

APPENDIX E

FAMILY LITERACY SERVICES

Maine has a documented history of comprehensive research-based family literacy programs providing services to families, but the number of programs in our state has been small due to the limited amount of Even Start funds. The Reading Excellence Act will provide targeted communities the resources to provide comprehensive research-based family literacy programs to its families.

Family Literacy Partnerships provide intensive family-centered education programs that involve parents and children, from birth through age seven, in a cooperative effort to help parents become full partners in the education of their children, and to assist children to reach their full potential as learners. The foundation for Maine's comprehensive research based model for family literacy is the Keenan model and consists of educational opportunities for low-income families through the integration of the following core components: early childhood education, adult literacy, parenting education, and parent-child activities. The partnerships are cooperative projects that build on existing community resources to create a new range of services for families determined to be most in need in terms of poverty and illiteracy. Family Literacy Partnerships must promote the achievement of the following National Education Goals:

Goal (1) All children in America will start school ready to learn; all students will learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and be productive in our Nation's economy.

Goal (5) Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Goal (8) Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social emotional, and academic growth of children.

Requirements for Providing Family Literacy Services

LEAs receiving funds under the Reading Excellence Act will be required, at a minimum, to:

- Develop partnerships with local community agencies to avoid duplication of services and leverage funds.
- Coordinate with local adult education and literacy volunteer programs for adult literacy services
- Participate in the Team Building Course at local subgrant sites
- Provide services to those families most in need.
- Serve 25 families (a family includes at least one child between the ages of birth and seven and one parent or primary caregiver in need of adult literacy instruction)
- Provide 20 hours per week in adult literacy instruction per family
- Provide services in literacy and pre-literacy for children for 20 hours per week

- Provide 6 hours of parent education programming
- Provide 6 hours per week of parent and child together time.
- Coordinate curriculum with the Learning Results and Equipped for the Future standards.
- Participate in all data collection and evaluation procedures.

Family literacy is an approach in education that focuses its programming on the educational needs of the whole family and can strengthen the family because it brings parents and children together as they learn in explicit instructional programs. Family literacy is based on a simple but powerful premise: parents and children can learn together and enhance the lives of each other. The explicit instruction provided in family literacy programs to teach parents and children in home based and center based programs enables them to support each other in their learning.

Family literacy is an empowerment model, therefore assessment and measurement of adult learners is not based on their weaknesses; rather, it is based on their strengths and the wealth of knowledge they bring to the program (Martim, Hall & Bahie, 1993). The emphasis in family literacy is the transferring learning from parent to child and child to parent. Documented evidence from the National Center for Family Literacy (1996) on family literacy programs shows some clear patterns for success for family members. Children who are now in grades one and two:

- are better at identifying letters, numbers and words than children who have not been in family literacy;
- have higher attendance rates than children who did not attend family literacy programs;
- have higher comprehension skills than children who did not attend the programs;
- exceed children who did not attend family programs in oral language development.

Their research on the families that participate in family literacy programs show:

- families change patterns of language to be more consistent with patterns related to later school success for children.
- adults make important and statistically-significant gains in language and math;
- adults make significant improvements in their self confidence and confidence in parenting;
- a higher percentage of adults achieve GED equivalence;
- more adults obtain and keep employment.

These research findings provide evidence for communities to commit to developing family literacy programs in partnership with their adult education programs and early elementary educational programs. In these communities children will be ready to learn as they enter school and the family members will be ready to be full partners in their child's education.

Three major themes have emerged in the research on teaching reading in adult and family literacy programs: (a) a teaching framework which allows the flexibility for the learner and the teacher to design the best program for the process of learning to read; (b) theory on how adults learn to read and the best instruction practices for teaching adults; and (c) programming ideas which utilize literature and engage members of the whole family.

A literature search of teaching methods for adults learning to read unearths a very small quantity of documented research (Earl, 1997). However, when reading the vast amount of research literature on teaching children to read, two major points stand out. The first is the consensus that children must spend a great deal of time practicing emerging literacy skills if they are to become proficient readers. There is a positive correlation between the time spent reading and reading achievement (Earl, 1997). The second is family literacy teachers should acquire a classroom library of books and materials for their students to choose high interest, multi-level materials. This provides the learner the opportunity to select their own reading material for their interest and reading ability level.

Two components of a balanced comprehensive research based approach to teaching reading for adult new readers include: the language experience technique for the adult beginning new reader and a four-component framework for the adult beginning intermediate new reader. The language experience method of reading instruction is used for adult beginning new readers who are developing basic literacy skills.

Language experience is a story or experience dictated by the student and written by the instructor using both the learner's own experiences and language as the basis for instructional material (Cheatham, Colvin, & Laminack, 1993). The emphasis is on demonstrating the connection between thought and oral language as written language through the learner's dictation.

The four component framework that is utilized to teach adult reading and writing skills at an intermediate level of basic skills is designed around four components: 1) uninterrupted sustained silent reading; 2) guided reading and discussion; 3) writing; and 4) practice activities (Soifer, Irwin, Crumrine, Honzaki, Simmons, & Young, 1990). In today's busy world of work and family, many adults do not find the time for uninterrupted sustained silent reading. A time for reading is essential for the acquisition of reading skills and must be planned into the lesson time. It is clear that one of the best ways to learn to read is by reading (Smith, as cited in Soifer, Irwin, Cruinrine, Honzaki, Simmons, & Young, 1990, p.17). Teachers should model the sixth guiding principle; (Figure 3) sustained silent reading, providing the learner with the belief that reading is important and that reading practice is essential to improving reading skills.

Guided reading and discussion reinforces the concept that reading is the dynamic process of interacting with the text and that readers are responsible for constructing meaning by using background knowledge they possess to assimilate new insights in their reading. This process works well in family literacy programs, allowing parents and children to read and work together as they gain meaning from and interact with printed materials. This method provides them with the practice they need for reading comprehension.

Writing activities provide the adult learner with experiences to promote their writing and reading abilities. Language experience provides adult learners with limited writing skills the ability to practice writing, and models a positive experience for adults to gain writing skills. Just providing practice in writing is not enough, instruction in the phases of the writing process is necessary with learner developed authentic materials to ensure success and a positive self-concept in the writing process.

The writing process emphasizes discussion, reading and writing in collaboration with another person who could be the tutor, teacher or peer, or in small groups. Tutor, Cheatham, Colvin, & Laminack (p.78) recommend these guidelines for the writing process with adult new readers, this is a guideline only and not a step-by step procedure to teach writing instruction.

Practice activities provide the adult learner with the ability to rehearse various ways to recognize words: by sight, sound, context clues, structural elements of language, and the sound-symbol relationships (phonics) of language. Adults have often experienced gaps in their learning journey and their practice allows for visual clues to these gaps and automaticity that is necessary in the acquisition of language skills. Adults need positive educational experiences in their lessons and the practice, practice, practice.

Instructors in family literacy programs will need to utilize resources that engage the adults and children in a balanced comprehensive research based approach to teaching reading that combines the reading skills of hearing the language, sharing the reading and gaining knowledge to equip our learners for their future.