Tennessee was awarded a two-year grant in January 2000 to initiate a Family Literacy program in the state. The funding was to promote the importance of the family in the educational, social, and physical development of children, in the stability of communities, and in the development of a competent workforce. Staff members of the Tennessee Department of Education have been working on the Even Start Family Literacy State Initiative Grant since 1999 and have recently been awarded a one-year extension. To carry out Tennessee’s plan to “expand, strengthen, and coordinate” family literacy services in the state, experts from a wide array of programs formed a statewide Family Literacy Consortium. These professionals have been working to define Family Literacy in our state and to identify the various programs supporting Family Literacy models. The Consortium includes representatives from the State Departments of Education, Health, Human Services, Justice, Labor and Workforce Development, and Public Libraries; the Commission on Children and Youth, the Higher Education Commission, colleges and universities, Head Start, local education agencies, non-profit community-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, and others interested in family-friendly programs.

The Consortium is sponsored by the State Department of Education and is assisted by the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee. Its purpose is to develop a network of support for programs that serve families and to improve literacy in the homes, schools, and communities of our state. For the past two years, Consortium members have been meeting quarterly to promote interagency collaboration at the state level, with the hope that policies developed at the state level will extend to local agencies or partners. Consortium members are now planning a November Celebration of their efforts to inform people from the areas of education, business, industry, community and government of the benefits of family literacy. (See page 5 for a list of Consortium members who have contributed their time and efforts to Family Literacy in Tennessee.)

To carry out Tennessee's plan to "expand, strengthen, and coordinate" family literacy services in the state, experts from a wide array of programs formed a statewide Family Literacy Consortium.

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Even Start includes the four components of family literacy: adult education, the Tennessee Family Literacy Consortium, sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Education Family Literacy Programs 710 James Robertson Parkway Nashville, TN 37243 (tel) 1-615-532-2717 (fax) 1-615-532-4899

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Rhea County
Even Start
Student Succeeds
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What is Family Literacy?

“Family literacy” has become the newest buzz word in the world of literacy education programs, and many people are confused about its meaning. The basic premise of the family literacy approach is that “parents are the first teachers their children have, and they are the teachers children have for the longest time” (Morrow, 1995, p.6). But does family literacy provide benefits only to the children in the family? The answer is a definite no! Family literacy influences the entire family, and the community as well.

Components of Family Literacy

Family literacy programs are community-based and aim to break the intergenerational cycle of low literacy skills and resulting poverty, focusing on both children and parents. By seeing the family as the unit of service, rather than the child or adult, educators have devised ways to be proactive in making literacy a family goal. A complete family literacy program has four components:

• Adult literacy education – Enhanced reading, math, and language skills lead parents to set goals for educational and personal achievements.
• Early childhood education – Teaching pre-literate skills, such as verbal expression, vocabulary building, organizational and social skills, creates a foundation for a successful school experience.
• Parent education – Through provided training, parents learn how to be the primary teachers and full partners in the education of their children.
• Parent and Child Together Time (PACT) – Parents fulfill their role as their children’s most important teachers by learning to teach their children through play-and-learn activities.

What does a complete program of family literacy look like? There is space for parents who are working on their own educational goals, whether they are earning GEDs, learning to read, discussing books, or learning to speak English. There is space for children who are learning to socialize, learning about language, asking questions, playing games, sharing their stories, etc. There are opportunities for parents to learn new ways to interact with their children and to share their success and questions with other adults. Finally, there are times for parents and children to play together, to read books, to ask questions and to have fun while they both learn.

A Continuum of Services

If a program does not include all of these components, does that mean it’s not family literacy? Think of family literacy as a continuum of services that increases as we add to our programs. A program may include reading with children and family time, but no adult or parenting education. This program would probably be in the midpoint of the continuum. As programs are added that provide parenting advice or adult education classes, such as math, reading or English as a second language, it moves up the continuum. In other words, family literacy programs just keep getting better and stronger as more components are added.

Many parents have not grown up with opportunities that would teach them to encourage literacy in their own young children. The grandparents may have been non-English speaking, with low financial, time, and opportunity resources with which to encourage reading. Because what we learn as children is what we teach our children, the cycle of low literacy and poverty is perpetuated. By bringing together low-literate adults and their children for family-focused educational experiences, we can help families break through the intergenerational cycle of poverty and low literacy (NCFL, 2001).

