supports your own parenting needs, goals, and priorities and those of your family, community and workplace.)
  - Identify those resources you have and those you need
  - Determine where resources are and how they can be obtained
  - Use the resources in an efficient and effective manner
  - Balance resources effectively for family, work, community and self

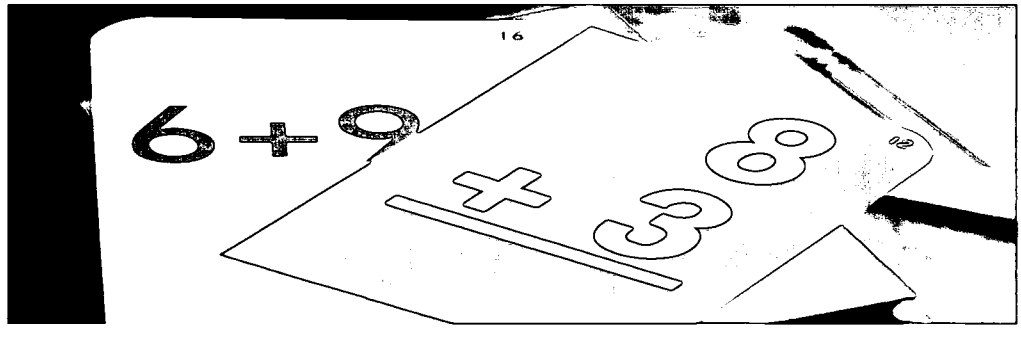
- **Work within the big picture**
  (Look beyond the immediate situation. Take into account the structures, culture, practices, and formal and informal rules and expectations of the goods and services systems that influence and shape your parenting and family relations actions.)
  - Gather information about a system and how it works
  - Determine your relationship to the system and the roles you and others play within it
  - Monitor the system and predict changes
  - Base your efforts to influence the system on your knowledge of how it works

- **Work together**
  (Cooperate with others to learn, accomplish tasks, and pursue common parenting and family relations-related goals.)
- Identify what needs to be done and plan how to do it
- Pay attention to the relationships within the group as well as to completing the task
- Identify and draw upon everyone's strengths in carrying out the work of the group
- Recognize and deal with conflict in a productive manner

- **Provide leadership**
  (Inspire and direct others in shaping and achieving common parenting and family relations goals.)
- Institute and manage plans for action and change based on an understanding of the big picture
- Organize and motive others to act
- Guide sound problem solving and decision making
- Assure consistent monitoring and evaluation of performance

- **Guide and support others**
  (Help others succeed by setting an example of healthy living, providing opportunities for learning, or giving other kinds of assistance.)
- Acknowledge and reward others' strengths and accomplishments
- Contribute to creating supportive learning environments and experiences
- Empower others through mentoring, coaching and being a role model

- **Seek guidance and support from others**
  (Help yourself succeed by asking for information, advice, and assistance.)
- Recognize when you need help and know where to go for it
- Seek out relationships with people whose judgment is trusted
- Create and make use of networks of personal and professional contacts
- Be responsive to new ideas and accept and use constructive criticism and feedback



- **Develop and express sense of self**
  (Create you own personal voice in healthy living. Use you understanding of self to guide your parenting actions and family interactions.)
- Examine and clarify your own values and beliefs, recognizing the role your cultural heritage and personal history play in shaping these and in determining the possibilities of expression
- Maintain standards of integrity
- Consider the constraints of the situation as well as your own strengths and weaknesses when choosing a course of action
- Pursue outlets for interests and talents to maintain emotional and physical health

- **Respect others and value diversity**
  (Respect and appreciate the values, beliefs, cultures, and history of others. Use this understanding to counteract prejudice and stereotypes.)
  - Create an environment where others feel welcome, are included, and thrive
  - Encourage and carefully consider a wide range of opinion and beliefs
  - Educate yourself about other cultures
  - Challenge the beliefs that a person's inherent capacity is limited by background or group membership.

- **Exercise rights and responsibilities**
  (Act and advocate on behalf of yourself and others, taking into account laws, social standards, and cultural traditions.)
  - Recognize and assume your share of family, civic, and work responsibilities
  - Monitor and keep up-to-date on federal, state, and local laws and regulations
  - Make sure your own behavior is just and responsible
  - Take personal responsibility to bring about change or resolve problems to achieve a common good

- **Create and pursue vision and goals**
  (Dare to dream. Be clear about where you want to go to be and maintain health and well being and how to get there.)
  - Articulate a vision that embodies your values and goals or those of your family, community or work group
  - Establish attainable goals that are compatible with that vision
  - Develop a realistic plan to move toward the vision and goals
  - Create alternative means of meeting your goals that anticipate the effects of change

- **Use technology and other tools to accomplish goals**
  (Be familiar with a variety of tools and technologies that can make it easier to achieve your parenting and family interaction goals.)
  - Keep up-to-date on developments in tools and technologies that may be useful for communicating, managing information, solving problems, and carrying out daily tasks
  - Determine which tools are most useful for the purpose and context at hand
  - Use complex tools, machines, and equipment to solve problems

- **Keep pace with change**
  (Anticipate, manage and adapt to change in family conditions and family support systems that affect your life.)
  - Adjust your goals and plans over time to take into account actual or prospective changes in the family
  - Keep abreast of and evaluate trends in goods and services industries that support family and community well-being, as well as the nation and world
  - Determine what skills and knowledge are needed to meet emerging parenting and family interaction needs or new situations
  - Create opportunities to expand your own skills and knowledge, as well as those of your family, community, and work group.

According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, 20 percent of the US adult population, scored at the lowest of five levels of literacy. In South Carolina 25% of the population fell in the lowest literacy category - 24% in Lancaster County and 30% in Chester County. This means that many parents are missing employment opportunities as well as the opportunity to be their child's first and best teacher. Even those parents who score in the next lowest level of literacy are ill equipped with some of the basic skills and information necessary to function successfully as employees or as parents of children who are successful in school. This means that over 56% of the population in South Carolina, 60% in Lancaster County, and 68% in Chester County do not have the basic skills they need for family life, employment, or citizenship. The Appendix provides a description of literacy levels and what is tested.[5]

Table 4. **Challenges for Adult Literacy System Development**

1: As a result of higher standards in K-12 education and the phasing out of remedial courses at institutions of higher education, the number of youth seeking - and being pointed toward - adult education services will increase. This is likely to put more pressure on an already strained system.

2: The changing demographic makeup of the United States is increasing the number of people who need adult education and literacy services. Access to services is a critical issue, in terms of both the growing need and the varying concerns of different populations.

3: Adults need more opportunities to gain the skills and knowledge needed to meet changing job demands and to succeed in the workforce.

4: Learning disabilities (LD) are increasingly recognized as a major factor in the low literacy of adults, but too little is known - even among practitioners - about the nature and scope of the problem, the ways it affects adult learning, and how it should be addressed. Moreover, too few adults with LD are being identified and receiving appropriate instruction and accommodations.

5: New technology is profoundly changing the way we live, work, and learn. This technology both requires and facilitates lifelong learning. But the adult education and literacy field has not yet taken full advantage of the potential technology has for transforming adult learning.

6: Public support for improving education for our nation's youth is increasing, but we lack that same support for improving adult education and literacy programs. There is a need for a better understanding of the importance of adult education and literacy to the nation's (and Lancaster and Chester counties') well-being.

7: Providing high quality, consistent services to adult learners is limited by a variety of critical programmatic factors. Among the most pressing are: a lack of consensus on goals, serious limitations of staff time and professional development opportunities, lack of research and information on best practices, mismatches between program structure and learners' needs, and the lack of active attention to adult learners as whole people.

We must and can do better to meet the needs of our citizens who are not adequately prepared for their roles as parents, workers and citizens. However, we face significant challenges in creating an effective system for raising literacy levels for adults. These challenges, described in Table 4, direct our attention to problem areas that need to be addressed.[6]

Communities committed to improving literacy rates can arrive at the solutions necessary to meet these challenges through a system of adult literacy that effectively involves and prepares adult learners for their roles as parents, workers, health consumers; and citizens. One strategy communities can employ is to design and operate family literacy programs.

Why Family Literacy?

The family has a tremendous influence on our lives. It is where learning begins, where attitudes are shaped, and where the first seeds of success are sown. Many parents are unable to total an entry on a deposit slip, locate the time and place of a meeting on a form, or identify a piece of specific information in a brief news article.[7] Reading is difficult for these parents, so they do not read at home and do not read to their children. They did not do well in school, so they do not get involved in their child's learning at home or at school. They are insecure about their lack of education and, as a result, do not pass along a value of learning to their children.

