

2 Even Start Family Literacy Program

The Even Start Family Literacy Program was established by Part B, Title I of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994 (Public Law 103-382).

Local communities have a number of funding options for establishing a family literacy program. One funding source is the federally-sponsored Even Start Family Literacy Program. Consistent with the National Center for Family Literacy's philosophy, the purpose of Even Start is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the education opportunities of the Nation's low-income families through the integration of early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program. The Even Start Family Literacy program is for family-centered education projects to help parents gain the literacy and parenting skills they need to become full partners in the education of their young children.

As with other community initiatives, a local Even Start program must be designed to be implemented through cooperative projects that build on existing community resources to create a new range of services. Even Start is a developmental demonstration program in which local agencies (often called eligible entities) are encouraged to test new, innovative ways to implement family literacy programs within the general Even Start structure. These local programs are to serve as models that can be replicated by other interested agencies.

Even Start components

An Even Start Family Literacy program must build on and not duplicate existing resources. These programs coordinate available resources and add needed services to provide comprehensive, integrated family literacy services for the whole family. The legislative charges are:

Adult Literacy. The Adult Literacy component must include life skills, job readiness skills, basic literacy skills, basic academic skills, and preparation for the General Education Development (GED) diploma. This component must be collaborated with the Adult Basic Educa-



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Reading problems are particularly severe for disadvantaged students. Fifty percent of fourth-graders whose parents graduated from college have “advanced” or “proficient” reading achievements, whereas only 10 percent of fourth-graders whose parents did not finish high school read at these levels.

NAEP, 1996, U.S. Department of Education

tion (ABE) program. The established ABE program serving the area must provide the adult literacy component. Instruction and materials for the Adult Education component of the program can be supplemented with Even Start funds. The most important source of funds for the adult component of a family literacy program is the Adult Education Act. The three most common types of instruction supported through adult education grants are: ABE for basic literacy services for adults whose skills are below the eighth-grade level; adult secondary education (ASE) for services designed to prepare students to obtain a high school equivalency diploma; and English as a Second Language (ESL) for services for adults with limited English proficiency.

Early Childhood Education. The Early Childhood Education component must be developmentally-appropriate for the ages of children served and may be provided only while the parents are attending the Even Start components of adult literacy, parenting education, and Parent and Child Together (PACT) time (see below), so the need for child care is not a barrier to parental participation. Appropriate childcare services must be provided for children from birth through the age of seven.

Parenting Education. The parenting education component must include individual and group meetings for Even Start parents in the areas of child development, parenting skills, discipline, at-home activities, family health, and mental health. This component reinforces efforts in all other components. Current resources for parenting education include the state-funded Parents As Teachers (PAT) program which provides services for families with pregnant teens and children birth to age 5 and the voluntary Practical Parenting Partnerships (PPP) program which provides parenting education for parents who have children in elementary school through high school.

Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time. A regularly scheduled time must be built into the Even Start schedule when parents and children work together on educational activities. These activities are to be the choice of the children with parents supporting that choice. This will be time when the Even Start staff can observe the progress being made in parent/child interaction. This component reinforces efforts in all other components. The form on the following page was developed by a Missouri Even Start program to be used by staff members to record observations made of clients participating in PACT time.

Home-Based Activity. Research indicates that at-risk families benefit from more contacts with the program staff, and home visits help with continued participation for the families. These visits can be completed by the adult educator, the PAT parent educator, or by an Even Start Family Literacy educator who is PAT-trained or PPP-trained. This component reinforces efforts in all other components.

Parent Name _____

Date _____

Even Start

Parent Observation Form
(Treatment thresholds — preschool age)

Reading Behaviors	70-100%	50-70%	30-50%	10-30%	0-10%
1. Parents will use expression when reading to their child or talking about pictures in a book.					
2. Parents will be able to ask their child open-ended questions pertaining to predictions about the book's or story's outcome					
3. Parents will be able to talk the pictures the child sees, thus increasing the child's vocabulary.					
4. Parents will be able to increase their child's awareness of letters and words through recognition and repetition in reading.					
5. Parents will be able to relate books and stories to their child.					

