



**FAMILY LITERACY IN ADULT EDUCATION:
The Federal and State Support Role**

**A Special Perspectives Paper
Prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy**

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FOREWORD

This special perspectives paper on family literacy was developed by Tony Peyton of the National Center for Family Literacy for the August 20th meeting of the National Commission on Adult Literacy. While its publication does not necessarily reflect conclusions of the Commission, we are pleased to make it available as a public service.

Other materials developed for the August 20th meeting are: a Policy Brief by senior researcher Julie Strawn of the Center for Law and Social Policy (*Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment* – scheduled for release soon); a Policy Brief by Stephen Reder of Portland State University (*Adult Education and Postsecondary Success* – released 9/4/07); and a Policy Brief by education consultant James Parker (*Workplace Education: Twenty State Perspectives* – released 9/4/07). As released, all Commission publications are available at www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org.

A current listing of commissioners and honorary commissioners of the National Commission on Adult Literacy is given on the next page.

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Family Literacy in Adult Education: The Federal and State Support Role Perspectives from the National Center for Family Literacy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Family literacy programs are a unique component of the adult education system. They work by bringing parents with low literacy skills together with their children to learn and receive instruction, reaching a cohort of people who might not be served by other adult education programs. As parents see their children's learning increase, they are often motivated to improve their own. Over the past 20 years, the federal government and many of the states have put policies in place that include family literacy as an important part of the adult education system with the intent of increasing the availability of family literacy services. The examples given in this paper show how family literacy is being incorporated into adult education programming and make evident the importance of maintaining a strong family literacy commitment. This commitment is essential to ensure that local communities have the resources they need to reach more parents and their children. Without significant improvement in the skill level of both low literate adults and their children, the cycle of low educational achievement and poverty is not likely to be broken.

INTRODUCTION

Implementing family literacy programs in local communities across the country has been an active goal of state and federal policy since the mid 1980s. In 1998, Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act, including as Title II the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. This was an important milestone, because while family literacy was born from the adult education movement, this was the first time that family literacy was specified in federal law as a program approach to meeting the adult education and literacy needs of the nation. One of the stated purposes of this Act is to "assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children."

However, as with other areas of education, attention to and funding for family literacy have ebbed and flowed at the state and federal level over the years depending on the issues that happen to be driving policy discussions at the time, be they in higher education reform, welfare reform, early childhood development, universal pre-K, workforce development, or K-12 reform.

Federal financial support for family literacy, through the Even Start program, reached a historical high between 2000 and 2003, \$250 million. Since 2004, federal budget constraints and changing political agendas have made federal support for Even Start uncertain. At the

same time, however, there is evidence of increasing state investment in the conduct of family literacy programs. As the following examples indicate, there are and have been successful efforts to adopt state legislation and funding for family literacy, and some states have maximized federal funding and used other federal resources to support their family literacy work.

There is no single repository of information about state family literacy initiatives, or family literacy programs in operation at the local level, so a comprehensive analysis of such activity in the country would be difficult to obtain. One of the reasons for the paucity of information, and for lack of comparability in data we do have, is there is such a vast array of program types in operation, with great variation in nature depending on whether they are linked to adult education, welfare reform, workforce development, school reform, the parental involvement goals of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or of other early childhood initiatives.

Nevertheless, the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) operates and interacts with all kinds of family literacy programs, and on the basis of that this paper provides at least a snapshot of family literacy activities. It also offers suggestions on steps needed to ensure that family literacy programs effectively reach more adults and are more firmly integrated into the adult education system.

Since 1985, a number of states have implemented family literacy programming through adoption of specific state legislation. Some are in the process of developing family literacy programs now. And others, convinced of the importance of family literacy services, carry out programs in the absence of any specific legislation. In at least 34 states, the term “family literacy” is somewhere in state statute.

This report is organized into four parts. Part I considers the benefits of the family literacy model. Part II summarizes the major federal sources of support for family literacy. Part III presents a sampling of what 10* states have done and are doing to implement and fund family literacy programs, based on NCFL’s direct knowledge. (The states included here are by no means the only states engaged in significant family literacy activity.) Part IV contains issues and recommendations for consideration of the National Commission on Adult Literacy.