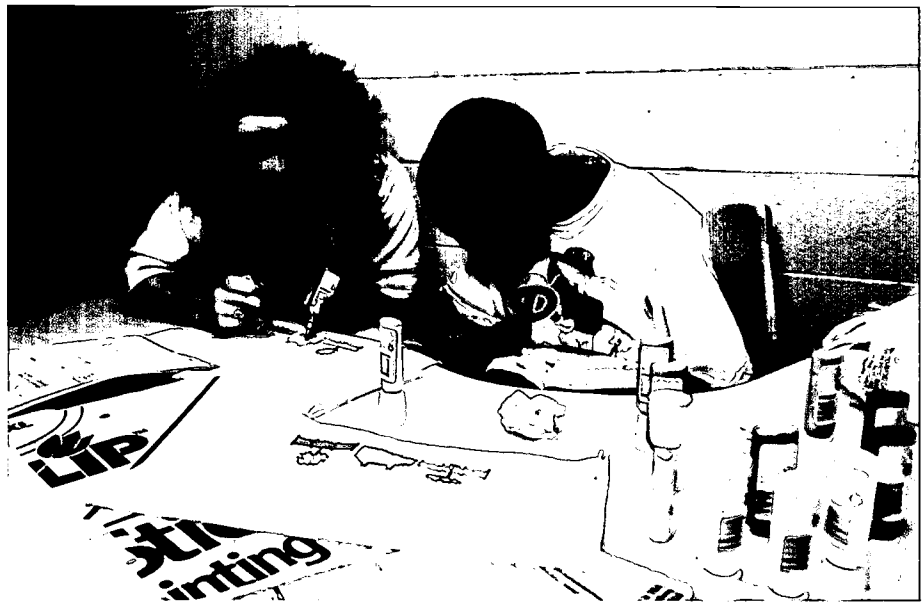
Why Focus Literacy Efforts on Parents?

One of life's defining moments is parenthood. Whether you are a teenager, young adult, or even middle-aged, if you are a parent for the first time, your life changes dramatically. Parenthood is considered a transformational occasion in one's life, for rich and poor alike.

Suddenly, you have new thoughts, feelings, and worries. Your feelings and thoughts are focused on a new life and what it takes to do the best you can for your baby. You now worry about him and about yourself as a parent. You want to know what to do to provide the best care possible for your baby. You want him to grow up to be happy and successful, feeling loved and loving.

You are motivated to do things for your baby that you were never motivated to do for yourself. Parenthood provides the motivation to better oneself because it is important to the well being of the new baby.

To capitalize on this motivational opportunity, family literacy programs are designed specifically to address the needs and interests of parents with low literacy skills. This design makes adult education programs more meaningful and useful to adults who are parents.



These programs are intergenerational; they address literacy for the adult and for the child. By addressing literacy skills in two or more generations, family literacy programs have the opportunity to raise low literacy levels for adults and prevent future low literacy levels for their children. An added bonus is that adult students can first experience success in the role they feel most comfortable - parent, worker, or citizen - and then transfer the skills and apply their knowledge to the other roles.

Why Is Literacy for Parents Important to Our Community?

Poverty, illiteracy, and educational failure are inter-related problems. According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, the majority of adults who demonstrated literacy skills in the lowest levels of proficiency were living in poverty. Research has shown that children in these homes are less likely to enter school prepared to learn and are more likely to drop out before they complete high school. Higher levels of adult income have a positive impact on both the income level and the educational future of the children in a family.[8]

Adults who have not mastered the basic skills have fewer job opportunities and are unlikely to be successful in the labor market. They are inhibited from being involved in their child's learning and cannot model appropriate literate behavior. They pass to their children the attitudes and lack of abilities that keep the family from breaking the cycle of poverty.

Research studies assert that children's motivation to succeed in school is influenced by the educational achievement of their parents. These studies stress the impact of the family and social environment on a child's cognitive development and literacy acquisition. Family income greatly affects a youth's chances of dropping out of school.

Parents with improved literacy skills will be more likely to counteract the three most powerful predictors of low achievement for their child: low literacy skills in parents, family poverty, and lack of involvement by parents in their child's learning. By improving their literacy skills, parents can change their future and that of their child, from one of school failure and poverty to one of school success and greater job opportunities.[9]

See Table 5 for additional data on the impact of low literacy levels on families.[10]

Family literacy can work to break the cycle of undereducation; it can help families create a legacy for future success because family literacy works with the whole family - parents and children learning together. It builds on families' abilities, and draws from the power of the family. Family literacy works for the family. And subsequently, it works for the community, the nation, the economy, and society at large. [11]

What Does Family Literacy Look Like?

The concept behind family literacy programs is that strengthening adult literacy and parenting skills provides a pathway to improve adults' functioning and to prevent low literacy skills and academic problems that are likely to occur for their children.

The Design for Family Literacy Programs

Family literacy encompasses a unique educational approach that includes four separate but integrated components: adult education, child education, parent and child learning time together, and parent group time. Table 6 describes the four family literacy components.[12]

These four components provide the framework for family literacy programs. In order to function effectively, these components must be well integrated - operating together to provide the experiences parents need to build their skills to fulfill the roles of parent, worker, and citizen. Within this framework, a great deal of diversity is found from one program to another. Family literacy programs vary from one community to another as each program works to meet the needs and to use the assets of the participants and the community.

The original design for a family literacy program was a center-based approach. It was often located in a school, and it combined, modified, and integrated

Table 5. **How Literacy Impacts Families**

- There is a strong, positive correlation between educational achievement and economics. In 1996, 25 to 34-year-olds who had dropped out of high school were more than three times as likely to receive public assistance as high school graduates who did not go to college.

- People with higher levels of education were more likely to be in the labor force than less educated individuals. In 1997, the unemployment rate for persons without a high school diploma was 8.1%. For people with a high school degree that rate was 4.3%. In 1998 among 25 to 34-year-olds, 78.5% of men and 47.3% of women without a high school diploma were employed. For the same year and age group, 87% of men and 69% of women with a GED or high school diploma were employed.

- As education increases, wages increase. National figures show that a man without a high school degree earns approximately $16,000 per year, whereas a man with a bachelor's degree earns approximately $48,000 a year.

- There is a strong correlation between low literacy skills and welfare. Approximately 70% of adults who received public assistance test in the bottom two levels of literacy proficiency. Approximately 50% do not graduate from high school.

- The more types of reading materials in the home, the higher students are in reading proficiency.

- States where homes have more reading materials generally have higher average reading proficiency scores.

- The substantial relationship between parent involvement for the school and the reading comprehension levels of fourth grade classroom is significant. Where involvement is low, classroom means for reading comprehension average 46 points below the national average, and where involvement is high, classrooms score 28 points above the national average, a gap of 74 points. Even after controlling for the other attributes of communities, schools, principals, classes, and students that might well confound this relationship, the gap is 44 points.

- As a mother's education increases, the likelihood that she will read to her child increases.

- Parental involvement in schooling and avoidance of frequent school mobility are important predictors of high school completion.

Table 6. **Four Components of Family Literacy Programs**

1. **Adult Education** - Parents work on basic educational skills, literacy skills, English language instruction and/or workplace skills in accordance with their goals.

2. **Child Education** - Children receive individualized literacy education that is appropriate for their age and developmental level.

3. **Parent and Child Together** - With program guidance, parents and children learn and play together through interactive literacy activities. Parents find they learn with and from their children. Many realize for the first time how much impact their teaching can have on their children. These times are focused on the 13 role related literacy activities as described in Tables 2 and 3.

4. **Parent Time** - Parents participate in groups that help them understand their child's literacy development and offer topics of interest such as life skills, coping skills, child rearing practices, pre-employment skills, etc. The focus of discussion is based on effective performance of parenting tasks as described in Tables 2 and 3.

adult education classes and early childhood classes. Modifications were made to provide the four components of family literacy: adult education, child education, parent and child time together, and parent group time.

A typical day in such a program:

- Arrival of both parents and children
- Breakfast for both
- Adult basic skills, job skills, and/or language instruction. Preschool for children.
- Parent and child are engaged in learning activities together.
- Lunch
- Parents meet together to discuss topics of interest for parenting, personal and professional growth. Children rest.
- Parents volunteer in the program. Preschool for children.
- Departure for parents and children[13]

This original design works well in communities where parents are not working and voluntarily agree to set aside several consecutive hours in a day for family literacy classes and where space exists in schools to allot to this programming. Where communities lack any of these factors, a family literacy design team

(community members, parents, service providers, and program staff) creatively design a program that makes use of community services in a program construct that fits the schedules and needs of parents.

Family literacy can take place in libraries, community centers, workplace sites, school classrooms and even jails. Programs should collaborate with clients and community members in creating the program design to help assure that the goals of the program match those of the populations served. Instructional approaches for both parents and children should be modified appropriately to respond to the variety of cultures within each program. Successful programs adapt practice and program design to the special needs of participants. Effective family literacy programs make use of community services and other resources in implementing each of the four components, serving as a catalyst in adapting these services to better meet the needs of the community and its families.