Directions: Please indicate the extent to which you observe this parent demonstrate the above reading behaviors at PACT Time and/or during home visits.

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Goals of the Even Start program

According to federal mandate, in addition to finding ways to successfully deliver the basic components of Even Start, local program planners are charged with designing a program that will strive:

- to identify and recruit families most in need of family literacy services as indicated by low levels of income, low levels of adult literacy or English language proficiency of the eligible parent(s), and other need-related indicators. Other need-related indicators might include factors such as handicapped conditions, homelessness, and chronic unemployment;
- to screen and prepare parents, including teenage parents and children, to enable them to participate fully in Even Start activities and services, including testing, referral to necessary counseling, other developmental and referral services, and related services;
- to design a flexible program to accommodate participants' work schedules and other responsibilities, including the provision of Even Start activities when those services are unavailable from other sources. These services might include child care for the period that parents are involved in the Even Start project, transportation to enable parents and their children to participate in the Even Start project, and scheduling and location of services to allow joint participation by parents and children;
- to provide high-quality instructional programs that promote adult literacy, empower parents to support the educational growth of their children, and provide developmentally-appropriate early childhood education services that prepare children for success in regular school programs;
- to provide family literacy and collaborating agency staff members (including child care staff) with training to develop the skills necessary to work with parents and young children in the full range of instructional services;
- to provide the operation of services on a year-round basis, including the provision of some program services, instructional or enrichment, during the summer months;
- to coordinate Even Start services with other Title I programs, any relevant programs under the Adult Education Act, the district Parents As Teachers program, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), the Head Start program, volunteer literacy programs, and other relevant programs;
- to ensure that the program will serve those families most in need of Even Start Family Literacy activities and services;
- to provide for an independent evaluation of the program; and
- to develop effective ways of assisting children and their families in making successful transition from preschool programs into the regular school program. This involves facilitating communications between the family and the school and helping the family take advantage of all the appropriate programs offered at the school.

Necessary collaborations

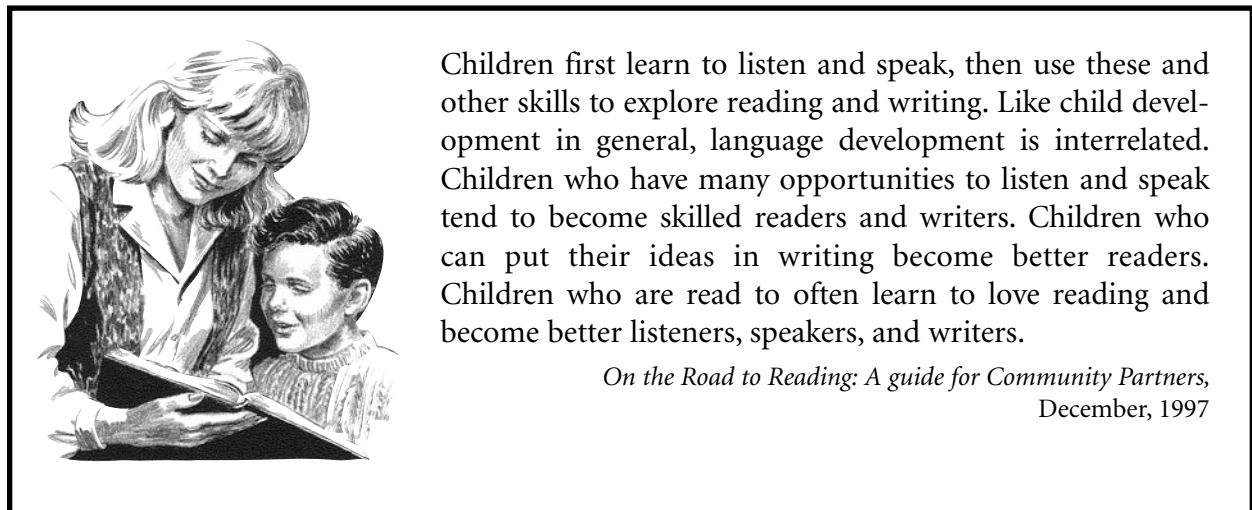
Employment Security. The Missouri Department of Employment Security will assist in counties where Even Start programs exist by referring families who meet the Even Start requirements and by assisting in job search activities for parents who complete the adult education component of Even Start.