I. MAKING THE CASE: Why Provide Family Literacy Services?

Family literacy programming aims to address two challenges at the same time: raising the literacy skills of parents and giving those adults the tools they need to support the literacy development of their children. For families that are educationally and economically disadvantaged, family literacy is an efficient and effective approach that, in a single program, provides benefits to both parents and children. Good programs not only reinforce the learning of both but also have the added advantage of strengthening the family unit.

The federal government has clearly and consistently defined family literacy in four separate pieces of legislation: the Workforce Investment Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (including Title I, Part A, Even Start, and after school programs), the Community Services Block Grant Act, and the Head Start Act.

In federal law, family literacy is defined as follows: “Family literacy services are services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family and that integrate all four of the following activities:

* The states are Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Washington, and Wyoming.

- Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.
- Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.
- An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.”

While there is variation from state to state, all the states profiled in this report include all elements of the federal definition in targeting populations of greatest economic and educational need, although how much each component is integrated depends on how programs are administered* and the precise language of governing state legislation, if any exists.

(a) Benefits to Adults

While family literacy programs address the needs of all family members, it is important to point out the specific benefits for the adults. Low literacy continues to be a persistent problem among adults in the United States. As is well known by now, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), completed by the U.S. Department of Education in 2003, found that 30 million adults have “below basic” literacy skills.¹ More than half of those scoring at this level did not have a high-school diploma or GED. Other recent research reinforces the scale of the problem.

Family literacy programs are an important tool for addressing these challenges. Available information suggests that they:

- **Reach and increase participation in literacy classes of adults not otherwise served or motivated.** Some research indicates that adults stay enrolled in family literacy programs longer than in most adult only programs and maintain higher attendance rates, with 59 percent of family literacy students remained enrolled more than 20 weeks, compared to 40 percent in adult-only programs.²
- **Improve educational achievement.** Adults who participate in family literacy programs show improved educational achievement. Adult academic gains are greater than those reported for single-service programs: For example, according to a University of North Carolina study, family literacy adults scored an average of 1.15 grade level equivalents higher pre-post on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), compared to a 0.75 grade level equivalents pre-post gain by students in a comparison stand-alone adult education program.³
- **Increase chances of economic self-sufficiency.** A study of 969 adult students who had participated in family literacy programs showed that 51 percent had received the GED or some other high school equivalency certificate; 43 percent had jobs, compared with 14 percent before enrolling; 14 percent were enrolled in some form of postsecondary education or job-training program, or continuing in ABE working toward GED certification.⁴

* Family literacy programs tend to adopt the focus of the agency administering them.

(b) Benefits to Families

As detailed in the Workforce Investment Act, it is essential to recognize the adult's role as a full partner in their child's education. With increased *adult* literacy comes increased involvement in their child's education.⁵ Further, as the literacy level of the parents rise, so does the academic performance of their children.⁶

- **Increased Educational Attainment and Economic Opportunity for the Parent.** One of the best indicators of a child's academic success is the educational attainment of the mother.⁷ Children from families with undereducated parents historically perform at the lowest levels in school. In addition, data shows that these children are more likely to be absent from school, more likely to behave in ways that result in disciplinary actions by the schools, less likely to complete school, less likely to enroll in higher education, and less likely to secure high-paying jobs.⁸
- **Increased Parental Involvement.** Sixty-four percent of public elementary schools with a high concentration of poverty perceive lack of parent education as a barrier to parent involvement.⁹ Family literacy programs can help increase parental involvement in their child's education. A study in Colorado showed that parents who participated in family literacy programs were more frequently involved in their children's education than non-family literacy parents.¹⁰

II. FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILY LITERACY

The federal commitment to family literacy has grown significantly over the past 20 years. Local family literacy programs can potentially access a variety of federal funding sources from various programs in four departments, including Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Interior (see box below). The two key federal sources are the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and the Even Start Family Literacy Program.

(a) Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the Workforce Investment Act) identifies family literacy as a viable option to meet adult education and literacy needs. The Act aims to include family literacy as a critical element of adult education. It is important for the adult education community to be fully aware that family literacy services are accepted and encouraged as a useful element of federal adult education authorizing laws.