Impact of Family Literacy

The impact of family literacy on adults includes:

• Students maintain longer periods of attendance than in traditional adult basic education classes.
• Parents feel closer to their children.
• Growth in reading abilities promotes positive feelings of self-worth.
• More adults earn their GEDs and enroll in higher education than those in other programs.
• More parents become employed as compared to those in traditional ABE programs.
• Parents become supportive coaches for their children in school.
• Parents learn skills to make them more self-sufficient.

Family literacy also has an uplifting influence on children:

• More “at-risk” children are judged by their teachers as ready for entry into kindergarten; a child ready for school is less likely to drop out.
• Children of adults with high exposure to parenting education have higher
scores on vocabulary tests.
• Parents take their children to the library twice as often.
• Children display greater confidence in their abilities to read and use books.

Creating Family Literacy Programs
Family literacy is not a magic pill; it takes a lot of hard work and sensitivity to create a good program. There must be collaboration between different levels of government agencies, such as adult basic education programs, Head Start programs, libraries, ESL (English as Second Language) programs, the United Way, civic and church communities, public school systems, etc. In addition, programs should not be prescribed for families as “fixing what’s wrong.” They represent a way to enhance what parents already know and do; focusing on positive features of a family is more effective than focusing on negative aspects. Program planners must be aware of cultural differences in and among families and should use those differences to enhance the program. By building around what’s important to families and cultures, we can encourage a higher level of participation and pleasure in the programs.

Family literacy offers a win-win-win situation for parents, kids, and communities!

Rhea County Even Start,
continued from page 1

early childhood education, parenting education, and parent and child time together. With the Even Start program, parents work on their studies, children have excellent care while learning through developmentally appropriate activities, and parents learn the importance of being involved in their children’s achievements.

On a recent day, Tiffany watched from her work area while Cory counted and clapped along with the other children. It makes it easier for parents to concentrate on their own work when they know their children are safe, nearby, and having fun. Tiffany says that, if it weren’t for the Even Start program, she would not have been able to return to school, because she didn’t know if she would have left Cory anywhere else.

Tiffany especially enjoys the time the parents and children have together each day. They eat breakfast and lunch together, and they spend time together reading, working on crafts, finger painting, and just having fun! Cory enjoys his time with his mom, and also with his teachers, Miss Tonya and Miss Crissy. Tiffany says that each day when they first arrive at the school, Cory is hanging on to her leg, but within minutes, he happily joins his classmates and teachers. It is reassuring to Tiffany that Cory knows she is there for him, but also that he is safe with trusted teachers.

Tiffany says that, when she first began working toward her GED, she was shy and unsure of herself. Tiffany credits her teacher, Kathy Edwards, with helping her become more outgoing, confident, and positive about life. On May 1, Tiffany received her GED while her dad beamed with pride from the audience! She is now completing paperwork to attend Chattanooga State Community College and plans to study some area of Social Work. Tiffany will be the first person in her family to attend college. By improving her own situation and prospects in life, Tiffany is improving life for her son. What better way to show a child the importance of education than to further your own?

By combining adult education, child education, parenting information, and child/parent time, the Rhea County Even Start has helped this family move forward. This is the goal of family literacy—helping people overcome the cycle of low skills and poverty by becoming better educated and more highly skilled.

Tiffany, congratulations on your accomplishments! Even Start provided the encouragement, facility, staff and opportunity, but you provided the determination and persistence. Hooray for you!

Mexican-American
Mom Has English-
Speaking Angel
—by Marcia Robertson, Supervisor, Houston County Adult Education

Ibana (pronounced Ivana) Lomeli came to the United States from Mexico in December of 2000, five months after her husband arrived to work as a tenant farmer. They have a four-year-old son, Angel. Together they face the difficult barrier of learning a new language well enough to achieve goals, find meaningful work, meet personal needs, and enjoy life to the fullest.

Angel enrolled in the Houston...
through the software program now applied for a job with Head Start. Ibana enlisted in the Family Academy to learn to speak and understand English and to promote her son’s education. A nurse in her homeland, the young mom is working part-time in a grocery store and cleaning houses until her English becomes fluent enough to find work as a nurse. She has now applied for a job with Head Start.

While Ibana is learning English through the software program “ELLIS,” her Family Academy teacher, Betty Heflin, coordinates with Angel’s Head Start teacher, Patricia Self. Activities that will reinforce what the four-year-old is learning in the classroom are sent home for Angel and his mom to do together. Parent and Child Time (PACT) activities also focus on the skills Angel is learning or with which he needs extra practice. The take-home activities have included writing an autobiographical poem together and reading favorite books. PACT has involved creative art activities and a reading time for the child to choose a book for parent and child to read together. These take-home activities and PACT increase Angel’s use of the English language and strengthen the bond between parent and child.