FUTURES. Personnel in the counties where Even Start exists will assist Even Start personnel in recruiting families most in need. They will also provide assistance for childcare and transportation as needed.

Goals 2000. It is the purpose of Goals 2000 projects to improve the quality of education for all students by improving student learning through a long-term and broad-based effort to promote coherent and coordinated improvements in the system of education throughout the United States at both the state and local levels. Local Goals 2000 projects, in developing building-level activities that address areas of school reform, are encouraged to share information with the Even Start projects.

Head Start. The Federal government's largest commitment to preschool-age children provides health, education, nutrition, social, and other services to economically disadvantaged preschool children and their parents. Most Even Start programs not only coordinate with Head Start, but also actually build on Head Start services. Parental involvement always has been a focus of Head Start and many programs actively promote family literacy. Title IV of the Head Start Act provides funds for Community-Based Family Resource Programs to provide services to promote parental competency and behavior that will lead to healthy and positive personal development of parents and children. In awarding local grants, states must give priority to programs serving low-income communities and programs serving young parents or parents with young children.

Literacy Organizations. Many communities have local volunteer organizations that work to improve the educational level of Missouri's adults. These organizations should be included in the Even Start collaboration and may provide valuable tutoring services to parents in Even Start.



Children first learn to listen and speak, then use these and other skills to explore reading and writing. Like child development in general, language development is interrelated. Children who have many opportunities to listen and speak tend to become skilled readers and writers. Children who can put their ideas in writing become better readers. Children who are read to often learn to love reading and become better listeners, speakers, and writers.

On the Road to Reading: A guide for Community Partners,
December, 1997

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“Why are we bothering to restate the obvious: that adult literacy students come from poor educationally disadvantaged backgrounds? ...We want to keep in mind the interaction of their academic difficulties with their life histories and current socioeconomic circumstances. Like other human activities, reading ability develops in various social contexts over time.”

Snow and Strucker, *Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young children for Adult Learning and Literacy*, 2000

Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The personnel of the Employment Training Section of the Department will assist Even Start staff in communicating with Job Training programs across the state. This will allow parents in Even Start projects to be referred for job training programs that exist in every part of the state.

Project Construct. Project Construct is an early childhood program developed and sponsored by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). It is a process-oriented curriculum and assessment framework for working with children ages three through seven. Materials and training are available to Even Start projects that choose Project Construct for the early childhood component.

Parents As Teachers (PAT). Every school district in Missouri has implemented Parents As Teachers and funding is available through DESE. The program provides for periodic developmental screening for all children from birth to kindergarten entry and parent education for parents with children under kindergarten entry age. Many of the activities included in Parents As Teachers are home-based. Materials and training are available to Even Start projects to use as part of their parenting education component.

Special Education. The Special Education Early Childhood Section of DESE funds a special education preschool program for children ages three and four. This program will be available to Even Start families through the school district. The Department also serves as the lead agency for First Steps, a program for infants and toddlers that identifies infants with disabilities and assigns a service coordinator to the family. The service coordinator helps the family identify and make use of all the services available to the children and the family. Even Start programs will have access to the resources of First Steps for those families with children who qualify for First Steps services. Both of these programs support family involvement and can collaborate with Even Start to provide needed services to Even Start families with special needs children.

Title I. Title I.A: Programs for Educationally Disadvantaged Students was enacted to break the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty by providing supplemental instructional services necessary for educationally-deprived students. The key elements of the reauthorized Title I focus on high standards for all students, enriched and accelerated instruction, decentralized decision making, improved accountability, strong professional development, coordination and integration of services, expanded family involvement, extended learning time, and early intervention. Schools may

also use Part A of Title I funds to provide necessary literacy training for parents if all reasonably available sources of funding have been exhausted. School personnel are encouraged to work with community agencies to provide health, nutrition, and social services not otherwise available to the children being served. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must reserve at least one percent of their Part A Title I allocations for parent involvement activities, including family literacy and parenting skills, unless the one percent is \$5,000 or less. Part A of Title I funds may also be used for preschool programs for educationally-disadvantaged children who reside in high poverty areas.