Total federal funding for the Adult Education Basic grants to the states is approximately \$564 million for FY 2007. These funds are allocated to states through the U.S. Department of Education and the state awards go towards the provision of adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy services, family literacy services, and English literacy programs.

(b) Even Start

The federal William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program, part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), works with the nation's low-income families to improve the academic achievement of parents and young children. The program provides funding to local family literacy projects that integrate adult literacy (adult basic education and

secondary education and instruction for English language learners), age-appropriate child education, parenting education, and interactive parent and child literacy activities. Even Start is unique in that it is designed as a family literacy program in which the eligibility of parents and children is interdependent. To be eligible, at least one parent and one or more eligible children must participate together in an Even Start project.

The Even Start Family Literacy Program was first enacted in 1988 as Part B of Chapter I of Title I of ESEA. Most recently, the program was reauthorized and amended by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The funding is allocated to states through the Department of Education based on their relative share of Title I, Part A funding. The state education agencies then award Even Start subgrants to eligible entities.

Federal funding for Even Start continued on an upward scale, starting at \$14.8 million in 1989 to \$250 million in 2002. For the past five years, however, funding for the program has begun to decline. Between 2003 and 2007 Even Start funding has gone from \$248 million to approximately \$82 million.

The following is a list of several federal programs that can be accessed to provide partial or complete funding for a family literacy program. While Even Start is the only federal funding source that *mandates* family literacy, many federal programs list family literacy as an allowable use of funds.

Federal Funding Sources That Allow Family Literacy Expenditures

U.S. Department of Education

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Programs
Title I, Part A
Reading First (Title I, Part B, Subpart 1)
Early Reading First (Title I, Part B, Subpart 2)
Even Start, Migrant Even Start and Indian Even Start (Title I, Part B, Subpart 3)
Education of Migratory Children (Title I, Part C)
Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (Title I, Part F)
State and Local Technology Grants (Title II, Part D, Subpart 1)
Ready to Learn Television (Title II, Part D, Subpart 3)
Grants and Subgrants for English Language Instruction (Title III, Part A)
21st Century Community Learning Centers (Title IV, Part B)
Local Innovative Education Programs (Title V, Part A)
Indian Education (Title VII, Part A)
Native Hawaiian Education (Title VII, Part B)
Alaska Native Education (Title VII, Part C)
Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Workforce Investment Act, Title II)
Federal Work-Study Program (Higher Education Act)

U.S. Department of Interior - Bureau of Indian Education

Family and Child Education (FACE) Program

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, and Indian Head Start (Head Start Act)
Community Services Block Grant (Community Services Block Grant Act)

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Neighborhood Networks Program
Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency Program

III. EXAMPLES OF STATE FAMILY LITERACY INITIATIVES

As noted, it would be difficult to catalog all state initiatives that incorporate family literacy services, but it is possible to get a strong sense of how some states are building on what federal programs like those listed above have begun, especially Even Start. According to 2003-2004 data, Even Start has served as many as 50,000 families annually, including more than 65,000 adults.¹¹ Although updated federal data is not currently available, this number is known to have declined in recent years. Therefore, it is useful to look at how the states, recognizing the power of family literacy programs, have created their own initiatives to serve parents, apart from federal support.

There is great variation in state efforts to provide family literacy services. Some legislation specifically authorizes family literacy services. Other legislation includes family literacy as part of a broader initiative, such as early childhood education. Funding streams flow through departments of education, adult education, state boards of technical and community colleges, and state library systems. In some states, special efforts by governors leverage funding from state and private sources. In addition, some states are presently looking for ways to supplement recent cuts in federal Even Start funding. The following examples illustrate the variation.

(a) Arizona

Arizona has long been a model for state-specific family literacy legislation, with the state adopting such legislation in 1994. The state requires of participants both a comprehensive family literacy program and community service.

Background

In Arizona, the Family Literacy Program began on a pilot basis in 1994. It operates through the Division of Adult Education and Family Literacy. Local programs are funded with grants awarded by the Arizona Department of Education. Moreover, Governor Janet Napolitano included the Family Literacy Program in her School Readiness Action Plan as a component of the state's early childhood education system.