When it comes to the Family Academy, everyone involved has some positive things to say about its role in families’ lives and its impact on individuals. Ibana says, “I like the Family Academy because it helps me to speak English and my son and I learn together. I will learn so that I can work for a doctor like I did in my other country.”

Head Start teacher Patricia Self promotes the program, saying, “I believe the Family Academy benefits each child and reflects on the family as a whole. The end result will have a positive impact as we see more responsible parents, workers, and citizens being involved in their community.” Ms. Self, speaking of Angel, said, “Angel plays and gets along well with other children and is learning English at a fast pace.” Family Academy teacher Betty Heflin agrees: “I’m excited about the difference the family literacy program can make in the lives of the children and parents participating in the program. I’m seeing the differences, and I’m thankful for the opportunity to be part of this learning experience that changes lives.”

Leading the Way in Tennessee’s Family Literacy Consortium

Susan Doughty has been the Director of the Even Start Family Literacy Initiative since its inception in 1999. Susan taught in Tennessee for 17 years before joining the Tennessee DOE in 1995. She is a licensed administrator (M.Ed.) and teacher for grades K-12 and has been certified by the American Montessori Society. At the State, she worked in EdTech and Adult/Community Education before becoming director of the Office of Family Literacy when it was formed in 1997.

Rebecca Goldstein is the new Project Manager for the Family Literacy Consortium and Initiative. Becky is a graduate of the City College of New York and has been a communications professional for over 30 years, most recently as Manager of Corporate Communications for Service Merchandise Co. Becky will use her communication and program management skills to expand the breadth of effective family literacy projects throughout Tennessee.

Community Cooperation Key to Family Resource Center

—with Doris Battle, Assistant Director, Haywood County Schools

The Haywood County Family Resource Centers are a cooperative effort of the University of Tennessee Extension Service and the Haywood County School system. The first Family Resource Center was opened in fall 1995 at Anderson Early Childhood Center, which houses preschool and kindergarten programs for Haywood County. A second site was established in fall 1998 at East Side Elementary School; it accommodates all third and fourth grade students for the county. This school year saw the opening of a third site at Haywood Elementary, the school for second and third graders.

Literacy was one of three initial goals for the Haywood County Family Resource Centers. The centers have employed several avenues to advance reading skills and comprehension through the Centers. Educational materials are available for free-loan to any resident of Haywood County; over 9,000 items are now on hand for teachers and parents to borrow for use with their children. These materials include fun, educational games, books and puppet sets. Parents and children may present their written or drawn opinion of the book in a journal. AR books, videos, and electronic games such as GeoSafari, Reading Safari, Playstations, and the Lightspan educational CDs are available, and computers are accessible for public use at all three Centers, with numerous computer games with various levels of learning ability. Each Center is also connected to the Internet; parents and students at all learning stages are encouraged to make use of this opportunity.

Planning parent meetings provides another avenue to instill the importance of reading. Bi-monthly meetings called “Circle-Time” for parents are held at all three centers. Many sessions are devoted to reading skills and comprehension. A highlight of these meetings is the “make and take” session, where parents make
games for their children. Parents are encouraged to read to or with their children every day and to have at least one family game night each week. Monthly parent meetings are also held for parents of preschool children. Reading with their children is always reinforced at these monthly meetings with various activities.

The Family Resource Centers have sponsored several reading contests. A new competition for this school year is the Family Reading Wall of Fame at each Center. A bulletin board has been placed at each Center to highlight this contest. Parents log in books after they are read with their children. At the end of each six-week period, the number of books read is recorded. Certificates are awarded to the top three readers from each school, and a picture of the top reader from each school is printed in the local newspaper. This contest has proven to be a successful way to get and keep parents more involved with their children’s reading. To date, over 3,400 books have been read and logged in at the Family Resource Centers this school year!

The Family Resource Center at Anderson coordinated with the local library to present the Motherread/Fathered program. This eight-session program was offered at the weekly “Circle-Time” meetings. A different children’s book was emphasized each week. Parents were given ideas on ways to make reading with their children more fun, and a craft was made each week that reinforced ideas from the chosen book. Parents were

Continued on page 6

Thanks to the Family Literacy Consortium members who given so freely of their time:

- Nardine Aquardo, Literacy Initiative Program Manager, ASSISI Foundation
- Joan Archer, Executive Director, TN Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges
- Cresa Bailey, Program Coordinator, TN Dept. of Human Services
- Janice Bridwell, Coordinator, Special Ed. Preschool Services, TN Dept. of Educ
- Jan Bushing, Director, School-Based Programs, TN Dept. of Education
- Jean Carter, NCFL Consultant, National Center for Family Literacy
- Connie Casha, Education Consultant, TN Dept. of Education
- Holly Clark, Assistant to the Governor for Policy, Governor’s Office
- Janet Coscarelli, Director, Head Start State Collaboration Office, TN Dept. of Education
- Linda Creek, Primary Education Consultant, TN Dept. of Education
- Nancy Duggin, Manager, Instruction & Prof. Development, TN Education Association
- Dr. Dale Farran, Director, Susan Gray School for Children, JFK Center for Research
- Joseph Fisher, Assistant Commissioner, Special Education, TN, Dept. of Education
- Jim Herman, TN State Director, Reading Excellence Act
- Betsy Houston, Executive Director, Education Edge, TN Dept. of Education
- Carol Irwin, ESL Consultant, TN Dept. of Education
- Rebecca Isbell, Ed.D., Director, Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Ed., East Tennessee State University
- Jacque Johnson, Parent Education Specialist, NashvilleREAD
- Jane Knight, Literacy Coordinator, Knox County Schools
- Anna Ausborn-Kulaski, Director Even Start/NashvilleREAD
- Hope Lancaster, Program Manager, TN Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development
- Janice Lovell, TECTA State Academic Coord, Tennessee State University
- Amy Lowery, Coordinator, Hawkins Co. Community Learning Ctr., ETSU
- Yvette Mack, Coordinator for Abstinence Only Ed. Program, TN Dept. of Health
- Julie McCargar, Director, Federal Programs, TN Dept. of Education
- Betsy McWhirt, Executive Director, NashvilleREAD
- Mary Meador, Director of Education, Dept. of Human Services
- Steve Minton, Assistant Commissioner, TN Dept. of Education
- Terry NeSmith, Education Consultant, TN Dept. of Education
- Meg Nugent, Nashville Adult Literacy Program Council
- Barbara Nye, Director/TECTA State Chairperson, Tennessee State University
- Robbi Nash, ESL Director, Woodbine Community Organization
- Linda O’Neal, Executive Director, TN Commission on Children and Youth
- Marsha Pate, Parent’s First Program, NashvilleREAD
- Donna Payne, Executive Director, TN Assoc. of Housing & Redevelopment Authority
- Richard Rhoda, Ph.D., Executive Director, TN Higher Education Commission
- Jeff Roberts, Deputy Commissioner, TN Dept. of Education
- Kay Sapp, Federal Programs, TN Dept. of Education
- Connie Smith, Ed.D., Exec. Director, Office of Accountability & School Improvement
- Brenda Staggs, Education Consultant 2/VISTA Coordinator, TN Dept. of Education
- Nancy Stetten, Ph.D., Research Consultant, TN Dept. of Education
- Veronica Stong, Migrant Education/Federal Programs, TN Dept. of Education
- Faye P. Taylor, Commissioner, TN Dept. of Education
- Carol Thippin, Ph.D., AEL TN State Director
- Fagan Thompson, Dept. of Human Services
- Mary Ann Vlahos, Literacy Coordinator, TN It’s Time to Read
- Fredia Wadley, M.D., Commissioner, TN Dept of Health
- Barbara Wall, Director, Center of Excellence for Research & Policy on Basic Skills
- Nancy Weatherman, Special Projects Coordinator, TN State Library & Archives
- Phil White, Director, Office of Adult Education, TN Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development
- Doug Wood, Ed.D., Executive Director, TN Board of Education
- George Yowell, President, Tennessee Tomorrow, Inc.

Staff of Tennessee Family Literacy
- Susan Benner, Ed.D., Professor, University of Tennessee
- Gail Cope, Independent Evaluator, UT Center for Literacy Studies
- Reggie Curran, Research Associate, UT Center for Literacy Studies
- Susan Doughty, Director, Family Literacy Programs, TN Dept. of Education
- Becky Goldstein, Project Mgr/Statewide Family Literacy Initiative, TN Dept. of Education
- Kathryn LeLaurin, Ph.D., Program Evaluation Consultant
- Tabatha Siddiqi, Administrative Secretary, TN Dept. of Education
- Connie White, Ph.D., Associate Director, UT Center for Literacy Studies
Haywood County, cont. from page 5
encouraged to read the books with their children and write their opinions.

