

PART THREE

Operation and Evaluation

CHAPTER 8 Establishing a Home Base

9 Program Evaluation

Evaluations

Can you accept evidence that suggests your efforts are not having the desired effect? If you do not want to know that your initiative might be ineffective, then you should not do program evaluation. However, keep in mind that, like confirming results, disconfirming results do not mean the intervention was ineffective; such results merely fail to prove the claim of effectiveness.

Character Plus: Evaluation Resource Guide, 1999

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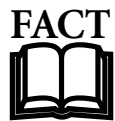
The physical set up of a family literacy program is the hub of a myriad of activities ranging from child care to educational technology. The facility has to meet families' needs for several other support services. Most basic issues center on questions about the flexibility of location, hours of operation, and program supervision.

Location, location, location

Successful recruitment of families is directly associated with the convenience, accessibility, and location of the family literacy center. The program must be based in an area where the families and staff feel safe and secure. Other questions about selecting site location and allocating adequate space to support the program design need to be answered. When selecting a program site facility consider:

- What services will be located on site?
- Does your budget afford the lease of or the purchase of property?
- Insurance: what kind of liabilities must be covered?
- Does the space in question require any remodeling? Who will pay for it?
- How close to the early childhood program does the adult education class need to be?
- Are there adequate restroom facilities? Areas large enough for diaper changing stations?
- Is there an area for children to play outside?
- How much space is needed for storage?
- Is there adequate electrical and Internet access for computers?
- What are the annual utilities costs?
- Is the parking adequate?
- Is the program close to a bus stop?
- Is there a large enough space for group meetings or staff meetings?
- How much staff office space is required?
- Will you need a kitchen to prepare food for the families or just the adults?
- If you will be serving children on location, will the space meet licensing requirements?





In a recent survey of Fortune 1,000 executives, 90 percent said that illiteracy is hurting productivity and profitability.

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Transportation

Transportation is key to families' access to the program. Few families served can afford a car to commute to the program and public transportation is not always available. Transportation is a costly service. We are aware of many scenarios describing how family literacy programs arranged and paid for transportation. For example, one school district set up quadrants for special buses with seat belts to transport participating families to the program. The program continues to serve a number of teenage parents. The parents and their children ride the bus together to the program site where the children are dropped off for their daycare and early childhood learning experiences. The teen parents continue on the bus to their high school where they attend classes. After school they are picked up by the bus and ride back to the family literacy program where they meet their children and have PACT time. After a thoroughly busy day, the family goes home on the bus.

One of Missouri's programs worked out a plan for the Head Start preschool van to pick up and drop off the children. A third program located their adult classroom across the street from the Head Start preschool classroom. Parents walk back and forth between their adult learning classes to the preschool and daycare rooms across the street.

Questions about transportation services include:

- Is transportation a barrier to accessing your program for families?
- Do all families have their own transportation?
- Will families have to rely on public transportation?
- Who or how will you pay for public transportation?
- Can the school district provide busses for transporting families to the program?
- How will children get to the different cooperating programs such as Title I preschool, Head Start preschool, before and after school programs?
- How will infants, toddlers and preschoolers be transported safely?
- Can the program afford to purchase a van and transport the families?

Attendance

Be there or lose funding dollars! Regular, daily attendance is essential for achieving participant performance indicators. Simply put, if a program's curriculum is valid and meaningful, the learning outcomes depend on the learning experiences that take place every day in the family literacy program. Motivating families to regularly attend the programs is a major challenge. Without regular attendance families endure greater difficulties as they work toward self-sufficiency and as they work to achieve their goals as family members, workers and citizens. It is