Program

Arizona's Family Literacy Program brings parents and their pre-school children together within the same program. Programs include specific educational objectives for the adult and the child through a comprehensive, intergenerational approach. All families must participate in the full program. In addition, programs build upon existing local community resources to offer educational and support services that help parents and children learn and succeed together. The integrated components of this intensive, holistic program include:

- Early Childhood and/or School-Aged Education
- Adult Education – ABE, ESOL, GED Preparation, Citizenship Education
- Parents and Children Learning Together (PACT) – Interactive Learning and Modeling Opportunities Through Play
- Parent Time – Parenting Education and Support
- Community Service – Volunteerism - Career Readiness

- Home Instruction - Home Visits (Transfer of learning to the home and to other family members)

Most programs in the state combine Even Start funding with state funding to provide family literacy services. Projects apply for both funding opportunities with a single proposal; however, eligibility for state funding has a few additional requirements: adult participants must be lawfully present in the United States, child participants must be three to four years of age, programs must assure that they have at least 10 families enrolled at all times, and parents must participate in service learning activities that include volunteering at the school or other community or faith-based programs.

Funding

Arizona has provided continuous funding for the Family Literacy Program since 1994. In 2007, the state allocation for family literacy was \$1,009,100, with \$951,279 available for direct assistance to 15 projects. The state is currently funding nine projects with federal Even Start dollars alone.¹²

(b) Colorado

Colorado technically provides no state funding for adult education and there is no state statute pertaining specifically to adult education. However, the state has done an exemplary job using family literacy to help address the state's adult literacy needs.

Background

In 2000, the Family Literacy Consortium was formed to bring together a variety of stakeholders and providers in order to increase networking and collaboration. In addition, the consortium worked to raise the profile of family literacy programs and to strengthen the message that family literacy programming is an effective way to help close the achievement gap.

In 2002, the Colorado General Assembly passed the Family Literacy Education Act (HB02-1303). This law outlines the benefits of family literacy to Colorado state residents but the Act specifically stated that no general funds could be appropriated for implementing the legislation. The Act states, however, that federal funds should be actively pursued. The only funding provisions of the bill were gifts, grants, and donations. If sufficient funds were not allocated by December 1, 2002, the Act would be repealed. Because no state funds could be allocated, activities authorized by the Family Literacy Education Act were supported by grants from the Lazurus Foundation, the Polis Schutz Foundation, and the Daniels Fund.

Legislation

The Family Literacy Education Act was amended during the 2007 legislative session (HB 07-1271) to remove the prohibitions on spending general funds for the program and to eliminate the annual repeal clause.

Funding

During the 2007 legislative session, in addition to changes in the Act, the Colorado State Assembly also appropriated \$200,000 for the grant program from the State Education Fund. The fiscal adjustment allocates funds to certain counties where programs wanted to expand their capacity to provide family literacy services in the 2008 fiscal year.

(c) Florida

Florida has not adopted specific legislation to support family literacy but the Florida Family Literacy Initiative has provided support for it.

Background

In 1999, Governor Jeb Bush, with support from former First Lady Barbara Bush, provided seed money for the Governor's Family Literacy Initiative. The original funding came from two grants, each for \$500,000, and one from the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy and the other from the South Annenberg Challenge. These funds were distributed to 20 organizations in grants of up to \$50,000.

The initiative continued to get funding and donations from private entities and, in 2003 the State of Florida allocated \$500,000 through the State Department of Education for the Governor's Family Literacy Initiative. This money was for sustainability grants for programs that had previously received grants through the Family Literacy Initiative.

The initiative has continued and with Governor Bush's support, at the end of his term the program was renamed the Florida Family Literacy Initiative.

Program

The Florida Family Literacy Initiative programs take multiple forms and have been implemented throughout Florida in home, school, and community settings. The program serves adults in basic adult education and English language learning, as well as their children who are either in pre-school settings or in kindergarten through third grade. This program strongly emphasizes the services provided to adults. Experience over the years indicates that the most effective programs are those that engage both parents and children with equal vigor. Since 2000, 106 programs have been awarded a total of 133 Florida Family Literacy Initiative program grants.