How Might Leaders Modify the Original Program Design?

Let's look at a few examples of why and how one would modify the original design to fit the needs of families and communities.

- If the community has a Parents as Teachers or another home visiting program, this could be modified to serve as the "parent and child together" component of the family literacy program rather than asking parents to go to center-based sessions.
- If parents are working, community services could be expanded to allow for evening and weekend services. The program design team would create a design that allowed for adult education, parenting group time, and parent and child learning time together to occur in non-traditional hours.
- If the location of the child development program or the adult education program is inaccessible, perhaps another location for one class of families could be found in a nontraditional service location such as a church, community center or work site.
- If good adult education and child development programs exist but eligible families are not attending, the family literacy program design team would canvas the community to better understand why parents are not taking advantage of these programs. The team would then include the target families in redesigning services to remove the barriers identified.

The modified design should provide quality programming for the four components of family literacy, integrate those components so that they work together for families, use resources in the community, and meet the needs and requirements of families involved. Effective programs, while looking different from one community to the next, adhere to principles of effective practice for family literacy. The result is that these programs improve program effectiveness because they are most appropriate for families and they do not duplicate community services.

Family literacy programs differ from traditional adult literacy programs in that they are designed to maximize the probability that adults who receive literacy education will actually succeed in transferring aspects of their new beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and skills intergenerationally to their children. Due to the intergenerational transfer of cognitive skills, including language and literacy, an investment in the literacy education of adults provides "double duty dollars." Family literacy improves the educational level of adults and simultaneously improves the educability and school success of the adults' children.[14]

Family literacy programs are different from family support programs in that they strive to develop literacy skills in both parent and child (See Table 1.) Family literacy programs also strive to teach literacy skills as they related to the role of parent and family member (See Tables 2 and 3). Thus the content of the learning experience is not only on effective parenting and family support but also on literacy skill development.

Do Family Literacy Programs Achieve Results?

Do family literacy programs really work? And if so, who benefits? A summary of documented results show that family literacy programs do work and that at least three groups benefit: parents, children, and families as units. See Table 7 for results.[15] By following the design of the four integrated components described earlier and the effective practices described later in this publication, one can reasonably expect to achieve similar results.

As these results demonstrate, family literacy programs provide excellent opportunities for parents with low level literacy skills to improve the lives of their family members. Family literacy programs also provide the community with excellent opportunities to address critical elements of a healthy community, e.g., literacy levels, employment rates, income, school test scores. Community members, service providers, and participants should work together from the beginning to design a program specific to the needs and assets of the participants and community to be served. Starting a family literacy program is a community project!

Table 7. **Results of Effective Family Literacy Programs**

Results for Parents

- Persistence in attending family literacy programs
- Attitudes about education improve; the value placed on education increases
- Reading achievement increases; (also applies to English as a Second Language (ESL) parents)
- Writing ability improves
- Math and science knowledge increases
- Knowledge about parenting options and child development increases
- Employment status or job satisfaction improves
- Educational level completed increases

Results for Children

- Achievement in school improves
- Attendance is more regular; education completion rates are higher
- Knowledge, including that measured by intelligence tests, improves
- Oral language accelerates
- Overall reading achievement improves
- Reading vocabulary improves
- Comprehension improves
- Writing improves
- Math and science achievement improves
- Social skills, self-esteem, and attitudes about school improve
- Health status improves

Results for Families

- Learn to value education
- Become more involved in school
- Become emotionally closer
- Read more and engage in more literate behaviors at home

How Do We Start?

Partnerships and planning are critical first steps to getting started. Initiating a family literacy program is extremely challenging. Start with a core group of committed community partners. Talk with as many people as possible to encourage and gauge their interest and commitment. Make sure you contact potential participants, community leaders, and ordinary community citizens as well as directors of other organizations and other professionals. Use this initial group to begin, bringing in others as your group evolves and plans develop. Remember the more inclusive you are in your planning group, the more community support you will enjoy. Generally speaking, the earlier individuals are involved the more commitment they feel to the program.

Start by arming yourselves with information. Use this book and the resources listed here as your beginning. There is a wealth of information available to you. The resources listed here will inevitably lead you to others. Once all members of your planning group are armed with knowledge, begin your planning.

The National Center for Family Literacy has a good guide for getting started that can assist your planning group, http://www.famlit.org/faqs/faqstart.html. This guide takes you through a process of questions in the areas essential to program planning and operation. Combine this list with the Planning Steps for Family Literacy Programs, Table 8.[16] Follow the guidance on effective practice presented in the next section of this booklet. Refer to the adult roles, skills and performance standards described in Equipped for the Future and found at the EFF web site - http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/.

Once your planning group is formed, you may want to assign some of the tasks to a smaller subset of the group. If you choose to employ this method of work, make sure that the entire group approves the work of the smaller group and has the information they need to give their approval. Good information is critical to good planning. One of the responsibilities of individuals on the planning group will be to make sure they are informed about the why, what, and how of family literacy and are able to inform others. Each

Table 8. **Planning Steps for Starting Family Literacy Programs**

1. Bring together a diverse, collaborative planning group.
2. Provide comprehensive information on effective family literacy programs to the planning group.
3. Identify the community needs you will be addressing.
4. Identify the assets your community has to assist you in meeting these needs.
5. Establish a common vision and identify realistic program goals.
6. Set realistic outcomes and measurements.
7. Identify the partners you will need to accomplish your goals and achieve your outcomes.
8. Develop a program design that uses community resources.
9. Identify a site or sites for your program.
10. Establish a staffing plan that is sufficient to address your goals.
11. Identify ways to address support services required by participants.
12. Identify the equipment and materials you will need.
13. Develop a realistic funding plan that allows you sufficient funds to accomplish your goals and achieve your outcomes.
14. Develop an evaluation plan that measures progress for participants and the program.
15. Develop a recruitment and retention plan for staff and participants.
16. Identify the curricula you will use.
17. Establish participant recognition strategies.
18. Prepare a staff development plan.

person in the group will have their own strengths in different aspects of family literacy. The strengths of any one member of the group will be complemented by different strengths of others in the group. Be sure to make everyone feel valued for the strengths they bring to the group.

Family literacy is a complex program. The planning group must be very specific and realistic in setting goals. It would be better to start small in goal setting. You might want to go through a brainstorming session, listing all the goals that you would want to set for the program, participants and for the community. Take this larger list and set priorities, choosing to focus on a few initially, and keep the others to address at a later time. Once you have established a well-defined program and experienced successes in meeting your goals, you can expand your goals.

What Will Help Us Be Successful?

Successful family literacy programs provide for four components: adult education, child education, parent and child learning time together, and parent group time. Effective programs will be designed in accordance with the adult learning principles found in Table 9 and the principles of adult literacy educational practice found in Table 10. Table 10 is elaborated in the Appendix. Successful programs will also follow the effective practices described below.

Applying these principles is hard work. It takes thinking and acting outside the "schooling" instructional box. Recruitment and retention rates often directly relate to how successful one is in applying these principles of teaching and communication. Reaching learning outcomes such as those mentioned previously are conditioned on using these principles effectively.

Principles of Effective Family Literacy Program Development Practice

Effective family literacy programs are guided by principles that integrate the most effective strategies for program planning with what is known works best for adult learners.

Table 9. Adult Learning Principles

1. Adults make choices about what they learn, when they learn, and how they learn it. In this regard adults are voluntary learners. Recognizing this aspect of adult learning will help in addressing two of the problems facing the adult literacy field - recruitment and retention of adult learners.

2. Adult experience is a valuable resource for learning. This principle recognizes that adults have had many experiences that have become integrated and internalized into their total personality. Respect for and an understanding of these experiences is a critical starting point for learning.

3. Adult learning should be linked directly to the needs and interests of the adult at that time. An adult's motivation to learn is directly linked to their current situation, not some future goal. Learning should be reality based and any literacy curriculum for adults should reflect the context in which the literacy skills are needed.

4. Adults desire an immediate application of knowledge. Adults favor a problem solving approach to learning that will help them deal with real-life adult situations.

1. **Planning:** The program is planned collaboratively, using expertise from prospective participants, the professional field, community members, and other service providers. The plan has a clearly written philosophy or mission statement. The plan establishes realistic and dynamic goals and action steps that are consistent with the principles of practice of adult literacy education found in Table 10. The content of the program is focused on literacy education of parent and child. These content standards are based on Tables 1-3. Goals should match those of the populations begin served. The collaborative planning group regularly reviews and modifies the plan.

2. **Recruitment:** Recruitment is an active and ongoing process conducted by program staff, participants, program partners, and community members. Recruitment incorporates a range of activities from one-on-one conversations with neighbors to public awareness campaigns.