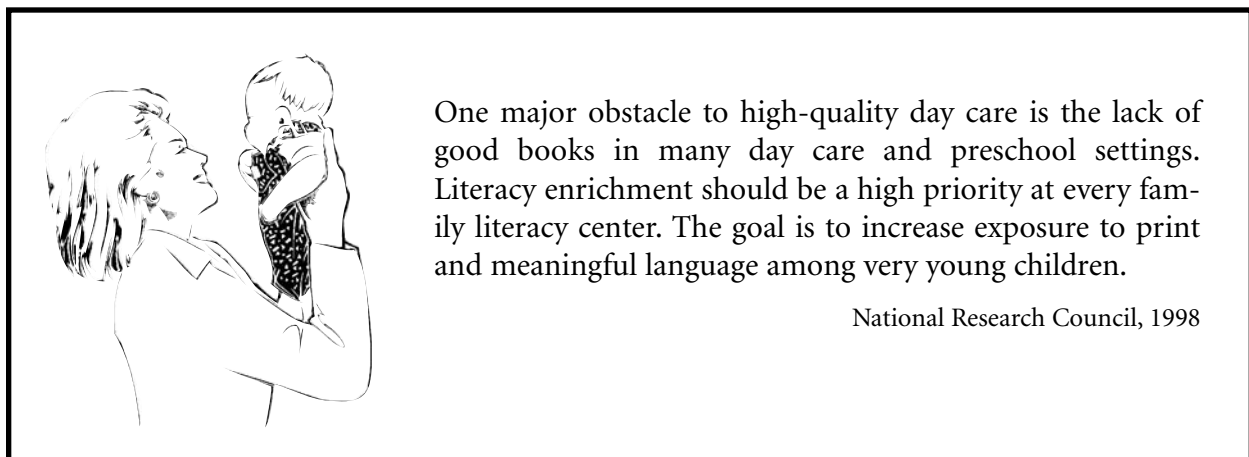
important to assess a parent's motivation for enrolling in the program. It is also important to regularly review with the parent whether the program is indeed helping support efforts toward those goals. Learners are nourished with continuous feedback about their effort and progress.

Many family literacy programs motivate attendance with incentives such as tokens or credits awarded for daily participation. The tokens or credits may be exchanged for clothing, toys, diapers, and other items in the program's "store." Other programs award points toward a culminating end-of-the-school-year special event. One program awarded a free trip to Chicago, another sponsored an evening out to a special restaurant. Many programs focus on the group attendance rates and encourage the parents to motivate each other to keep the group rate high. Pragmatism is the hallmark of operations management. One program director summed up the attendance issue by saying, "Bottom line? After Christmas vacation, snow storm or long weekend, when the parents don't show up, we pick up the phone and call, or grab the keys to our cars and head out to pick them up. We make it very clear that 'School's in session and we need you to do our job! And you need us to help you to get a job and be your child's first and best teacher.'"

