

Why is Family Literacy Important?

By using a comprehensive and holistic approach to education, family literacy programs are making great strides in helping families break the cycle of low literacy, poverty, and hopelessness.

- ◆ Children's literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational level of their parents, especially their mothers.
- ◆ Parental income and marital status are both important predictors of success in school, but neither is as significant as having a mother (or primary caregiver) who completed high school.
- ◆ Children of parents who are unemployed and have not completed high school are five times more likely to drop out than children of employed parents.

Solution

The National Center for Family Literacy supports programs that include four essential components for family literacy:

1. *Early Childhood Education*: focuses on pre-literacy skills such as vocabulary building and verbal expression.
2. *Adult Literacy Education*: helps parents enhance their own reading, math, and language skills.
3. *Parenting Education*: offers topics for study and discussion, including child nurturing, managing and coping with child behavior and self-esteem, and community resources.
4. *Parent and Child Together (PACT)*: brings parents and children together in the pre-school classroom and in the home in order to teach parents how to best fulfill their role as their child's most important teacher.

Outcomes

- ◆ Adults stay enrolled in family literacy programs longer than in most adult-only programs, and their attendance rate is higher.
- ◆ Children participating in family literacy programs in 15 cities made gains at least three times greater than would have been expected based on their pre-enrollment rate of development.
- ◆ Adults significantly improve their self-confidence, confidence in their parenting abilities, and their employment status (29 percent increase).
- ◆ Children showed an 80 percent increase in reading books, and made twice as many trips to the library.
- ◆ Long-term National Center for Family Literacy follow-up studies¹ found the following:
 1. Fifty-one percent of adults participating in family literacy programs earned their GED or the equivalent.
 2. Forty-three percent became employed, compared with 14 percent before enrolling.
 3. Thirteen percent enrolled in higher education or training programs and another 11 percent continued in GED programs.
 4. Twenty-three percent of those who were on public assistance when they enrolled are now self-sufficient.

(This section (page 2-3) was taken from a handout from the National Institute for Literacy, 800 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006-2712 phone: 202/632-1500 <http://www.nifl.gov>)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES	
National Center for Family Literacy Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200 325 West Main Street Louisville, KY 40202-4251 502/584-1133	Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy 1112 16 th St., NW #340 Washington, DC 20036 202/955-6183
Even Start Division U.S. Department of Education 600 Independence Ave., SW Washington, DC 20202 202/260-7764	Division of Adult Education and Literacy Clearinghouse U.S. Department of Education 600 Independence Ave., SW, MES 4414 Washington, DC 20202 202/260-7764

¹ “The Power of Family Literacy,” 1996 Edition (available by calling 502/584-1133).