One of the most rewarding literacy programs for Haywood County is the participation in the national “Reading is Fundamental” (RIF) program. Funds are raised from various grants and local contributions to purchase books for each child in preschool through sixth grade. Distributions called “Book Jams” are held three times a year at four schools in Haywood County. This year, about 2,300 students will each receive three free books...a total of almost 6,900 books!
The Haywood County Family Resource Centers also registered with the national Reading Is Fundamental program to participate with the rest of America in the “Read With Me” literacy activities during the first two weeks in March. Reading activities were encouraged at the four schools where RIF “Book Jams” are held.
As you can see, reading is rewarding in the Haywood County Family Resource Centers! ▲

Lenoir City Preschool Focuses on Family Literacy

—by Reggie Curran

The Preschool at Lenoir City Elementary School is a wonderful example of Family Literacy. Preschool Director Shari Berkholz has expanded the onsite preschool from one class in 1993 to seven classes today. That’s amazing growth in nine years!
The preschool classes are held in the same building as the elementary school, which helps young children become familiar with the school surroundings, and helps parents feel their children are safe. In addition, parents with older school children are pleased with the convenience of one drop-off site for their preschool and elementary-age children. Lenoir City Elementary School Principal, Pattie Jones, is enthusiastically supportive of the preschool program and encourages the staff to expand and create new programs.
Children are brought to their preschool class by parents or caretakers, which gives them a chance to talk with their child’s teacher. This provides opportunities for families and teachers to discuss what’s going on in the child’s world, both at school and at home, allowing important and relevant information to be shared. By integrating home life with school, teachers and parents make learning a family event.
Reading is a prime focus in Lenoir City preschool classrooms. Teachers read “big” books to the children, asking questions, inviting comparisons and comments, and showing the children how to take good care of books. Children have opportunities to borrow books each week, with civic organizations like Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs sending volunteers to distribute and help children select the books.
Children with special educational needs have a class of their own, but are also part of the Lenoir City preschool; they are frequently included in other class activities. By inclusion, children learn about each other and learn to enjoy people who are different from them. Differences are also seen in the multi-ethnic backgrounds of the children and their families. Spanish-speaking teacher assistants help many families feel more comfortable with what their children are learning and doing. The teachers at Lenoir City preschool find that parents

GOVERNOR’S LITERACY MESSAGE

When Governor Don Sundquist gave his “State of the State” speech earlier this year, “reading in Tennessee” took center stage. The Governor spoke about the importance of reading ability to the future of our children, and he made reading improvement a goal for the remainder of his administration. Sundquist said, “Teaching children to read better is the centerpiece of my plan. If they can read, they can do math. If they can read, they can understand science. If they can read, they can become successful, because in America, education is the great equalizer.” The governor addressed ways that Tennesseans can help accomplish this goal:
• Identify seventh and eighth graders who have trouble with reading, and send targeted money to middle schools to work one-on-one with youth who aren’t doing well, through after-school or weekend tutoring.
• Position reading coaches in each school. They will be responsible for developing plans to teach other teachers how to incorporate reading into their lessons, and they will get parents and volunteers involved with reading in and out of the classroom.
• Make preschool available to all our four-year-olds, starting with those most at risk. Some of these children come to kindergarten having never held a book or been read to, and their eyes have not been trained to follow a sentence from left to right, much less to recognize their ABCs.

In his speech, the Governor said, “It’s time to work harder to bring everyone together, every family, every community, every school, every social and civic group, to make absolutely sure that every child in Tennessee meets or exceeds reading expectations by the third grade....Together, we must teach our children to read, because if they can’t read, they can’t spell future.”

Sounds like a plug for Family Literacy, doesn’t it?
are anxious to share their talents with other families, and a Spanish-speaking father has been instrumental in tackling language barriers with several families.

Children in the preschool enjoy playtime, exercising their bodies and keeping them fit. Climbing, running, skipping, hopping, and jumping may seem like child’s play, but it really is important work in the child’s physical development. Playtime also helps children learn to socialize, to get along with playmates, to share, and to find activities they enjoy.

When it’s time for lunch, children eat in the same cafeteria the older students use; it’s amazing to see these little children handling their lunch trays! By learning about the building where they will be attending elementary school, the children have a head start in feeling comfortable at school.

Parents are welcome to attend the preschool with their children at any time, to read, to play, and to learn with their children. Frequent play nights are scheduled, when parents come to the classroom at the end of the school day to participate in activities with their children. Recently parents came to school for a game night with their children. One of the games was a Bear Hunt, which augmented one of the children’s favorite books. Parents and children searched for “bear food,” “bear tracks,” etc. These enjoyable evenings are a great example of family literacy activities.