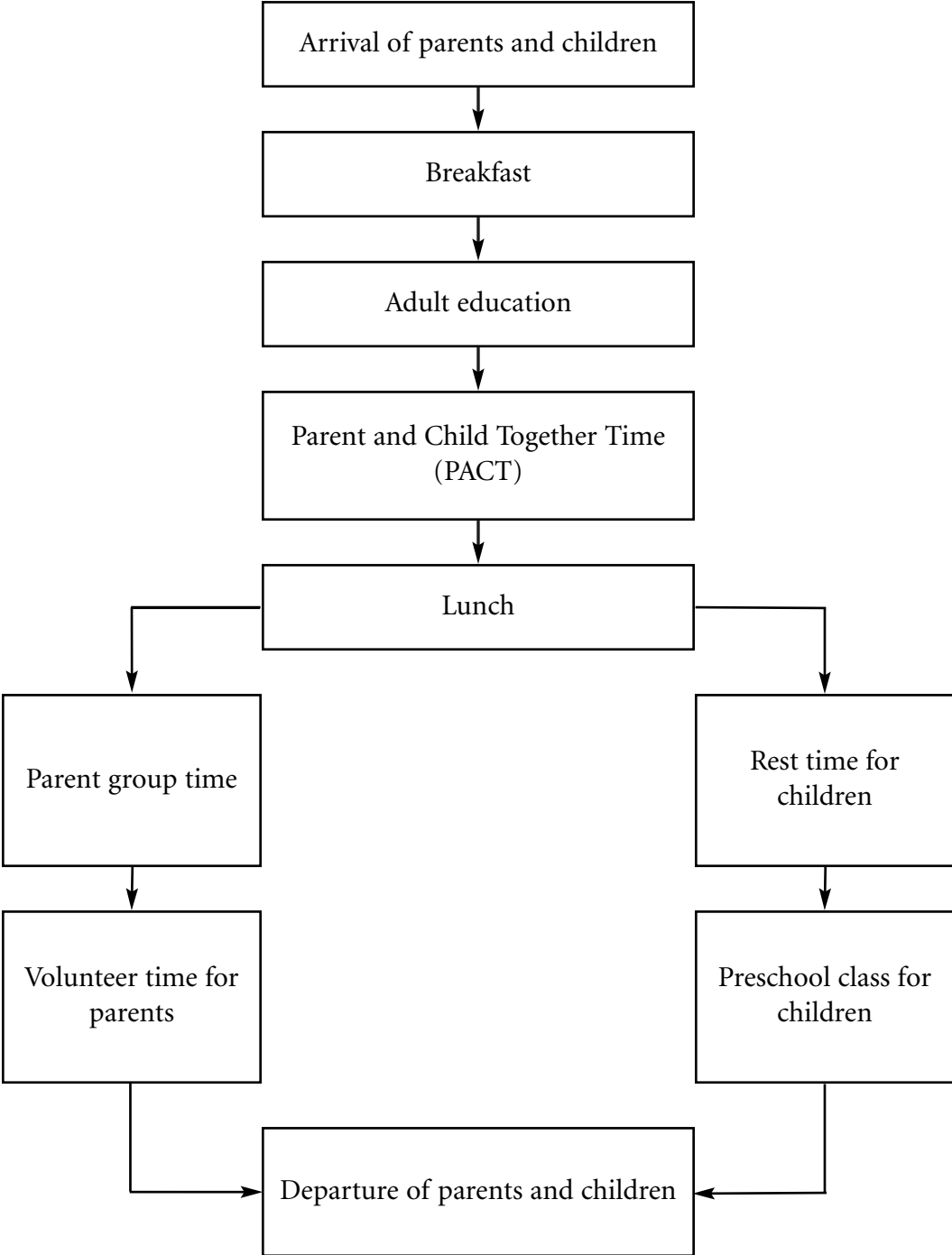
Hours of operation

A sample of a typical day in a family literacy program helps develop a better understanding on how many hours per day each program component should be scheduled. The chart on the next page provides a sample of a day in the life of a family literacy program. The research findings of the Even Start Family Literacy Program suggest providing at least 80 hours a month of adult education and a minimum of 20 hours per month of parenting education. The formula of 100 learning hours includes home visits and group meetings.

The Welfare Reform Act changed the context of family literacy programs. Programs adjusted their hours of operation to meet the needs of participants who are required to get a job or volunteer. Soon the law will require adults needing public assistance to work or volunteer 30 to 40 hours per week. Time is the coin of learning, and with welfare reform the investment of public assistance is confined to a 2-year time limit with a 5-year lifetime cap for adult participants. Invite a representative from Social Services to explain the limits, projections, and requirements of economic support programs such as School to Work, Welfare to Work, TANIF and others. Be



A Day in the Life of a Family Literacy Program



FACT



Since 1988, there has been a 58.8 percent increase in adult basic education enrollment across the United States. In the last five years, almost 1.5 million adults have earned a high school credential after enrolling in adult education classes. GED graduates, on average, earn \$2,040 more per year than do high school dropouts.

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prepared to offer flexible hours to accommodate part time employment, full time employment, and volunteering. Consider providing services in the evening and on weekends. Flexible program hours require the commitment of staff and adequate space for activities that children and families share. Discuss these possibilities with the planning committee and decide what works best considering local employment opportunities and school schedules.

Food

Once you determine your location and hours of operation, decide if and how food service will be provided. Full component programs require a long day. Breakfast and lunch are nutritional essentials. Meal times are valuable opportunities for parenting lessons and PACT time. Contact the Child and Adult Food Care Program and the School Lunch programs. Serving food is expensive and requires staff that can cook and meet the Department of Health regulations. Explore the possibilities and find out what will work best for your community. Be sure to invite someone from Women Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program when addressing this concern and integrate WIC services to eligible families directly within your program.