3. **Support Services:** Programs work with community members and participants to identify and overcome physical and emotional barriers to access and participation. Examples of physical barriers include transportation, child care, and

Table 10. **Use Effective Adult Education Principles to Guide Instruction and Communication Practices**

Often our teaching behaviors are shaped by what we saw in school settings. For many low literate adults schooling models of teaching are not valued. *Effective adult educators of family literacy efforts do the following things:*

1. Effective educators link new literacy learning to an adult's prior parenting and family relation experiences.

2. They help adults meet specific family literacy learning goals related to their own parenting and family relations needs.

3. They help adults meet specific family literacy learning goals related to their role as educator of their children's and other family member's literacy needs.

4. Their family literacy instruction is experientially based.

5. They are able to assess various learning styles of adults and communicate new family literacy information and skills to them in ways they understand it.

6. Their literacy learning experiences are contextual.

7. They communicate effectively with adults who have differing ways in which they think about and take action on parenting and family relation situations.

8. They are able to work in a variety of family support service settings with a variety of different types of community leaders.

9. They effectively involve adults in planning their own family literacy learning.

10. They market their family literacy learning offerings in effective ways.

11. They understand that retention of adults in family literacy programs is a problem and act accordingly.

12. They reward adults who have successfully completed the program or accomplished correctly a family literacy task.

instability in the community due to poverty. Examples of emotional barriers include fear of school, low self-esteem, and cultural and familial differences.

4. **Staffing**: Program staff have varied credentials in fields such as adult education, early childhood education, elementary education, community education, social work and educational administration. Personal characteristics are considered as important as professional credentials. Desired characteristics include: works collaboratively, is flexible and can respond appropriately to differences in cultures and families, clearly demonstrates respect for participants and program partners.

5. **Collaboration**: Programs value learner and community input. Expertise of community members and participants becomes an integral part of program resources. Programs collaborate with surrounding agencies to avoid duplication of services and to meet the comprehensive needs of families. Programs serve as a catalyst in adapting community services to better meet the needs of families.

6. **Retention**: Individualized educational plans are designed by the learner and teacher to address learner goals. Adults understand how their learned skills apply in their daily lives. They are aware of concrete examples of progress and regularly experience success. Participants recognize and celebrate their achievements.

7. **Training:** Staff training consists not only of theory, introductions to assessment instruments, and curricula, but also interactive learning about and with the population and community being served. It is important that staff learn by listening to participants and community members.

8. **Curriculum**: Curricula are meaningful and useful in the daily lives of adult participants and include spending a significant amount of time on age-interactive literacy activities for both children and adults. Curricula are collaboratively designed, theoretically sound, and clearly able to be modified for individual, cultural and program differences and objectives. Materials are developmentally and age appropriate. Instructional approaches for both adults and children should respond to the variety of cultures within each program. EFF standards developed through the National Institute for Literacy and the National Center for Family Literacy are used as a basis for curriculum construction.

9. **Funding:** Programs involve the community-at-large in developing a realistic funding plan that provides stability, opportunities for growth and enhancements, and multiple funding sources.

10. **Evaluation:** An evaluation plan provides regular assessments that inform participants, program staff, the community, and funders. Participants, program staff, and community members use evaluation results to regularly celebrate successes and to improve future results.[17]

In addition to the preceding principles for family literacy programs, programs should also follow Principles of Family Support Practice, published by Family Support America and found in Table 11.[18]

Table 11. **Principles of Family Support Practice**

1. Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
2. Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth, and children.
3. Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.
4. Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
5. Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
6. Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
7. Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
8. Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
9. Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.

Words of Advice from the Field

Not every family literacy program is able to demonstrate success. Advice from researchers who have studied family literacy programs identify particular areas of practice to which we should pay close attention.

When planning and operating family literacy programs:

- Collaborate with other family literacy projects and personnel within your own program and within your community. Invest time in collaborative relationships, communicate frequently, seek resources and expertise from community partners, and seek mentors among established programs.
- Be realistic about program goals. Decide the number of families and age range of children that can realistically be served. Realize that delays and unanticipated problems are inevitable and that program start-up will take a great deal of time and energy; don't get discouraged.[19]

Avoid these weaknesses:

- Lack of theoretical support for development of program components. Be careful employing the strategy of creating your own curriculum framework by taking bits and pieces from various commercial materials and packaged curricula. This tactic may lead to a hodgepodge of materials and activities without a coherent framework or design and requires collaboration and negotiation among the staff to ensure that the needs of the participants are met in an educationally sound program.

- Unbalanced components in terms of family literacy emphasis (i.e., not enough time spent on adult/child activities, too much time spent on conventional skill instruction or the reverse, too much time spent on social issues).
- Assessment that does not match pedagogy or is insensitive to individual progress and the specific program services and curriculum.
- Outdated, irrelevant curricula (pre-packaged curricula that does not easily lend itself to modification or curricula designed without theoretical backing).
- Rigid adherence to procedures in a set model or plan.

- Narrow perspective on family literacy, often evident in a single focus on adult or early childhood education. Some forget to teach literacy skills at all.
- Inadequate staff training and high turnover.
- Insecure funding, which can lead to an unstable, uninvested staff.
- Targeting a transient population that must focus on survival before considering the value of literacy;[20] With community partners, programs must address family issues in order to improve family stability.
- Evaluation - often the weakest aspect of family literacy programs. In some family literacy programs both parents and children show improved attitudes toward learning and children show gains in literacy ability. However, adults show only modest improvement in literacy skills. These findings may be the result of the lack of adequate instruments designed especially to measure adult gains in family literacy settings.[21]

Don't forget to incorporate these often-neglected aspects of family literacy work:

- Parents working independently on reading and writing. On the most basic level, just by developing their own literacy parents contribute to family literacy; as parents become less dependent on children, the burden shifts and children are freer to develop in their own ways.
- Using literacy to address family and community problems. Dealing with issues such as immigration, employment, or housing through literacy work makes it possible for literacy to become socially significant in parents' lives; by extension it models the use of literacy as an integral part of daily life for children.
- Parents addressing child-rearing concerns through family literacy class. By providing mutual support and a safe forum for dialogue, parents can share and develop their own strategies for dealing with issues such as teenage sex, drugs, discipline, and children's attitudes toward language choice.
- Supporting the development of the home language and culture. As parents contribute to the development of the home language and culture, they build the foundation for their children's academic achievement, positive self-concept, and appreciation for their multicultural heritage. By valuing and building on parents' strengths, the status of those strengths is enhanced.
- Interacting with the school system. The classroom becomes a place where parents can bring school-related issues and develop the ability to understand and respond to them. They can explore their attitudes toward their own and their children's school experiences. They can assess what they see and determine their responses, rehearse interactions with school personnel, and develop support networks for individual and group advocacy.[22]

By following guidance presented in this publication, communities will be armed with a good foundation of information for designing an effective and successful program.

How Do We Measure Success?

Measuring success is important to four population groups: participants, program staff and board, the community, and funders. Therefore, it is important that program planners identify criteria and measurements that provide information needed by all four groups. Results achieved by the program and by the program participants can improve the quality of life in the community. What are those community indicators that can demonstrate the value of the program's success to community well-being? Program planners must identify these indicators, determine what can be measured, and design strategies to inform the community. Community members that see how program results improve quality of life statistics are much more likely to be involved program partners.

The program plan will identify program goals and action steps. Determine how the program will measure the progress toward these goals, the completion of action steps, and the results of implementing the action steps. This information will be important to all groups, but especially to program staff and the governing board as they revise program policies and strategies in order to improve results.

Staff and the board must be aware of actions that work in achieving results as well as those that do not achieve the desired results. Program planning and evaluation are an ongoing process and done in such a way as to improve program results. Measures should indicate if the desired results were achieved and if the timetables were realistic, and they should uncover strengths and weaknesses. Staff and the board should see unsatisfactory results and weaknesses as areas for redesign and improvements, not as failures.

In addition to measuring progress toward goals and action steps in the program plan, diverse measures are needed to identify participant progress and skill development. These measures should be easily measured and understood by participants. Measures of progress and skills achieved should occur frequently and provide encouragement and motivation to participants. Adult participants should

clearly understand the link between a skill or progress achieved and the application to their life. Adults should not only be cognizant of their own successes but also those of their child.

Furthermore, it is important to make sure that all commitments made to funders can be measured, are measured, and that results are reported. In addition to commitments made in the proposal, discuss your evaluation plans with funders to ensure that their evaluation expectations can and will be met.

Multiple evaluation strategies will be needed to provide information on program results to the four audience groups. However, there are four steps to evaluation that provide the framework for all strategies:

- Evaluation design: what information is needed; how this information can be obtained; who will collect it; when it will be collected.
- Data collection: use valid instruments; ensure reliability in measures; get baseline data; also use informal measures of data collection such as interviews and "stories" of actual participant results and community impacts.
- Interpretation of information: summarize information collected; present information in ways that are meaningful to the different audiences.
- Application: apply the information collected to improve the program, motivate participants, engage the community, and inform and impress funders.[23]

Important components in planning and evaluation are establishing outcomes and measuring progress toward achieving outcome goals. Outcomes should reflect what is important to participants as well as to the community. As with goal setting, start small and expand the outcomes on which you focus as the program realizes results. Outcomes of family literacy programs you might consider are found in Table 12. Before these outcome statements would be complete you would have to identify the specific rates of improvement or increase that were desired. For example: "Adult participants' reading level will increase by four grade levels by the time they complete the program as measured by X test."

