



The Challenge

The Whole Family Families enrolled in family literacy programs are often the poorest of the poor, facing myriad challenges that affect both parents and their children.

Adult Education The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy indicates that 30 million American adults lack basic reading skills; 55% who did not graduate from high school scored below the basic level in reading.¹

High School Drop-Outs A recent Gates Foundation (2006) study indicates that the nation's high school drop-out rate is approaching 30%.²

Socio-Economics Status Many adults with limited literacy skills are poor and unemployed, working in jobs with low pay, or receiving public assistance. Nearly 37 million Americans, including 13 million children, lived in poverty in 2004.³

Children's School Readiness Children living in poverty and with mothers who are less educated are less likely to attend an early childhood education program.³

Children's and Families' Health Children living in poverty and whose mothers have limited education are less likely to have a nutritious diet or be in very good health, which are factors that affect the ability to concentrate and learn.³

Interactive Language and Literacy Mothers with lower educational levels are less likely to read to their children every day.³

¹ Kutner, M., Greeberg, E., & Baer, J. (2006). A first look at the literacy of America's adults in the 21st century. Washington, DC: American Institute for Research.

² Bridgeland, J., DiUlio, J., & Morison, K. (2006, March). The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises, LLC.

³ Literacy facts and figures. (2003). Louisville, KY: National Center for Family Literacy.

The Promise of Family Literacy

Family literacy programs provide eligible families with integrated and comprehensive educational and support services, including adult and early childhood education, parent education, and opportunities for parents and their children to engage in language and literacy learning activities.

Family literacy programs provide educational opportunities for parents to improve their basic skills, obtain a high school diploma or earn its equivalent (GED), and learn the English language.

Family literacy's Even Start programs serve teen parents, helping them to earn their GED or working with school districts to ensure that they stay in school and graduate with a high school diploma.

Family literacy programs help parents achieve self-sufficiency by improving their basic skills and enabling them to obtain or retain employment, or to enter postsecondary education or training.

Family literacy programs provide high quality early childhood education to children from birth to age five and work with elementary schools to support children's learning when they enter elementary school.

Family literacy programs help parents develop the skills and knowledge they need to be their children's first and most important teachers, providing opportunities for parents to learn about child development and other topics that contribute to healthy families.

Family literacy programs stress the importance of reading and talking with children and help parents to engage in interactive literacy activities with their children in the classroom and at home.

"I now know that I have a voice in my child's education."

Pennsylvania Family Literacy Outcomes 2004-2005

Over the years, Pennsylvania's family literacy programs have made continuous program improvement a priority. The programs' ongoing efforts have helped families make significant educational gains and meet personal and family goals.

Families remain in programs longer and have increased their participation in adult, parent, and early childhood education, and in interactive literacy activities. Research suggests that greater duration (length of time) and intensity (number of instructional hours) produce greater learning outcomes.

Parents achieved personal educational, economic, and civic participation goals.

- Earned the General Education Development (GED) credential or obtained a high school diploma.
- Entered employment or retained employment.
- Entered postsecondary education or training.
- Reduced or eliminated reliance on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits or other public assistance.
- Registered to vote and voted for the first time.
- Became U.S. citizens.

Children developed skills needed to enter school ready to learn, and those in school made significant progress.

- Pre-school children, infants, and toddlers made significant gains in all developmental areas, including language and literacy, math, cognitive development, self-help, gross and fine motor skills, and social and emotional behavior.
- Teachers rated more than half of school-age children as advanced or proficient in reading and math at the end of the school year.
- A high percentage of school-age children were promoted to the next grade level.

Parents were involved in their children's lives.

- A high percentage of parents reported increasing involvement in their children's education, including helping more with schoolwork, increasing contact with their children's teachers, and increasing involvement in their children's school activities.
- A high percentage of parents reported increasing involvement in their children's literacy activities at home.

