Guiding Principles for Implementing Family Literacy Programs

Family Literacy programs are developed with the overall purpose of supporting parents/guardians of children ages 0-5, (and in some programs extending to the early childhood years 0-8), in their roles as the principal teachers of their preschool children. Programs are designed to serve children, parents (or guardians), together as a family unit.

I. Family Literacy Programs should make a special effort to recruit and retain parents of children zero to eight (0-8) who are considered at risk of school failure. For purposes of parenting and family literacy programs, children “at-risk” are defined as those experiencing any of, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- Demonstrate significant developmental delays
- Experience instability and inadequate basic capacity within the home and/or family
- Poverty
- Limited English proficiency
- Teen parent
- Poor health (physical, mental, emotional)
- Child abuse and neglect
- Child is in foster care
- Incarcerated parent
- Inadequate parenting skills/practices
- Inadequate access to needed family services
- Eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Eligible for free school lunch (103% of federal poverty level or below)

II. To demonstrate and emphasize the significance of a parent’s role as child’s first and most important teacher, a district or consortium should use a variety of service delivery methods, such as:

- Adult literacy enhancement
  - High School Diploma (HSD)
  - High School Equivalent Diploma (HSED)
  - Career Readiness Certificate (CRC)

- Enhancement of program services
  - Child Care on site
  - Meals
  - Transportation
  - Direct contact with Adult Education Programs’ Transition Specialist
  - Carefully established academic goals and intentional instruction to reach those goals
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- Case management to include:
  - Academic goals
  - Parent education goals
  - Individualized study plans
  - Emphasis on being career ready
  - Emphasis on strategies to meet literacy and parenting goals

- Community service, both volunteer and agency-sponsored

- Systematic and focused group activities for the parent and for the parent and child

- Systematic and focused parent training with student input and topics of interest

This is not an exhaustive list based on the fact that service delivery will vary in specific type, combination and intensity according to the assessed literacy and parenting needs of participating families.

III. Programs should make intensive and special efforts to recruit and retain parents. The target populations are disadvantaged families with low literacy skills, (parents lacking a high school diploma), and parents of children with limited English proficiency.

- Recruitment messages should highlight what the program can do for the whole family and emphasize that program curricula and activities are based on family members’ goals and needs.
- Multiple methods and sources should be used for recruitment including written materials, public service announcements, personal contact, and the social media
- Recruitment is everyone’s job and it is ongoing

Comprehensive Family Literacy Programs Should Include the Following:

- A balanced program that includes parent education, adult education, early childhood education and literacy activities.

- Flexible scheduling and accessible locations

- Research based curriculums that guide parent education instruction and instruction in the early childhood classroom. Such as:
  - Practical Parent Education (PPE)
  - Creative Curriculum (Learning Games, Mathematics – The Creative Curriculum Approach, Literacy – The Creative Curriculum Approach)
  - Parent Child Home Program
- Integration of instruction to assist parents in meeting adult literacy goals and parenting goals

- Promotion of the role of the parent as the “advocate” for their children’s ongoing educational readiness and school progress

- Emphasis on job retention and/or advancement

- Emphasis on post-secondary education

- A partner and collaboration plan both internal and external, with collaboration and partnerships with potential agencies, non-profits, programs, etc. such as:
  - Title I
  - Head Start
  - Children’s Trust
  - United Way
  - DSS
  - DHEC
  - Businesses and Foundations
  - Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Faith Based Community
  - Others