As with other aspects of the program, evaluation plans and strategies should involve participants and community partners. Use expertise within the community and data collection efforts of others, and join with other groups in information dissemination strategies to capitalize on community assets. A successful program must ensure that everyone involved is aware of the results and feels appreciated for their part in the success. Celebrations are important!

Table 12. Possible Outcomes of Family Literacy Programs

Possible Outcomes for Parents

- Improvement in adult reading level
- Improvement in English proficiency
- Improvement in adult math skills
- Attainment of GED or high school diploma
- Attainment of or improvement in computer skills
- Improvement in budgeting and basic financial skills of parents
- Improvement in job status or job satisfaction of adult
- Improvement in parent income level
- Increase in parental knowledge of child development
- Increase in positive interaction between parent and child
- Parent reads more to child
- Household has more books for adult and child
- Increase in use of library
- Improvement in confidence of parents in their role as their child's first teacher

Possible Outcomes for Children

- Improvement in developmental levels of child
- Child scores ready for first grade
- Child enjoys being read to by parent
- Increase in positive interaction between parent and child
- Decrease in behavior problems of child as reported by parent and teacher

Possible Program Outcomes

- Improvement in percentage of participants attending regularly
- Improvement in percentage of participants attaining personal goals
- Improvement in percentage of participants completing program
- Improvement in the percentage of targeted population enrolled in program

Possible Community Outcomes

- Increase in literacy rates
- Increase in employment rates
- Increase in income levels
- Improvement in school readiness scores
- Improvement in school test scores

Conclusion

Now more than ever before, literacy represents a broad range of essential skills, including reading, writing, speaking, calculating, and critical thinking. Daily life increasingly requires us all to use these complex skills and knowledge. Helping children with schoolwork, using computers and the Internet, following doctors' instructions correctly, and carrying out many other life tasks demand strong literacy skills. Literacy is critical for adults to achieve the goals they set for themselves at work, at home, and in the community.

From Margins to the Mainstream: An Action Agenda for Literacy[24]

Family literacy provides a meaningful way for parents to improve their literacy and basic skills, their employment opportunities, their skills in meeting family needs and responsibilities, their parenting skills, and their child's literacy and potential for success. It is an intergenerational approach to literacy that takes advantage of the motivational opportunity presented when individuals become parents.

If communities want to invest in family literacy, they must be prepared to do it wisely - to learn from the literature and from others' experiences on how to achieve results. Both planning and collaboration are time consuming efforts but critical to success. Developing and operating a successful family literacy program is a challenging task, but as discussed in this publication, it can be very rewarding not only to program staff but also to families and to communities.

"Literacy is the foundation of opportunity and the cornerstone of success for individuals, families, communities, and companies. Investing in literacy yields benefits for everyone and ultimately makes the world a better place." Chuck Lee, Chairman and Co-CEO, Verizon[25]

Resources

To provide further assistance in planning and operating a successful family literacy program, the following resources are listed to expand your knowledge base and lead you to other valuable resources.

Programs and Curricula

1. **Exemplary Programs in South Carolina**

The following family literacy programs in South Carolina were cited as noteworthy by the S.C. State Department of Education and given contracts to provide technical assistance and mentoring to other family literacy programs.

Greenville School District: Program Coordinator - Rhonda Corley

Greenville has four (and will open their fifth soon) "family learning centers" that are integrated with the Early Childhood Development Centers. In addition to providing the four components of family literacy, all centers integrate a myriad of services in support of family with young children.

Aiken School District: Program Coordinator - Gail Graham

Aiken also has four centers. In 2000; they graduated more parents with GED's and high school diplomas than one of their high schools. They have developed very creative ways of retaining students once they recruit and enroll them. The center directors are, for the most part, graduates of the programs.

Florence School District: Program Coordinator - Dianne Oliver

Florence has 3 Family Literacy programs that center around their federally funded Even Start project. The centers are located in rural communities.

For more information on any of these programs contact Estella Holliday at ehollida@sde.state.sc.us or (803) 734-8073.

2. **National Programs of Promise**

The National Center of Family Literacy noted the following programs as promising in one or more aspects important to NCFL's Family Independence Initiative (FII).

Charlotte, N.C., family literacy program: The FII/Even Start Program was designed to investigate the impact of welfare reform on family literacy programs and build an action plan for placing family literacy in the center of that reform. The partnership between the Charlotte FII/Even Start Program and the Mecklenburg County DSS is viable, ongoing and focused on the goal of supporting families on the

road to economic stability. It is one example of the combined power that can be gained through sharing of resources, talents, and services.

Boulder, Colorado family literacy program: A computer instructor in the Family Independence Initiative program in Boulder, Colorado is demystifying the world of computers and the digital divide for family literacy students. Designed to show that computers are not magical mystery machines understandable by only a few and that with just a little effort, students can cross that digital divide, the program is successfully preparing students for employment. More than 100 students have gone from no computer knowledge to having employable general office computer skills through the Boulder family literacy program.

Akron, Ohio family literacy programs: Integration is the magic word at the Decker Family Development Center in Akron, Ohio. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act created an awareness of welfare time limits and the need for work-focused family literacy programs. The integration of a pre-employment literacy curriculum with practical real life situations to help families meet the requirements of welfare reform became a goal of the Center. One way this goal has been met is through a discussion of jobs and employment opportunities.

Louisville, Kentucky family literacy program: At the Jubilee family literacy program in Louisville, Kentucky, a "theme-work," teamwork approach to integrating the components of family literacy has proven successful. By carrying a theme across the elements of the curriculum, the Jubilee team has enabled parents and children to form bonds through common areas of interest while learning skills essential for success in school and in the workforce.

For more information on these programs, check out the NCFL web site, http://www.famlit.org. Look under archived article in the Momentum site located on the home page. Also, look under the Verizon site, located on the NCFL home page, for a listing of programs and addresses.

3. **Parents as Teachers**: PAT focuses on the early years, prenatal through kindergarten entry, to help parents understand what to expect during each stage of their child's development. PAT-certified parent educators offer parents practical ways to encourage learning, manage challenging behavior, and promote strong parent-child relationships. The program provides the following core services: 1) Personal Visits — a PAT trained and certified parent educator helps a family understand and have appropriate expectations for each stage of their child's development. These visits are usually held in the home. They use the PAT *Born to Learn*™ Curriculum to

bring the latest neuroscience research findings to parents, offering practical ideas on ways to encourage learning and interact with their children. 2) Parent Meetings — parents meet to enhance their parenting knowledge, gain new insights and share their experiences, common concerns and successes. 3) Screenings — Parents as Teachers offers periodic screening of overall development, health, hearing, and vision to provide early detection of potential problems and prevent later difficulties in school. 4) Linkages to a Community Resource Network — families are helped to access other needed community services that are beyond the scope of the PAT program. The PAT curriculum is one that can fulfil the requirement for parent and child learning time together.

Parents As Teachers National Center
10176 Corporate Square Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63132
(314) 432-4330
http://www.patnc.org/

4. **The Parent-Child Home Program**: The Parent-Child Home Program* (PCHP) is a proven, innovative home-based literacy and parenting program serving families challenged by poverty, low-levels of education, language barriers and other obstacles to educational success. Published research demonstrates that the Parent-Child Home Program prepares children to succeed in school and is a proven tool to prevent high school dropouts. PCHP participants graduate from high school at the rates of middle-class students.

*formerly the Mother-Child Home Program.

The National Center for The Parent-Child Home Program
585 Plandome Road, Suite 105B
Manhasset, New York 11030
Email: Info@Parent-Child.org
Phone: (516) 869-1283
Fax: (516) 869-1284
http://www.parent-child.org/

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Web Sites and Publications

1. **The National Center for Family Literacy:** Acknowledged as a leader in family literacy program development, research and training, the Center was established in 1989 with funds from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. NCFL focuses its efforts on: 1) advocacy and policy development at the national level; 2) research and evaluation to improve the field

and promote long range effectiveness; 3) model program development that promotes effective programming at the local level; 4) training and technical assistance at the practice, administrative and policy levels; and 5) information dissemination to the public and throughout programs to educate and enhance the quality of offerings. A listing of conferences, training events and publications and their costs is available from their web site. You will also find access to a family literacy list serve and other information valuable to planning and operation. NCFL developed, promotes and supports the Kenan Model, a national model for family literacy. The Kenan model provided the framework for the federally funded family literacy program, Even Start. From NCFL's home page, look under publications for videos that you can purchase to raise awareness and inform your partners, the community, and potential funders.