In 2006, Florida launched an effort to strengthen family literacy throughout the state and beyond by funding Florida Family Literacy Academies. These programs have made a three-year commitment to identifying and sharing best practices in family literacy, with 12 sites across the state serving as testing and teaching sites.

Funding

For 2006-2007, \$1.3 million was raised for the Florida Family Literacy Initiative in cash support and \$1.4 million in in-kind support. Most of this funding is raised through an annual event called the Celebration of Reading. In addition, the Florida Family Literacy Initiative receives grants from the Florida Department of Education, and Out of the Just Read, Florida! state appropriation, the Florida Family Literacy Initiative is funded at \$500,000 per year.

(d) Illinois

Illinois funds family literacy through the State Library system and the Illinois Community College Board.

Background

In 1992, as Secretary of State, former Governor George Ryan initiated the first permanent funding for family literacy. The Family Literacy Project began in fiscal year 1993 and has been in effect continuously since then.

During his years in office, Governor Ryan increased spending on adult education and literacy. In 2001, he transferred administration of adult education and literacy from the State Board of Education to the Illinois Community College Board and created the Illinois Community College Board Adult Education and Literacy Fund. At that time, 70 percent of the people enrolled in adult education and literacy programming were already being served by the Illinois community colleges.

Programs

The Illinois State Library Literacy Office runs the Adult Literacy Grant Program. The Family Literacy Project, a component of the Adult Literacy Grant Program, provides instructional services to parents and children to enhance their basic reading, math, writing, or language skills. Direct service grants are awarded through an annual competitive application process. Award notification is made when legislative and gubernatorial approval of the annual appropriation is completed. Projects must partner with an adult literacy provider agency, child-at-risk agency, and a library. In 2006, 45 projects served 1,265 parents and 1,858 children.¹³

In addition, the state provides a summer program called the Penny Sevens Summer Family Literacy Program. In this program, family literacy services are offered from May through August to compensate for the summer break when many traditional programs close. The summer program provides instructional services to enhance the basic reading, math, writing, or language skills of both parents and children. Services include educational experiences that build on community resources for family learning. Individual grants are awarded to educational agencies such as libraries, community colleges, community-based organizations, school districts, and volunteer organizations. During the summer of 2006, 56 projects were funded and served 1,497 adults and 2,551 children.¹⁴

Funding

In 2007, the Family Literacy Project funded 45 separate grant projects for a total expenditure of \$1,567,322. In the 2007 Summer Family Literacy program, 53 projects are operating on about \$250,000 in state funds.¹⁵

(e) Kentucky

Background

Kentucky is considered the birthplace of family literacy and continues to provide strong support with 100 state-funded programs. The original four-component family literacy model, piloted in 1985 by Sharon Darling, then Adult Education Director for Kentucky, and other state staff, was called the Parent and Child Education (PACE) program. In 1985, Kentucky became the first state to enact a family literacy law. While the model has evolved and the PACE program is no longer in state statute, family literacy is still in statute and the state adult education agency has continuously funded family literacy programs and invested significantly in professional development for more than 20 years.

Program

The original PACE programs were designed as an intense intervention, which ultimately provided services in 36 counties across the state. The programs prepared adults for the GED while also providing interactive literacy activities for parents and their preschool children. The PACE program soon gained national attention and, in 1988, was selected by the Ford Foundation and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government as one of 10 outstanding innovations in state and local government.

PACE was ultimately repealed in 2000 upon passage of the Adult Education Act (Senate Bill 1) to allow more flexibility. In 2001, funding for family literacy increased from \$2 million to \$4 million, and in 2002 family literacy programs were available in all 120 counties.

Kentucky Adult Education (KYAE) is a unit of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. It continues to promote a flexible model of family literacy that includes the four components through partnerships with a children's education partner (no adult education funding can be used for the children's education component). Programs range from intense

models with daily services to part-time models that meet at night to accommodate working families. In 2006, 4,109 families were enrolled in KYAE family literacy programs.