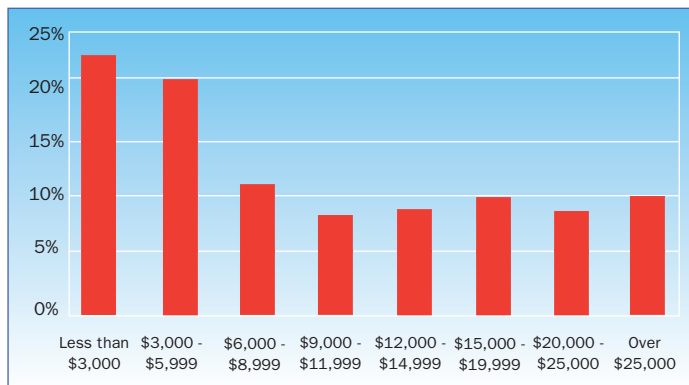
“Family literacy has helped me to make the right decisions in life.”

Programs Serve Families Most in Need of Services

Pennsylvania's family literacy programs served the most vulnerable Pennsylvania families in terms of income, employment, and parents' educational level.⁴

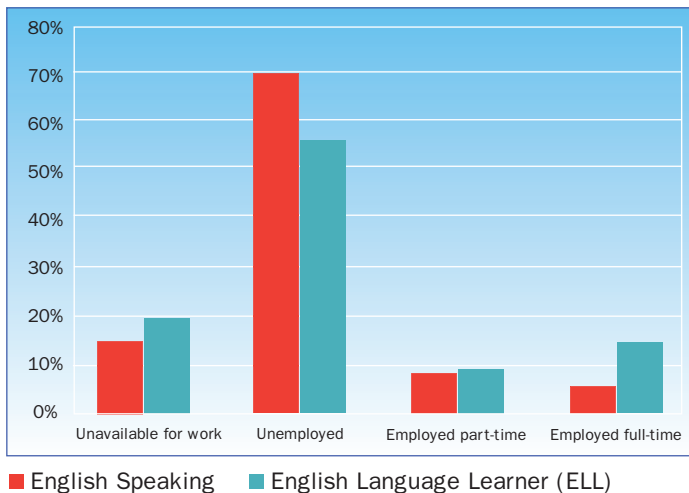
Parent Income on Entry

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of the families received public assistance when they entered the program. The median family income was only \$7,500 with over 70% of the families living below the poverty level. In contrast, the median family income in Pennsylvania was over \$49,000, and only 12.1% of families were living in poverty.



Parent Employment Status on Entry

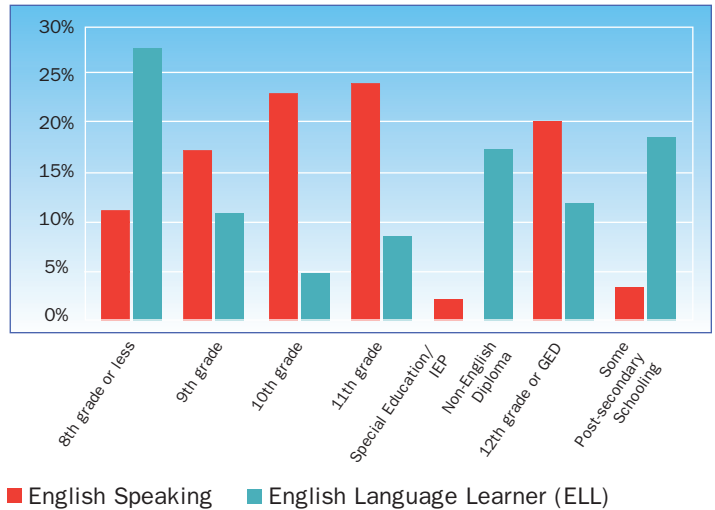
On entry to the family literacy program, few parents were employed, either full or part time, with a full 66% unemployed. In comparison only 3.5% of the general population was unemployed.