National Center for Family Literacy
Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200
325 West Main Street
Louisville, KY 40202-4251
(502) 584-1133
http://www.famlit.org

2. **US Department of Education**

Office of Vocational and Adult Education: The Office of Vocational and Adult Education has the mission to help all people achieve the knowledge and skills to be lifelong learners, to be successful in their chosen careers, and to be effective citizens. The web page offers several sites that provide information on adult education/literacy and family literacy.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
4090 MES
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202
Phone: (202) 205-5451
Fax: (202) 205-8748
Email: *ovae@inet.ed.gov*
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/aboutus.html

U.S. Department of Education Information Resource Center:
1-800-872-5327 (toll-free)
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/InfoBoard/f-14.html

Family Literacy Fact Sheet
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/InfoBoard/f-14.html

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/InfoBoard/legis.html

National Evaluation of The Even Start Family Literacy Program
1994-1997 Final Report
http://obemla.ed.gov/pubs/evenstart_final/index.html

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Compensatory Education Programs (CEP): This office administers programs of financial assistance to State and local educational agencies and to colleges and universities. Under Title I of the ESEA, CEP administers the Title I program of supplementary instruction and other services; Even Start Family Literacy program formula grants to States; and the Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk of Dropping Out. In addition CEP administers three related discretionary programs: Even Start for Indian Tribes and Tribal Organizations; Even Start Family Literacy in Women's Prisons; and the Statewide Family Literacy Initiatives. It also manages the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (P.L. 100-77). At 7.9 billion, Title I is the largest program funded under the ESEA, serving 6.4 million children in more than 14,000 school districts across the United States.

OESE@ed.gov
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/CEP/

3. **National Institute for Literacy:** This is an independent federal organization whose mission states its intent to "ensure the highest quality of literacy services" by promoting communication, collaboration, and innovation, intending to facilitate a comprehensive and unified system for literacy in the United States. Among its offerings is ***LINCS***, the connection to a wealth of literacy research with program descriptions and practical tools grouped into regional hubs. This site includes a "special collections" offering that houses "Family Literacy", a resource component that parents, practitioners, program planners and researchers find valuable in their efforts to access material assisting in program planning and implementation and to further the field of family literacy through evaluation and the dissemination of state of the art resources.

National Institute for Literacy
1775 I Street, NW, Suite 730
Washington, DC 20006-2401
(202) 233-2050
NIFL Hotline: 1-800-228-8813
http://novel.nifl.gov/

4. **South Carolina Literacy Resource Center:** This is SC's center for LINCS (referenced above). The center is operated by the State Department of Education and offers resources and consultation on adult literacy. There are many valuable resources on this site: SC's State Plan for adult literacy and family literacy that provides examples of performance measurement instruments for adults and children; connections with state professional associations; access to "coach" - on site technical assistance and a training calendar;

South Carolina Literacy Resource Center
1722 Main Street, Suite 104
Columbia, SC 29201
Phone: (803) 929-2562
Fax: (803) 929-2571
Email: Info@sclrc.org
http://sclrc.org/index.htm

5. **National Center on Adult Literacy:** Housed at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, this resource has a variety of literacy related information by Topic/Theme (click on Topic/Theme at the top of the page) that includes Family Literacy (under Topic offerings). This information tends to be research-based technical reports, conference offerings, and videoconference tapes (at a cost). It offers a wealth of valuable information tracing the efforts in the family literacy field.

Literacy Research Centers
University of Pennsylvania
Graduate School of Education
3910 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA
19104-3111 USA
Phone: (215) 898-2100
Fax: (215) 898-9804
editor@literacy.upenn.edu
http://ncal.literacy.upenn.edu/

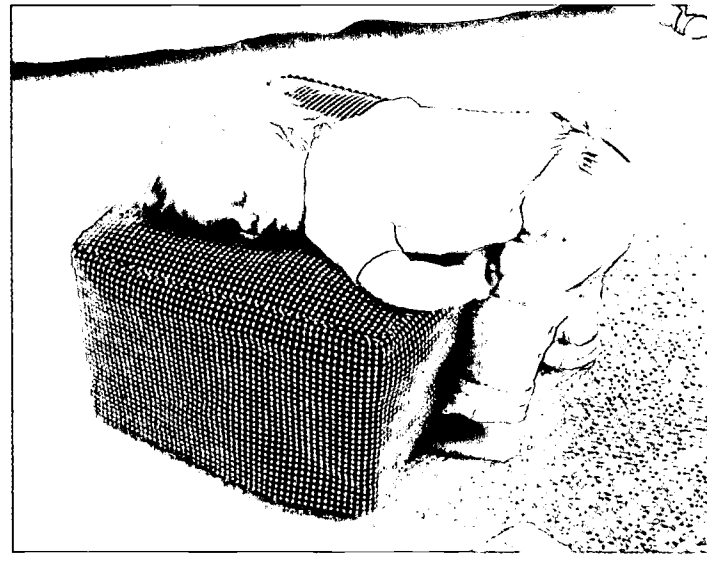
6. **The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy:** This is a resource for potential funding as this Foundation has funded 276 family literacy programs in 44 states since its beginning in 1989. This web page offers particularly helpful information under the heading "Lessons Learned" regarding pertinent issues such as recruitment, retention, instruction, curriculum, staff, evaluation, and institutionalization, i.e., ensuring the funding and integration of the program into the web of community services to promote its continued existence. Other headings include publications and information about their grant process.

The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy
1112 16th St. NW #340
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 955-6183
http://www.barbarabushfoundation.com/

7. **AOL Time Warner's Time to Read:** This project is AOL Time Warner's nationwide volunteer literacy program. Started in 1985 to address the crisis of low levels of literacy among American children and adults, the program now operates at more than 400 locations across the country, involving more than 29,000 tutors and learners. Program locations range from schools and adult-education centers to prisons, libraries, churches, community centers, clinics and homeless shelters. This may be a potential funding source for components of family literacy programs.

AOL Time Warner Inc.
75 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10019
(212) 484-6410
http://www.time-to-read.com/AboutTTR.html

8. **Laubach Literacy:** A nonprofit educational corporation dedicated to helping adults learn reading, writing, math and problem solving skills. Laubach's U.S. Program Division has 1,100 member programs throughout the United States. Their International Programs Division has partner programs teaching people in 1,008 communities in 36 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. The publishing division, New Readers Press, publishes and distributes 500 titles of books and other educational materials to 30,000 literacy programs, libraries, schools, prisons, and religious organizations nationwide.



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Laubach Literacy
1320 Jamesville Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13210
(315) 422-9121
888-LAUBACH (528-2224)
http://www.laubach.org/

9. **Literacy Volunteers of America:** Combining with Verizon, the LVA/ Verizon Family Literacy Initiative has worked to combine technology and family literacy instruction. This web site has an array of information highlighting their funded programs and "promising practices". Some options are for affiliates only and this includes a cost. Click on the Family Literacy option at the LVA web site.

Literacy Volunteers of America
635 James Street
Syracuse, NY 13203-2214
Phone: (315)-472-0001
Fax: (315)-472-0002
Http://www.literacyvolunteers.org

10. **Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF):** This federally funded program develops and delivers children's and family literacy programs that help prepare young children for reading and motivate school-age children to read. Through a national grassroots network that is expected to exceed 360,000 community volunteers (parents, teachers, librarians, and others) by the end of this year, RIF programs will provide new, free books and other essential literacy resources to more than 5 million children and their families. RIF's highest priority is the nation's neediest children from infancy to age 11. Many of the children RIF serves have economic or learning needs that put them at risk of failing to achieve basic educational goals.

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.
1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20009
Toll Free 1 (877) RIF-READ
or (202) 287-3220
http://www.rif.org/about/index.html

11. **National Adult Literacy Database (NALD):** The National Adult Literacy Database Inc. (NALD) is a federally incorporated, non-profit service organization that fills the crucial need for a single-source, comprehensive, up-to-date and easily accessible database of adult literacy programs, resources, services and activities across Canada. It also links with other services and databases in North America and overseas. This page provides information on Family Literacy materials - handbooks, guides, stories, magazines and other things about developing literacy and the family. Publications are listed alphabetically. Look for the statements and standards for best practices publication for detailed help in planning and self-evaluation -http://www.nald.ca/CLR/family.htm.

National Adult Literacy Data Base
Scovil House
703 Brunswick Street
Fredericton, New Brunswick
Canada E3B 1H8
info@nald.ca
http://www.nald.ca

12. **The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy:** Every effort made by NCSALL is guided by its focus on improving practice. This priority ensures that NCSALL's efforts and products will be immediately useful to teachers, program directors, counselors, volunteers, staff developers, and policy makers working in or with educational programs that serve adults who score in the bottom two of the five levels of basic skills identified by the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), have limited English language proficiency, or do not have a high school diploma. This encompasses adult basic education (ABE), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and adult secondary education (ASE) instruction in the full range of programs, including but not limited to adult learning centers, family literacy, volunteer tutoring, workplace literacy, libraries, and correctional facilities.