In 2007-2008, adult education programs were given the flexibility to offer family literacy programs based upon the need for these services in their county. One hundred counties have renewed their commitment to offering the program. KYAE is working closely with the Kentucky Institute for Family Literacy of the National Center for Family Literacy to develop several new models for family literacy that address changing conditions and community needs.

Funding

Family literacy funding is included as part of the adult education grant in each county, with no separate line item. Local programs allocate the amount needed for family literacy services from their overall budgets, and are funded by the state on a formula basis. Programs not offering family literacy in 2007-2008 must complete a Revised Scope of Work addressing how the program will use funding, staff, and other resources previously designated to family literacy for other local adult education needs.

(f) Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania has been a leader in the area of state-led family literacy efforts with legislation that requires the integration of family literacy services into the adult education system. The state has consistently devoted significant amounts of funding to family literacy, and it has also worked to improve the quality of programs across the state.

Background

In 1998, Pennsylvania began earmarking state money for family literacy programs when an amendment to an adult education bill earmarked \$3 million for family literacy. In 2001, the state legislature passed the Adult Basic and Family Literacy Education Act (Act 143), which established permanent funding for family literacy programs administered by the state's Department of Education. Since 2001, the state has provided continuous funding for family literacy.

Program

Act 143 established the Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Education Grant Program, which set aside a portion of the appropriation for family literacy, defined in the Act as: "An educational program designed to provide literacy training for adults, education services for children, and activities for parents and children together, at the same or at different sites."

The stated purpose of the program is to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy through an intergenerational instructional program, to improve the educational opportunities for children and adults by integrating early childhood and adult education for parents into a unified family program, and to implement collaborative relationships that build on existing community resources creating a new range of services.

The Act directed the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education to initiate family literacy programs through local educational agencies and nonprofit organizations. The programs were required to include the four components of a comprehensive literacy program. Pennsylvania currently has 70 community-based family literacy programs located in every county in the Commonwealth. According to the latest data (2005), Pennsylvania's family literacy programs served 2,912 families that included 3,000 adults.¹⁶

Funding

The family literacy program in Pennsylvania is supported with state funds through Act 143, which was funded at the level of \$8.1 million for 2007.

(g) South Carolina

South Carolina's family literacy program has existed for a number of years as a component of the state's early childhood program. However, recent actions have more substantively included the parent literacy component.

Background

Nearly 15 years ago, South Carolina passed Act 135, the Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act of 1993, which included the Parenting and Family Literacy Program. In 2004, new guidelines were written to require districts to provide comprehensive family literacy programs under Act 135. This requirement includes parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

Program

Under Act 135, the target population of the Parenting and Family Literacy Program was children up to age five and their parents, with the goal of supporting parents in their role as the principle teachers of their pre-school aged children. All districts were required to provide parenting and family literacy services. The services often include developmental screenings for children, instructional newsletters, parenting and family literacy classes, transportation and child care for parents attending those classes, home visits, and support groups/workshops. As mentioned above, the 2004 guidelines require each district to implement a family literacy program that includes the four components needed for a comprehensive family literacy model. Districts are in various stages of implementing the new requirement.

Funding

The funding, about \$5.4 million in 2006, is allocated statewide by a formula with a base allocation of \$35,000 for each school district and the balance distributed based on the districts' percentage of free/reduced lunch pupils in the state.

(h) Washington

Washington State includes family literacy as part of its overall adult education strategy. The state provides State Family Literacy funding, formerly called Project Even Start.

Background

The Washington Even Start program started in 1987 with the passage of the state's Project Even Start legislation, before the federal Even Start program became law. The idea was to coordinate adult education with pre-school programs for at-risk children.

Program

In Washington, the Office of Adult Literacy, within the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, administers the family literacy program. That Office, in consultation with others around the state, decided that addressing the literacy needs of family members was important as a priority. It sought to enhance funding and to structure programs that build on the best-known practices from state and national research.

The State Family Literacy funding promotes quality family literacy activities in the basic skills system through four principle strategies, which may include the following singly or in combination:

- Development of activities that can be used in basic skills courses that incorporate a family focus.
- Development of thematic instruction for family literacy programs.
- Staff training for enhanced family literacy instruction.
- Direct delivery of family literacy services.