Another support service for parents is the Family Resource Center (FRC), also on the grounds of the Lenoir City Elementary School. This program, directed by Linda Tillery, links parents with community resources they need to help their children succeed in school. The Family Resource Center provides information and referral about health services, legal assistance, housing, childcare, and emergency assistance. In addition, FRC provides parenting classes for parents of various ages and books with topics of interest to parents, such as discipline, nutrition, financial management, and fun things to do with children.

Family Resource Center staff members also administer the "Parents And Children Together” program (PACT), with book checkouts and activity sheets to help the parents become and remain involved with their children’s literacy activities at home. Also, a new program called “Parents as Teachers” helps parents of young children learn best ways to educate their children by giving them access to books and other educational activities. This program involves home visits by a trained and certified professional.

The new building housing the Family Resource Center and some of the preschool classrooms will also host adult educational opportunities, including ESL and other classes that will appeal to parents. Using the school for community educational resources is part of the Center’s purpose of linking parents, school, community, business, and civic groups to help children succeed in school.

Adult Basic Education is also part of the Lenoir City Schools, offered at the middle school facility. Parents attend ESL, GED, and workforce education training at the adult programs, helping them acquire the education they need to provide better opportunities for their families. In addition, the Family Resource Center has begun offering ESL classes and is considering the inclusion of other adult education classes in their new facility.

We commend the Lenoir City School Board for realizing the importance of the family in the education of children and for supporting their educators’ efforts to make learning a family project.
**Local Programs Highlight Family Literacy**

**Even Start**

Even Start is an integrated program targeting families most in need because of poverty, illiteracy or limited education, low English proficiency, disability, teen pregnancy, and/or homelessness. There are currently 28 Even Start Family Literacy Programs across Tennessee. An eligible family has at least one child who is under the age of 8 and an adult who does not have a high school diploma or is not English proficient but who provides primary care to the child(ren).

The purpose of Even Start is to help break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of the Nation’s low-income families. Even Start works with families by providing services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours and of sufficient duration to make sustainable changes in a family. These services provide interactive literacy activities between parents and children, provide training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children, parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency, and age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences. The components of the Even Start program are Parent and Child Time together (PACT), Parenting Education, Adult Literacy Education, and developmentally appropriate Early Childhood Education.

**Head Start**

Since 1992, all Head Start programs have had a literacy program in place for their families. They actively promote family literacy through a variety of innovative and established practices.

Head Start and family literacy models share the belief that the parent is a child’s first and most important teacher. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn how well many standard Head Start practices can be adapted to promote family literacy. Such practices as the family needs assessment and the community needs assessment processes, developmentally appropriate educational programming for children, parent involvement, parent training, and the utilization of volunteers are existing mechanisms for promoting family literacy.

Head Start calls upon every program to recognize family literacy as a priority, which is clearly reflected in their regular activities. For example, the educational programming for the classroom and home should reflect a commitment to promoting children’s emerging literacy, and should actively involve parents as models. In conducting the family needs assessment, the observed and expressed needs of family members for literacy development should be noted, with support offered to the family in defining and improving their educational needs.

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**Family Literacy Library Resources**

Many resources about family literacy are available from your local libraries. Some found in The University of Tennessee Center for Literacy Studies are:

**Assessment Success in Family Literacy and Adult ESL**
Daniel Holt and Carol Van Duzer, editors
LC151.A884 2000

**Assessing Success in Family Literacy Projects**
Daniel Holt, editor
LC151.A88 1994

Both the above titles provide alternative assessment strategies for use with a family literacy program. The 2000 edition is an update, but both have valuable insights and useful worksheets.

**Families at School: A Guide for Educators**
Adele Thomas, Lynn Fazio, & Betty Stiefelmeyer
LC151.T56 1999

This book describes the success of a family literacy program in Niagara Falls Secondary School. It includes background on family literacy, information about program structure, lists of resources, and sample lesson plans.

**Family Literacy: Connections in Schools and Communities**
Lesley Mandel Morrow, editor
LC151.L525 1995

This volume includes an overview of family literacy practices, background information about different types of family literacy organizations, best practices, and new research.

**P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Parental Adults Reading, Encouraging, Nurturing, Teaching, Supporting: Curriculum Guide**
Jane Curtis and Carole Talan
LC159.C87 1997

This curriculum was designed to be used in the adult education classroom, with 13 lessons built around children’s literature to teach important parenting skills.

Please contact Beth Fredrick, CLS Librarian at 1-865-974 – 4109 or bfredric@utk.edu to see these or other library materials. More titles on Family Literacy may be viewed on the Center for Literacy Studies website: [http://cls.coe.utk.edu](http://cls.coe.utk.edu) (just click on libraries, subject indexes, family literacy).
addressing individual goals. In addition, Head Start encourages programs to improve the capacity of existing Head Start practices to promote family literacy.