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy
Harvard University Graduate School of Education
Nichols House, Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 495-4843
http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ncsall/index.html

13. **The Harvard Family Research Project:** HFRP strives to increase the effectiveness of public and private organizations and communities as they promote child development, student achievement, healthy family functioning and community development. In its relationships with national, state and local partners, HFRP fosters a sustainable learning process - one that relies on the collection, analysis, synthesis and application of information to guide problem-solving and decision-making. HFRP is recognized nationally among funders and practitioners for its expertise in designing and making evaluation work for community-based programs. Be sure to check the FINE Network and the article, *Friction at Madison Family Literacy Program*, under teaching tools.

Harvard Family Research Project
38 Concord Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone: (617) 495-9108
Fax: (617) 495-8594
E-mail: hfrp_gse@harvard.edu
http://www.gse.harvard.edu/%7Ehfrp/index.html

14. **National Association for the Education of Young Children:** The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is the nation's largest and most influential organization of early childhood educators and others dedicated to improving the quality of programs for children from birth through third grade. The organization works toward the following goals.

- Facilitating improvements in the professional practice and working conditions in the field of early childhood education by creating professional development opportunities/resources and by setting and promoting standards of professional practice;
- Improving public understanding and support and funding of high quality programs in centers, homes, and schools serving young children and their families through public policy initiatives and public awareness and engagement activities; and
- Building and maintaining a strong, diverse, and inclusive organization that enables NAEYC to achieve Goals 1 and 2.

This organization will be a very valuable resource for the child education component of a family literacy program. Their program accreditation standards are widely recognized to be the national standards for quality in early childhood programs.

National Association for the Education of Young Children
Email: naeyc@naeyc.org
http://www.naeyc.org/

15. **Family Support America:** Family Support America, formerly Family Resource Coalition of America, promotes family support as the nationally recognized movement to strengthen and support families and places the principles of family support practice at the heart of every setting in which children and families are present. Family Support America works to bring about a completely new societal response to children, youth, and their families: one that strengthens and empowers families and communities so that they can foster the optimal development of children, youth, and adult family members —one that solves problems by preventing them. This is the organization that developed the principles of family support practice (referenced above) that are excellent guidelines for effective family literacy programs. Family Support is an approach to services that fits perfectly with family literacy programs. This web site will offer resources needed by family literacy programs to provide the support services families need in order to realize their goals.

Family Support America
20 North Wacker Dr. Suite 1100, Chicago, IL 60606
Tel: (312) 338-0900
Fax: (312) 338-1522
http://www.familysupportamerica.org/content/home.htm

16. **Early Childhood Care and Development:** ECCD activities are those that support young children appropriately and seek to strengthen the environments in which they live. ECCD includes working with parents to strengthen parenting skills, working with siblings and other family members to recognize the specific developmental needs of younger children, working to provide or strengthen day care options, developing preschools and other early childhood education programs that address the child's needs in holistic ways, as well as striving to bolster the community in its economic, physical, and moral support of families and young children. The site provides valuable research-based information on children and parenting from around the world. You will find information on evaluation as well as on programming.

The Consultative Group on
Early Childhood Care and Development
Ryerson University
School of Early Childhood Education
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3 Canada

info@ecdgroup.com
http://www.ecdgroup.com/

17. **Child and Family Web Guide:** The Child & Family Web Guide describes and evaluates web sites that contain research-based information about child development. These web sites have been selected from thousands of sites about children, based primarily on the quality of the information provided. The goal of the WebGuide is to give the public easy access to the best child development information on the Web. There are six categories of information: Family, Education, Health, Typical Development, Childcare, and Activities. The first five categories contain sites with research-based information that is evaluated by a team of child development graduate students. The sixth category, Activities, contains sites with information about specific programs and things to do — organized by region. This category, which does not involve research-based information, was added at the request of parents.

Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development at Tufts University
in collaboration with academic librarians at
Tufts' Tisch Library and
Society for Research in Child Development
http://www.cfw.tufts.edu/

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Appendix

National Adult Literacy Survey
Description of Literacy Levels

When literacy was simply thought of as reading, it was typically measured in grade-level equivalents. An adult's literacy skill was said to be at first grade or fifth grade, for example. A more complex, more realistic conception of literacy emphasizes its use in adult activities. To determine literacy skills in American adults ages 16 and older, the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) used test items that resembled everyday life tasks. It involved the use of prose, document and quantitative skills. The NALS classified the results in five levels of proficiency with level one being the lowest level of proficiency and level five the highest. These levels are now commonly used to describe adults' literacy skill levels.

The ***prose literacy*** items assessed the adults' ability to handle written text such as editorials, news stories, poems and fiction. It assessed the ability to handle both expository and narrative prose. Expository prose involves printed information that defines, describes, or informs such as newspaper stories or written instructions. Narrative prose assessed the adults' ability to understand a story. Prose literacy tasks included locating all the information requested, integrating information from various parts of a passage of text, and writing new information related to the text.

Document literacy items assessed the adults' ability to understand short forms or graphically displayed information found in everyday life, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and graphs. Document literacy tasks included locating a particular intersection on a street map, using a schedule to choose the appropriate bus, or entering information on an application form.

Quantitative literacy information was displayed visually in graphs or charts or in numerical form using whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percentages, or time units. These quantities appeared in both prose and document form. Quantitative literacy referred to locating quantities, integrating information from various parts of a document, determining the necessary arithmetic operation, and performing that operation. Quantitative literacy tasks included balancing a checkbook, completing an order form and determining the amount of interest paid on a loan.

The National Adult Literacy Survey captures well the printed and written information dimensions and related reasoning skills but isn't as complete as the National Institute for Literacy's *Equipping For the Future* competency standards for adult literacy. These standards also include the communication, interpersonal relationship and life-long learning dimensions to literacy development. The *Equipping For the Future* standards are reviewed elsewhere in this report.

Almost all adults in Level 1 can read a little but not well enough to fill out an application, read a food label, a medicine label, read a simple story to a child, or

fill out a deposit slip correctly. Adults in level 2 usually can perform more complex tasks such as comparing, contrasting or integrating pieces of information but usually not higher level reading and problem-solving skills. For example, those at level 2 could correctly write their signature on a social security card and fill out a simple job application. But they could not read correctly a sales graph or figure out what the gross pay was on a pay check stub, or add correctly the cost of a meal. Adults in levels 3 through 5 usually can perform the same types of more complex tasks on increasingly lengthy and dense texts and documents. These levels use a broad range of information processing skills in various combinations. For example, people at level 3 could figure out bar charts and graphs but could not correctly read a bus schedule. They could not figure out the correct number of minutes that it would take to get from one location to another. People at level 4 could read the bus schedule but not summarize the views of parents and teachers found on a summary chart which involved comparing parent and teacher data across four questions and across three levels of schools. They could not correctly estimate the cost per ounce of a food product when given a food store shelf label with this information on it or figure out interest charges on a home loan.

In summary each scale was divided into five levels that reflect the progression of information-processing skills and strategies. These levels were determined not as a result of any statistical property of the scales, but rather as a result of *shifts in the skills and strategies required to succeed on various tasks along the scales, from simple to complex.*

For a review of the levels of literacy found in the National Adult Literacy survey see http://nces.ed.gov/naal/ . This site also contains samples from the survey instruments.

Many factors explain the relative high number of adults in the lowest level of literacy. Twenty-two percent of adults in Level 1 were immigrants who may have just been learning to speak English. More than 60% didn't complete high school. More than 30% were over 65. More than 25% had physical or mental conditions that kept them from fully participating in work, school, housework, or other activities and almost 20% had vision problems that affected their ability to read print.[26]

Use Effective Adult Education Principles to Guide Instruction and Communication Practices

Often our teaching behaviors are shaped by what we saw in school settings. For many low literate adults schooling models of teaching are not valued. *Effective adult educators of family literacy efforts do the following things:*

1. Effective educators link new literacy learning to an adult's prior parenting and family relation experiences.

Adults learn more quickly if they can start with what they know and apply new learning to what they already know and can do. Educators must spend time with each adult so that they really know how they think about making parenting decisions, how they act as parents, where they feel strong and weak in accessing parenting resources and making wise parenting decisions. That is one of the reasons why using volunteers is helpful so that one thinks beyond the traditional classroom approach with one teacher and several students. Educators need to see adults actually making parenting decisions, trying to access resources for the family, trying to read to their children and reading important information needed to be an effective parent such as instructions sent home from school. Adults tend to attach more meaning to the learning that is gained when it is connected to their own actual parent decision-making experiences. Adults tend to learn more quickly if they can use their own life experiences when they are literacy learners and teachers.