Title II: Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development. The purpose of this program is to assist schools in improving the teaching and learning of all students by providing sustained and intensive high-quality professional development that is tied to the Show-Me Standards; reflects recent research; supports effective teaching of the content areas; incorporates effective strategies to meet the needs of historically under-represented students (such as females, minorities, individuals with disabilities, individuals with limited English proficiency, and those who are economically disadvantaged) and of sufficient intensity and duration to have a positive and lasting impact.

Title VI: Innovative Education Program. This program supports innovative activities such as:

- programs to combat illiteracy in students, as well as parents and other adults;
- implementation of reform activities;
- activities to improve the higher order thinking skills of disadvantaged elementary or secondary students to prevent them from dropping out of school;
- provision of equipment, software, or professional development in technology directly related to implementation of the comprehensive school improvement plan;
- purchase of instructional materials or computers (including media center materials and services), assessments, and other curricular materials required to promote achievement of the Show-Me Standards;
- activities to provide for the educational needs of gifted and talented children;
- school reform activities consistent with the Goals 2000: Educate America Act; and
- support for Title I activities for school improvement and assessment.

Allowable uses of Even Start funds

Salaries may include full- and part-time, professional and support staff of the program. Employee Benefits may be included for positions funded by the Even Start Family Literacy funds. Benefits must be the same as those provided to other employees of the applying entity. Purchased Services may include expenses for personnel not on the program's payroll, and for services required by the program. The following may fall under this category:

- professional and technical services,
- instructional (not covered by other programs such as Adult Education or Parents As Teachers),
- participants, program staff, and collaborating agencies staff services,
- audit, local evaluation, participation in national evaluations, the Even Start Family Literacy Program Information System, data processing, and like services,

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- property services (cleaning, repairs, maintenance),
- transportation (contracted and noncontracted),
- staff travel,
- insurance (other than employee benefits),
- communication (advertising, printing), and
- other (contracted food services).

Materials and Supplies are amounts paid for expendable items which are consumed or worn out or become part of more complex units or substances. These include:

- general supplies,
- textbooks (free and regular),
- library books, periodicals, resource materials,
- food (items usually claimed on the School Food Service Reimbursement form),
- utilities (electric, gas, phone), and
- other supplies and materials.

Even Start Family Literacy funds may be used only to supplement, not supplant, the level of funds that would be made available from nonfederal sources in the absence of these funds. Even Start funds may fund parent meetings and/or support groups for Even Start parents in addition to those that Parents As Teachers (PAT) and/or Practical Parenting Partnerships (PPP) provide.

Because Adult Basic Education (ABE) is funded according to the number of contact hours each student spends in class, it may be necessary to supplement the ABE component for a short period during the start-up of the program. It may also be helpful to pay the ABE teacher a stipend from Even Start funds so that he or she has time to spend as a member of the Even Start team as the staff works to integrate services and curriculum for families. Even Start funds may supplement existing adult literacy programs with additional activities or at the time when the enrollment becomes so low that the regular ABE program would close the site.

Funding

The minimum annual operating budget of a local Even Start program must be at least \$75,000. A year-nine program has a minimum budget of \$52,000. For each application, the funds listed in the match column must be in addition to the Even Start portion and must be equal to the percentage required for the grant year. The Even Start Family Literacy regulations require the project to match funds with a steadily decreasing maximum Federal share. This is an inverse relationship — as community funds increase, federal funds decrease.

According to program guidelines, an Even Start Family Literacy Program is to become self-sufficient by the end of year 4 or year 8. The remaining costs of a program may be provided in cash or in kind, and may be obtained from any source, including other Federal funds. In-kind donations must be documented.