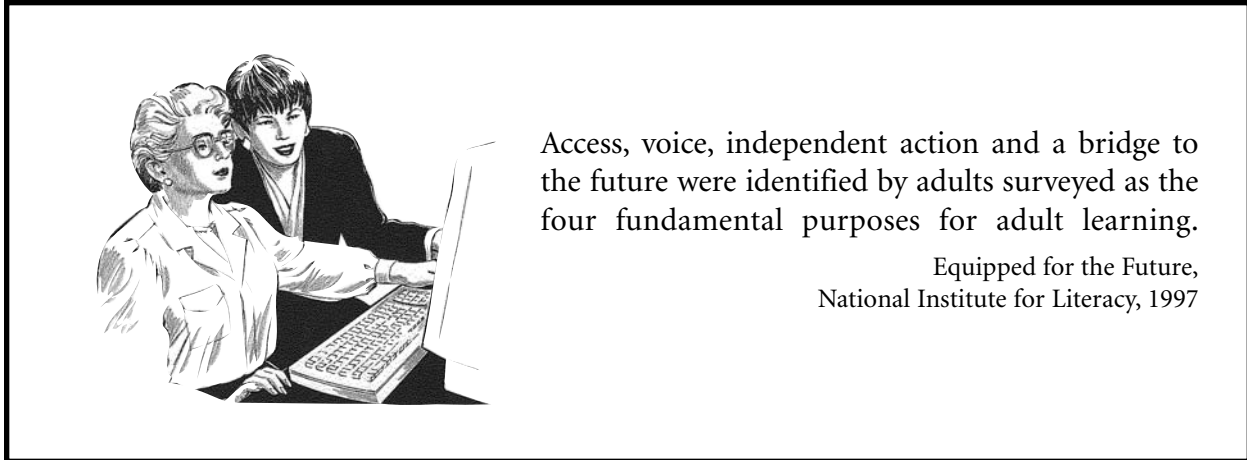
Program coordination

Responsibility for daily program coordination is a major administrative task. Overlapping or cross-training prepares everyone on staff to fill in or substitute during another's absence, but leadership is essential for program success. Typically, in Missouri, one person is hired as the program director/coordinator to supervise the employees, administer the budget, and manage daily activities. The program director can also serve as the adult educator or early childhood person. She is the community liaison, pinnacle "head" representative to local businesses, grant contact, and key administrator. Typically the coordinator serves on other program services boards, represents the program at all school board meetings, attends community events, does presentations for local philanthropic organizations, regularly visits with DESE program directors, represents the program at national conferences and pinch hits when a staff member is absent.

Staff development and technical assistance

LIFT-Missouri. LIFT provides training workshops for adult educators, early childhood educators, and social service professionals. These workshops provide a hands-on approach to exploring ways for parents to enhance young children's development by understanding how the brain develops and influences learning. The workshops also provide a chance to enter a computer lab to learn first-hand how to utilize the Internet for finding quality resources for family literacy and

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PACT. Examples of the workshops offered by LIFT include Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities, Brain PACT (Parent and Child Together), HOT Brains (Hands-on Teaching), and PACT Net-sitement!: Family Literacy on the Internet.

As Missouri's Literacy Resource Center, LIFT provides a wide range of technical assistance to local programs and serves 500 people per month with up-to-date literacy information from national, regional, and state sources. These resource include:

- teaching materials,
- student assessment tools,
- current research and statistics,
- program evaluation techniques,
- "best practices" in the literacy field,
- effective teaching strategies,
- early childhood materials,
- model programs, and
- innovative curricula.

National Institute for Literacy: Internet Resources. This site is part of the Midwest Region of NIFL's Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS). Begun in 1994 with a single national site on the Internet, LINCS now connects every state through regional telecommunication hubs. LINCS also gives stakeholders nationwide the opportunity to communicate about the literacy issues that matter most to them.

With the funding of four regional hubs for LINCS, NIFL has ensured that literacy organizations in every state and territory in the nation can gain the technological capacity to produce and share electronic information for literacy. The Midwest Hub, called the Midwest Adult Literacy Network (M-Net), is coordinated by the Ohio Literacy Resource Center (OLRC), which provides equipment, training, and technical assistance to the other states for the development and use of the individual web sites. Mini-grants have been awarded to local adult literacy programs to conduct technology projects to demonstrate the usage of the information on the Internet. The M-Net is well known for its unique collection of math and family literacy on-line resources.