2. They help adults meet specific family literacy learning goals related to their own parenting and family relations needs.

Educators must understand each adult's own family literacy levels. Learning activities that *combine* basic literacy skills with practical use will enhance the adult's overall ability to become more literate. Instruction should therefore be reality-based and start by meeting immediate felt parenting and family relations needs and goals. Adults are ready to learn when they need to learn in order to cope with real-life parent decision-making tasks or situations. There should be ample opportunity for the learners to practice their newly acquired family literacy skills. In other words, adults need to see models of parenting related to family literacy skill development. They need practice in actually doing family literacy level tasks.

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3. They help adults meet specific family literacy learning goals related to their role as educator of their children's and other family member's literacy needs.

Adults are not only learners they are teachers too. Educators must observe the adult as teacher and coach them to educate their children and other family members to perform family literacy tasks proficiently. Learning experiences must allow adults to interact with children and family members under supervision so that adults can see other adults model effective family literacy instructional behaviors to children and family members. Adults need opportunities to be coached on how to act as educator of their children, family members and friends.

4. Their family literacy instruction is experientially based.

Adults learn best when they can learn by doing and then discuss what they did and how to do it better. This is called experiential learning. The educational format designed by adult literacy educators should not appear schooling-oriented in approach or style. For these individuals most schooling experiences were content-oriented rather than experientially based. And the content taught in school settings often wasn't seen as relevant by the student. In addition, schooling experiences for many level one and level two literate adults were negative experiences because failure was more their experience than success. Therefore, learning experiences for family literacy programs need to be experiential and designed to feel and look different from schooling. Instruction that uses experiential techniques, such as discussion, problem solving, simulation exercises and field experiences are more effective than lectures and rote memorization. Effective family literacy volunteers take the time to assist learning while a person is trying to understand information and learn new behaviors to tackle current child growth and development and family relations issues. Modeling behavior desired and discussed is very important so concrete examples are available.

5. They are able to assess various learning styles of adults and communicate new family literacy information and skills to them in ways they understand it.

Adult learners need practice in actually teaching family literacy skills to their children, friends and family member. They need to receive the necessary feedback on how to do it better. This means that the instructor must know his or her material well enough to go where the adult wants to go with family literacy learning rather than following the more traditional lesson plan format which follows the educator's logic but not the learner's needs or logic. Why? Because adults tend to be goal oriented in their learning—they want to see results immediately. This is particularly true to family literacy learning. Parents want

new knowledge and skill learning to applied directly to their immediate parent decision-making needs. Learning must be practical and address immediate family needs that tend to be more skill-based and decision-oriented.

6. Their literacy learning experiences are contextual.

Often the family issues present provide the context for teaching. However, family literacy education also occurs within general discussions of skill improvement. To contextualize instruction means that the educator must learn about actual adult learner family and parenting situations related to the adult's efforts to gain literacy skills (eg. helping with homework, discipline, dealing with sibling rivalry) and act as educator of their children's and family members' family literacy learning. The educator must use those situations as a base for conversations and practice. Adult learners are situation solvers. (Some call these problem solvers but not all situations are seen as problems to adults but in fact do demand new learning.) Once actual situations are known then teaching has a context that is seen as relevant to the adult learner. That is one reason why volunteer and natural helper advice systems and hotlines work well as part of effective family literacy education efforts.

7. They communicate effectively with adults who have differing ways in which they think about and take action on parenting and family relation situations.

Adults have different learning styles and therefore the way they are taught needs to be individualized. Learning styles affect how we go about making sense out of information received and how we begin to take action on what we hear. It's our own thinking-action process. Some want to understand the overview first before getting to the particulars of a parenting situation. Others want the particulars first and then the overview. Some want as much information as they can about a parenting issue before they act. Others want to act or decide and then get information only relevant to what they are specifically doing. Others want to think it through completely before acting. Others want to think while acting. Some have a hard time thinking conceptually about a piece of parenting information. Others immediately put the information into a context based on their current parenting and family relation understandings and practices. Some are only comfortable hearing about it and not doing it. Others only want to do it and not think much about what it all means to them and others. These are all characteristics of different learning styles. Effective educators are able to adjust personal communications to match what they hear expressed in their adult learner's discussions. So, instruction has to be flexible in order to pitch the family literacy message correctly. Because of this demand to meet multiple learning styles, it is helpful to have lots of volunteers to mentors one-on-one does help.

8. They are able to work in a variety of family support service settings with a variety of different types of community leaders.

They must partner with leaders from hospitals; clinics; nonprofit agencies; departments of health, education, social services; literacy councils; community coalition groups; churches; media outlets; the public schools; technical colleges; and four-year colleges and universities. They develop family literacy learning sequences that can be of benefit to a greater number of adult learners. Effective adult educators can communicate with a variety of different types of people who possess differing levels of communication literacy skills.

9. They effectively involve adults in planning their own family literacy learning.

Learning is enhanced when there is buy-in from the learners themselves. Despite more and more training and educational mandates from employers and society at large, adult learning remains primarily a voluntary exercise. Strategies, such as the development of a learning contract, seem to work well with adults. Retention is higher when adults are involved in planning their own learning. Retention is higher when their improved parenting and family relation goals are addressed.

10. They market their family literacy learning offerings in effective ways.

Recruitment is a problem for some. Many adult education programs run through the state department of education are low in attendance because mass communication is used rather than a personal touch. Effective educators tend to set up systems so adults are personally invited. Mass communication advertising doesn't seem to work as well. One-on-one invitations given out by an effective volunteer systems or neighbor inviting neighbor, church member inviting church member, or work colleague inviting a work colleague approach tend to work better. Just think about what you tend to attend. You are more apt to attend an event when there is a personal invitation and you feel someone really cares whether or not you are there.

Another method that tends to work is building in some sort of reward system. Promising a computer to any adult who comes and goes through the family literacy program has worked in some settings. Giving out books that they can use to read to their kids works for some. Providing free goods and services works well as a marketing strategy.

11. They understand that retention of adults in family literacy programs is a problem and act accordingly.

Retention is higher in family literacy programs that have a personal touch. Retention is higher when family literacy is combined with health literacy. (See the Promoting Health Literacy report for details.) Adults can't feel like a faceless number. Needs have to be addressed. They have to feel comfortable and safe to communicate where they really are and what they really want to learn. They have to be given encouragement continuously. They have to experience some rapid skill gains. Effective educators know this and act accordingly. Populations that need family literacy the most (ESOL, teen and young adult families, families with disabled members, low literacy parents, those in poverty) are particularly sensitive in these regards.

12. They reward adults who have successfully completed the program or accomplished correctly a family literacy task.

The rewards for demonstration of improved literacy skills need to be immediate. If wiser decision-making occurs, this needs to be rewarded. If parenting instructions were understood and followed more accurately, this needs to be rewarded. If family members counseled other family members more wisely, this needs to be recognized. If information was understood correctly, this needs to be acknowledged. Immediate feedback and corrective steps are also needed.

While rewards must be ever-present throughout the program, the program should have a defined end. A valued reward should be presented at the close of the program. Educators therefore should define the family literacy program's goals and objectives accordingly. These goals and objectives are obtainable and tailored to the specific group of adults with whom they are working. There are built in small "wins" to learning that are recognized in appropriate ways. The benefit of participation in the family literacy program should be evident to the adults.

Applying these principles is hard work. It takes thinking and acting outside the "schooling" instructional box. Recruitment and retention rates often directly relate to how successful one is in applying these principles of teaching and communication. Reaching learning outcomes such as those mentioned previously are conditioned on using these principles effectively.

Notes and References

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[2] This is the definition found in the National Literacy Act of 1991. See http://www.nifl.gov/public-law/ section three.

[3] *Equipped for the Future*, Washington DC: National Institute for Literacy, http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff.html.

[4] See http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff_family.html

[5] See http://www.nces.ed.gov/nall/ for a review of the National Adult Literacy Survey. Samples of test questions and detailed coverage of what the survey is about can be found at this site.

[6] See http://www.nifl.gov/ for a copy of the complete Literacy Summit report. The challenges are reviewed in Table 5.

[7] *1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (1992)*. Washington D.C.: National Center of Education Statistics.

[8] DeBruin-Parecki, A., Paris, S.G. & Siedenburg, J. *Family literacy: Examining practice and issues of effectiveness*, p. 2. Retrieved March 3, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http://www.its-ps.uni.edu:200/learning/family_literacy/examining_practice.htm.

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[21] Sapin & Padak, p. 1.34

[22] Auerbach, E. (1989). *Toward a socio-contextual approach to family literacy*. Harvard Educational Review, 59. Pp.165-181.

[23] Quezada, S., Nickse, R.S. (1993) *Community Collaborations for Family Literacy Handbook*. NY: Neal-Schuman, pg. 89

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Processing Coordinator
ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
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