■ English Speaking ■ English Language Learner (ELL)

Parent Educational Level on Entry

On entry to the program, three-fourths (75%) of native English speaking parents had not completed the 12th grade or earned the GED. In Pennsylvania, only 18.2% of adults had not completed 12th grade, including the GED.



■ English Speaking ■ English Language Learner (ELL)

⁴ Profile of general demographic characteristics. Geographic area: Pennsylvania. (2000). Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Who Participates?

Pennsylvania's family literacy programs serve a population both common to and disproportionate to the Commonwealth's general demographics.

- **Household Status:** One-half (50%) of the adults were in two-parent families, similar to Pennsylvania's 51.7%.
- **Adult Family Member:** Mothers were the primary adult participants (89%). Fathers constituted only 7%.
- **Age:** The average age for adults was 28. The average age for children was 3 years, 11 months. Teen parents represented 7% of the adult participants in Even Start programs.
- **Race:** Over half (52%) of the participating adults were Caucasian, 24% were Hispanic, 20% were African-American, and 4% were Asian. Children's racial demographics closely matched their parents.
- **Native Language:** A quarter (25%) of enrolled adults were English language learners (ELL). In contrast, only 8.4% Pennsylvania's adults are ELL.



The Vazquez-Cabrera family joined the TIU#11 Even Start program in Mifflin County with their three-year old son, Mario. They participate in Even Start and ELL classes and are active participants in the Parent-Child Home Program. Each member has had great success in improving spoken and written English. They enjoy sharing their love of music with home visitors.



Kellie Hummel was referred to the Mid-State Literacy Council by the local WIA Youth Program where she was getting work experience at a daycare center. Kellie earned her GED and is employed at the daycare program, where she enjoys having her daughter Cadence in her classroom.

“We need Even Start in our lives. It has created positive changes for my family.”

What Were Adult Outcomes?

Adults in Pennsylvania's family literacy program are meeting their academic and life goals. Pre- and posttest results on standardized adult assessments indicate:

- Native English speaking adults made statistically significant gains in math, reading, and language.
- ELL adults made statistically significant gains in English language skills.

Adult outcomes are measured for goals related to education, employment, and quality of life. The majority of adults who set goals in these areas reportedly met them in 2004-2005.

GOAL	% MEETING GOAL
Retain employment	83%
Register to vote	74%
Become a U.S. citizen	74%
Enter employment	72%
Obtain high school diploma	71%
Reduce / eliminate TANF or other public assistance	60%
Advance to postsecondary education or training	60%
Vote for first time	58%
Obtain GED	54%

What Were Parenting Outcomes?

Since enrolling in family literacy, parents reported increases in their involvement in interactive literacy activities and in their children's education.

- Many enrolled adults set a goal to increase involvement in literacy activities with their children overall and met this goal. Specifically,
 - 79% read more to their children.
 - 76% purchased books or magazines.
 - 75% visited the library with their children.
- Many enrolled adults also set the goal to increase involvement in their children's education overall and met this goal. Specifically,
 - 79% increased contact with their children's teachers.
 - 77% helped more with children's schoolwork.
 - 77% increased involvement in their children's school activities.



Ibrahim Muya and Rukie Abdiraham, parents of three sons, spent more than 10 years in Kenyan refugee camps as young adults, after fleeing civil war in Somalia. They arrived in the U.S. in 2004, lacking literacy skills in their native language as well as English skills, and enrolled in the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council family literacy program. Since enrolling, both Ibrahim and Rukie have found employment, furthering their dream to buy a home and send their sons to college.

What Were Child Outcomes?

Infants, Toddlers, and Pre-School Children

To assess children's growth and development, programs administer one of several state-approved criterion-referenced assessments appropriate for children from birth to five years old. Results indicated that enrolled infants, toddlers, and pre-school children made statistically significant gains in the developmental domains of language, cognition, social and emotional skills, self-help, and gross and fine motor skills.

