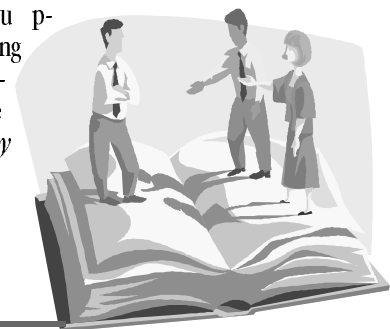


Program Resources

Getting Started with Family Literacy Issues and Ideas

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Whether you are building a structure for family literacy where none exists or attempting to supplement or augment existing programs or services, getting started with family literacy is a challenging and complex endeavor. In this brief report we synthesize start-up suggestions, many based on research conducted in Ohio. Issues are framed as questions, ideas as bulleted comments beneath the questions. For more information about any of this material, see chapter 4 of the *Family Literacy Resource Notebook* available online at <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/familitnotebook>.



How Can We Build On Rather Than Duplicate Existing Services?

- Get people together to talk. Find out about existing collaboratives.
- Keep the focus on families during planning, not on agencies or programs.
- Take time to find out what already exists in your community. Conduct a needs assessment and/or survey of existing services related to family education. Use results to determine what else may be needed.
- Keep the focus on pulling together and, perhaps, supplementing existing services.
- Start by discussing what services are already provided. Then determine what else is needed. Initially, at least, disregard fiscal matters.
- Keep it simple. Start small and grow.
- Create a mission statement.

Who Should the Partners Be? How Should the Partnership Be Coordinated?

- Begin with partnerships that are already successful, to the extent possible, or that show great promise of becoming successful.
- Look for partners with missions that address what families need.
- Meet frequently. Invest time at the beginning of the partnership for establishing relationships and common

expectations. Work to make relationships strong and flexible.

- Develop written agreements.

Who Should Lead the Effort?

- Elect a leader as soon as the planning group is formed.
- Look for a leader who is a “people person” and who has the respect of the planning group. S/he also needs good organizational skills and follow-through ability. Good teachers are not always good “hustlers.” Go for the hustler.
- Clarify the leader’s role: facilitation, promotion, etc.
- Select a fiscal agent if the program involves new funding. The fiscal agent should be accustomed to dealing with grants.

How Can We Determine Families’ Needs?

- Decide on the population to be served.
- Include some potential program participants in the planning group for the needs assessment process.
- Find out about needs around family support issues.
- Find out about literacy needs.
- Find out about broader community needs.
- Consider issues related to language and culture.
- Make some broad programmatic decisions based on the result of needs assessment: direct or indirect programming for parents? For children? Age of children?

What Are Broad Program Planning Issues?

- Program focus: Decide on the initial and long-term goals for the program. Look at models for family literacy programs, including the most comprehensive—the “four component model”—and decide how to begin. Also think about how and when the program might grow.
- Site selection: Base selection on convenience for families but also on commitment of the building administrator. Get written commitments regarding space. Ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. Look for sites that are close to public transportation. If possible, locate programs in sites that already house other services for families.
- Staff selection and training: Meet frequently; work at creating a cohesive team; make communication a priority. Ensure that program staffing addresses the family and cultural backgrounds of learners. Establish an ongoing professional development plan.
- Transportation: Locate programs as near as possible to the population to be served. Provide bus tokens or passes. Use public school, Head Start, or church buses or vans.
- Meals: Food is a great motivator; if possible, find funds for food. Purchase a small refrigerator and crock pot. Use the purchase and preparation of food as a learning activity. Parents under 20 are entitled to free food through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (See Government Offices, U.S. Government in your yellow pages.) Check into buying food from your school district food services. Ask local food stores and restaurants to make donations.
- Day Care: Contract with existing providers (Head Start, public preschools, nonprofits, YM/WCAs) or supplement existing programs. Try to locate parents’ classes in (or near) children’s schools. Learn about licensing requirements before developing your own child care facility.
- Program name: Create a catchy name that also reflects the purpose of the program. Consider whether you want the word “literacy” in the name—this signals an educational program, which may detract potential participants. Good words for program names: families, reading, books, children.

What Curriculum Development Issues Are Important?

- Scope: What will be included for parents—literacy instruction, parenting skills, employment-related skills, support for children’s learning? What will be included for children—literacy instruction, support? Will children be on site? If not, what mechanisms can encourage parents to work with their children in their homes?
- Structure: Will the program be home-based, site-based, or both? At what points (and where) will parents and children work together? Separately?
- Language and culture: How are learners’ native language and culture incorporated into the curriculum? How are family culture and patterns incorporated?

- Collaboration: What opportunities are available for parents and staff to share successes, concerns, problem-solving? To what extent are parents involved in curriculum planning? How do staff work together to plan, implement, and evaluate curriculum?
- Outcomes: What learner and program outcomes are expected? How are they evaluated?

How Can We Recruit Participants?

- Work one-on-one, face-to-face.
- Use students as recruiters and speakers.
- Start with existing pools: adult education, Head Start, public preschool, Human Services, WIC clinics, hospital neonatal units, churches.
- Create “events” and share them faithfully with local media.
- Make a recruitment plan. Follow through on it. Make recruitment a priority for all staff by including it in written job descriptions.

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