Using the Equipped for the Future framework (originally developed under the auspices of the National Institute for Literacy), literacy services are funded that enable adults to succeed as family members. Programs focus on contextualized learning in which skills building is based on content of direct interest to clients. Services for children are carried out with local partners who share a commitment to child literacy and parental involvement in their child's education.

To be eligible for grants that provide direct delivery of family literacy services, the programs must include the four components defined by federal law. For individuals to enroll in the programs, they must be eligible for Adult Basic Education (ABE). Program components include adult participation in ABE instruction leading to economic self-sufficiency; instruction to develop parents as the primary teacher of their child; Parent and Child Together time (PACT time), and age-appropriate education for the child.

Funding

The State Family Literacy funding was \$800,000 in 2007, providing funds for 12 programs in Washington State.¹⁷

(9) Hawaii and Wyoming

Hawaii and Wyoming are included here because they represent recent state appropriations that are the direct result of federal funding cuts to Even Start.

In Hawaii, for the 2006-2007 school year, the state legislature added a \$400,000 Even Start line item to the Department of Education budget to help compensate for the impact of federal Even Start cuts. An allocation of the same amount has been made for the 2007-2008 year.

The Wyoming Legislature first appropriated state dollars to make up for lost federal Even Start funding in 2006-2007. The state allocated \$600,000 with the stipulation that the program be administered through the Community College Commission, which oversees ABE and GED. Wyoming has appropriated \$834,000 for the program for 2007-2008. Wyoming's family literacy programs are operating as though they had not experienced federal cuts at all and a couple are actually expanding.

IV. ISSUES & RECOMMENDATIONS

From the examples given, it is clear that policymakers in many states are looking to family literacy programs as one key way to improve and increase the skills and employability of adults. Indeed, the economic future of the states may depend to an important degree on lifting the educational levels of both parents and children.

Family literacy is an essential part of an overall federal and state adult education strategy, including efforts to address some of the needs of recent immigrant families. However, at present, many policymakers and services providers are not fully aware of the benefits of family literacy, and often it is treated only as part of early childhood initiatives even though instruction for adults is the backbone of the approach. This misconception is counterproductive and needs to be changed.

Following are some recommendations that the Commission might consider to advance the family literacy strand of the adult education and literacy system:

- **Promote family literacy as an integral component of the adult education system** with funding explicitly provided for service to adults who can be reached best by the family literacy programs. This can be done at the state or federal level as standalone legislation or combined as part of a broader initiative, such as adult education, workforce development, or early childhood education. Legislation governing family literacy should require programs of this type to incorporate the four elements of family literacy services currently outlined in federal law.
- **Capitalize on the current national, state, and local focus on elementary and secondary education accountability by incorporating proven family literacy programs.** With Congress poised to renew federal education laws (including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) and state educational agencies under pressure to meet accountability standards, more local schools should be urged and enabled to implement family literacy programming. U.S. Department of Education Guidance pertaining to “parental involvement” allows the use of Title I, Part A funds for family literacy services.
- **Convene administrators and educators to bring about collaboration and resource sharing among state agencies.** Among other things, such collaboration will help create a new mindset about the importance of family literacy learning and of investment in it. And it will help promote understanding of the role of family literacy in adult education services generally.
- **Encourage states to appropriate funds specifically for family literacy.** Even in the absence of specific legislation, states can appropriate funds to start state family literacy programs within the existing adult education system, to supplement federal funds that support family literacy programs, or to replace federal funds that have been reduced. In a similar vein, make family literacy an allowable use of federal and state funds provided for adult education and such other programs as ESL, vocational and workforce development, and early childhood education.
- **Urge serious national and state attention to the collection of comparable data about family literacy services, program types, funding, legislative provisions, and enrollments across the states as well as research to fully demonstrate program outcomes.** Better data collection efforts would need substantial new funding support, possibly an area well suited to philanthropic engagement.

ENDNOTES

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¹⁷ Interview with Robin Thompson, Family Literacy Program Coordinator, Washington State Board
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