School Readiness

Four-year-old children were administered the *Get Ready to Read!* instrument to determine their readiness for kindergarten. The mean gains were statistically significant, indicating that children made gains toward reading readiness.

School-Age Children

Elementary school teachers provided information about school-age children at the end of the school year. Teachers rated children in terms of their academic levels, indicating that of enrolled elementary students:

- 58% were rated as advanced or proficient (at or above grade level) in math.
- 55% were rated as advanced or proficient in reading.
- 55% were rated as advanced or proficient for overall school performance.

In addition, teachers reported positive behavioral outcomes for enrolled students, indicating that:

- 69% read more books.
- 67% were more interested in learning.
- 64% talked more positively about school.
- 53% had more friends.
- 50% increased their self-esteem.



Through the Altoona Area School District family literacy program, Sarah Ammerman has met her goal to obtain employment and has worked for Head Start for two years. Alex spends time with her mother reading and singing.



Jesse Winstead, married with two young children, joined The Learning Center (Lycoming Co.). She earned her GED and will enroll in the Pennsylvania College of Technology. She seeks out information to be a more effective parent and serves on the Parent Council.

“I learned that I should be and am my children’s first and most important teacher.”

Clenetta Robinson and her daughter Diamond participate in the Families That Work at CHANCES (Mayor’s Commission on Literacy, Philadelphia). She is actively working toward her goal of earning her GED. Clenetta and Diamond maintain perfect attendance in Interactive Literacy, and Clenetta has discovered teaching techniques to help prepare her daughter for kindergarten.



Background to Pennsylvania’s Family Literacy Programs 2004-2005

Family literacy comprises four components that, as a whole, build on each other to improve parents’ and children’s achievements.

- Adult education, including adult basic and secondary education and ELL
- Parent education—to be a child’s first and most important teacher
- Early childhood education
- Parent and child interactive language and literacy activities

In 2004-2005, the Bureau of ABLE administered a \$13 million family literacy program, including nearly \$7.5 million in federal Even Start funds and more than \$5.5 million in Act 143 state funds. These funds supported 58 programs in all 67 counties of the Commonwealth. Services were provided to 193 of Pennsylvania’s 501 school districts and two charter schools. In 2004-2005, Pennsylvania enrolled 2,912 families, consisting of 3,000 adults and 3,989 children.

Outcome and Demographic Trends	Implications
Enrollment has increased steadily over the past five years.	Programs have improved recruitment efforts and are retaining families.
Families are attending more hours in all components.	Programs are providing services and schedules that address the needs of the families, increasing intensity and duration.
Adults are reaching academic and family goals.	Programs are helping adults set realistic short- and long-term goals and providing the services to reach those goals.
Young children are making gains in all developmental areas.	Programs are using early childhood assessments to guide curriculum and instruction. Parents are more involved with their children’s development.
Children are demonstrating gains in reading readiness prior to entering kindergarten.	Programs are preparing children for kindergarten by helping them develop pre-reading skills.
School-age children are achieving proficiency in reading, but more children need to achieve this outcome.	Programs and schools must work together with parents to ensure that school-age children make greater gains in reading and other academic skills.
Parents are more engaged with their children’s education and literacy activities.	Programs are emphasizing the importance of parents as their children’s first and most important teachers.
Families are poorer. A larger percentage of families are in the lowest income groups, and fewer families are employed full time or part time.	Programs are serving low-income families, those most vulnerable and in need of services.
At entry to the program, the vast majority of native English speaking adults lacked a high school diploma or GED.	Programs are serving adults with basic educational needs.
There is a slow but steady increase in the percentage of teen parents participating in family literacy programs.	Programs are reaching out to this population, helping young mothers with infants gain the skills they need in their roles as adults.
Adults who are English language learners continue to be a significant proportion of enrolled families.	The substantial presence of this population has implications for service delivery and professional development.

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