Public Libraries
Public libraries of Tennessee support Family Literacy through programming that includes both parents and children. Head Start, Even Start, and Families First programs make use of library programming and collections of materials. The library also provides teaching and learning kits that can be used by any family literacy audience. One example is the Summer Reading Program, which encourages children to keep reading during summer vacation.

The public libraries also provide programs for new mothers who fall below the federal poverty level, collaborative programs with schools serving families of that population, and programs that help and encourage parents gain motivation, skill and knowledge to become employed or pursue further education or training. See your local librarian for more information on how the public libraries can help with your Family Literacy program.

Family Resource Centers
Family Resource Centers (FRC) are programs in school facilities, adult education centers, school system central offices, or subsidized housing developments. Their goals are to assist families through information and training, and to help families learn to resolve problems through the collaborative efforts of many disciplines within the community (educational, medical, psychological, business, and social services). The programs respect the strengths of families and build on those strengths rather than focus on weaknesses. The uniqueness of the FRC program is its ability to work with at-risk families in a one-on-one approach that leverages the support and expertise of many agencies. The FRC tailors its approach to each family situation to develop solutions to problems that can overwhelm parents and put children at risk.

The goals established by these versatile agencies are closely aligned with these six outcomes: parents are working, children and families are safe, children and families are healthy, children are succeeding at school, young children are ready to enter school, and youth are ready for productive adulthood. By addressing such issues as adult access to education, job availability, housing, good health practices and health care, children’s readiness and success in school, and counseling services, Family Resource Centers help families deal with problem areas and encourage family success.

Adult Basic Education
The Office of Adult Education includes Adult Secondary Education Programs, Families First Programs, Special Program Grants, and General Educational Development (GED). Common threads through these programs include a focus on workforce development and welfare reform. This focus involves empowering individuals and strengthening the relationships between communities and industries where these individuals live and work.

A fairly new area included in the Adult Development focus is that of Family Literacy. By creating activities that reinforce the importance of parents’ involvement in their children’s educational activities, adult education teachers help adults become more comfortable and confident with their role in their children’s education. Parents learn improved parenting skills and realize that they are their children’s first and foremost teachers. In addition, family literacy gives parents the motivation to proceed with their own studies in order to be role models for their children. By working with the family rather than the individual as the unit of service, adult educators affect all members of the family rather than just the parent.

Title I
Title I is the largest federal funding program contributing to the education of disadvantaged children. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is a federal program that assists students in high-poverty schools, and is the heart of President Bush’s education legislation, “No Child Left Behind.”

Title I aims to narrow the academic achievement gap between low-income students and their peers by providing supplemental funding to impoverished school districts. By providing students with more teachers and smaller classroom settings, Title I enables students to benefit from more one-on-one time with teachers. In this way, students who might be left behind are encouraged to persist in their struggle for education.

Funds from Title I may be used for all students in schools that have been designated Title I schools. The school-wide program intent is still to assist disadvantaged children, but the goal is achieved by upgrading the entire educational environment. As long as the intent and purpose of the school-wide programs are addressed, all students in a school-wide program school may benefit from equipment purchased with Title I funds, thus improving the entire school program.

Title I also provides funds for family literacy programs, helping to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving educational opportunities for low income families. These programs integrate early childhood education, adult literacy programs, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program. By providing funding for programs, equipment, and staff that would not be available through other sources, Title I helps students and their families improve literacy skills which lead to improved opportunities in life.

Early Childhood Education
The goal of Tennessee’s Early Childhood programs is to bring about gains in children’s learning. Programs are designed to improve the lives of young children by preparing them for an enjoyable, successful start in school. To accomplish the goal, Continued on page 10
Local Programs, Cont. from page 9
Tennessee Early Childhood education program supervisors:
1. Advocate for legislation, policies and programs to promote and protect the health, well-being and development of children and youth;
2. Educate the community about the needs and problems of children by compiling information on the status of Tennessee’s children and speaking at conferences and meetings;
4. Coordinate efforts to enhance services for children and youth, especially in the areas of juvenile justice and teen pregnancy prevention;
5. Evaluate services to children in state care; and
6. Make recommendations on the needs and problems of children and youth.
Family literacy is highlighted by early childhood educators in these ways:
• Focus on family and community by providing developmentally appropriate support and services for young children at home and in community settings;
• Focus on services which involve the family as a whole, encouraging partnerships among family, program, school and community;
• Complement other programs in operation through federal, state or local agencies, helping to provide essential services to children and families;
• Provide well-qualified staff to implement programs;
• Assess and evaluate children and programs, providing accountability for program dollars.
By providing direction and focus in early childhood education, early childhood educators help provide a continuum of services to children as they move from early childhood to primary school programs.

Literacy Lore
- Literacy is defined by the National Literacy Act as “an individual’s ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one’s goals, and develop one’s knowledge and potential.” (National Institute for Literacy)

- 21% to 23% of adults in this country, over 40 million people, demonstrate skills in the lowest levels; many are unable to total an entry on a deposit slip, locate the time and place of a meeting on a form, or identify a piece of specific information in a news article. (National Center for Family Literacy)

- Activities such as reading and singing songs vary by maternal education, family type, welfare receipt, and race/ethnicity. Children whose mothers have lower levels of education, single mothers, families reporting receipt of welfare services, and black parents are less likely to be read to every day than those with mothers with higher levels of education, two-parent families, families without welfare support and white, Hispanic and Asian parents. (National Center for Education Statistics. America’s Kindergartners: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, 2000)

National Perspectives on Family Literacy

From the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)
April 2000
www.nifl.gov

How does Adult Literacy tie in with Family Literacy? Adult literacy is one of the four components of a Family Literacy program. The National Institute for Literacy found that more than 20 percent of adults read at or below a fifth grade level, which is far below the level needed to earn a living wage. Over 20 million Americans age 16 and older have significant literacy needs. The National Literacy Act defines literacy as “an individual’s ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one’s goals, and develop one’s knowledge and potential.”

Forty-three percent of people with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty, 17 percent receive food stamps, and 70 percent have no job or only a part-time job. These statistics affect family income, which greatly affects a youth’s chances of dropping out of school. Youth at high-income family levels are much more likely to remain in school than those at lower income levels.

Children’s literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational level of their parents, especially mothers. Parental income and marital status are both strong predictors of success in school, but neither is as significant as having a mother (or primary caregiver) who completed high school.

So, again, how does Adult Literacy tie in with Family Literacy? If adults have low literacy skills, they will be less likely to have jobs and less likely to read to their children. If children are not read to, they are apt to follow in their parents’ footsteps, with low skills and low income. The cycle keeps repeating—people who can’t read produce children who can’t read, and on and on and on…. We need to encourage Family Literacy to put a stop to the circular spiraling out of control.

From the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL)
www.famlit.org

The family is the strongest element in shaping lives. It’s the most powerful support network there is. It’s where the
Websites Promoting Family Literacy

There are some wonderful Websites available to people who are working with Family Literacy. These are good for teachers, parents, and children. Some encourage reading and activities that parents and children can do together, while others offer information about parenting and child development. Have fun with these sites!

**www.beginningwithbooks.org**
This site recommends books that children will enjoy reading and having read to them.

**http://www.zerotothree.org**
This site is for parents, caregivers and professionals who want to learn about children's brain development. It also provides information about early literacy in children. Lots of interesting information!

**http://www.ed.gov/lnits/americareads/index.html**
This site is about the America Reads program.

**www.pbskids.org**
All the PBS television shows for kids! Lots of coloring pages, stories, and activities. Information for parents and caregivers, too.

**http://unmuseum.mus.pa.us/crr**
Children’s reading room; stories for ages 3-9.

**www.manythings.org**
Interactive site for ESL students and teachers featuring word games, puzzles, slang, and more.

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The Tennessee Family Literacy Initiative Consortium will host a Family Literacy Celebration Summit this fall. The Summit will take place Friday, November 8, 2002, at Opryland Hotel in Nashville. The conference will promote awareness among state and community leaders of what family literacy means, with demonstrated ideas that show how to get family literacy programs started in our communities, how to generate funding, and how practitioners can use family literacy in their programs. Program sponsors are The Tennessee Department of Education, The University of Tennessee Center for Literacy Studies, and NashvilleREAD.

The day will begin with registration and sign-in at 8:00, with a continental breakfast available. The morning’s speakers and panels will introduce the subject of family literacy with three tracks of breakout sessions, including policy, planning, and practitioners. Morning and afternoon breakouts are separated by lunch and an address by our keynote speaker (to be determined). An end-of-day wrap-up will feature door prizes and recognition of special people.

The day has been planned with topics to interest all, so reserve your space for this informative program now. Call the University of Tennessee Center for Literacy Studies at 1-865-974-4109 to register.
Welcome to the first issue of the Family Literacy Forum. You’ll find updates and information on family literacy programs in Tennessee and on how you can work to strengthen families.