Lit ⌕ Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

Measuring the Impact of
Family Literacy Projects in Colorado

During the 1998-99 fiscal year, CARE—Adult/Family Literacy surveyed approximately 100 family literacy projects. To assess the potential for a statewide assessment of these projects and their impact on the families of at-risk students, a survey was conducted during the Spring of 1999. The major findings of the survey are highlighted and the complete results are appended.

Project Status

■ Two out of five responding organizations (over 40 percent) currently operate a family literacy project. Almost a third (30 percent) either no longer operate one or never did. One out of six responding organizations (over 15 percent) is in the planning stages of beginning a new program.

■ The single most frequent reason for discontinuance of a project—a reason identified by more than two out of five projects (over 40 percent) was loss of funding. One out of five projects (over 20 percent) blamed insufficient client involvement, and a comparable proportion blamed changes in organizational priorities.

Parent and Child Involvement

■ Of the four components of a family literacy project, the two receiving the least attention from responding organizations are Parent And Child Time (PACT) and Parent Time. On the average responding projects offer Adult Basic Education 25 hours per typical week and children's developmental education 14 hours. By contrast, PACT averages only three hours per week and Parent Time only four hours.

■ The proximity of the average numbers of families, parents, and children served by these programs—47, 50, and 56, respectively—suggests that the overwhelming majority of program clients are single parents of one or two children.

■ Totals for cumulative contact hours for the three client groups indicate that children receive the most attention (over 23,000 hours) followed by families (over 18,000 hours). Parents alone receive the least attention (less than 12,000 hours).

■ Statistics on ages and grades of children served indicate that children involved in these programs are most likely to be pre-kindergarten (ages 3 and 4), kindergarten (age 5), and grades 1 and 2. (Each of these groups was marked by one-third or more of responding organizations.) More than a quarter (28 percent) serve newborns, but less than 10 percent serve high schoolers.

Partnerships & Other Strategies for Strengthening Projects

■ Types of organizations from which family literacy projects are most likely to receive financial support include: public schools and funding sources (27 percent each), followed by government agencies and higher education institutions (17 percent each) and businesses (16 percent).

■ Organizational types leading the way with in-kind support include: libraries (23 percent), followed by health agencies and job training programs (19 percent each), and then Head Start and community organizations like Zonta and Rotary (17 percent each).

■ The two most popular strategies being pursued to insure project sustainability are writing grant proposals (44 percent) and seeking local contributions (34 percent).

Documentable Outcomes

■ Most documentable outcomes for families include: increased reading time and acquisition of library cards 39 percent each), increased participation in school activities (34 percent) and retention in the project (31 percent).

■ Most documentable outcomes for parents include: increased self-esteem (44 percent), acquisition of a job or better job and improved Spoken English/ESL performance (39 percent each), and pursuit of further education (33 percent).

■ Most documentable outcomes for children include: increased reading (38 percent), followed somewhat distantly by starting school at grade level and progressing from grade to grade (22 percent each).

■ Of the four kinds of documentation requested, two out of five projects (39 percent) confirmed having their own project records—however dissimilar they may be. Over one-quarter (28 percent) followed with teacher observation records, more than one-fifth (22 percent) with parent observation records, and finally one-fifth (20 percent) with test score reports.

Possible New Programs

■ Five additional projects that may not be included in CDE's databases were also identified. All of these projects are located in the northern Front Range, including two each in Boulder and Greeley and another in Fort Collins.

Next Steps

Concurrently with this survey, a statewide evaluation of Even Start projects has been conducted. For that reason, most of those projects did not participate in this survey. An analysis of the combined results will be performed as soon as possible.

Since this survey was initiated, CARE has begun to coordinate family literacy support programs throughout CDE. To that end, an initial meeting of key staff was held in the early summer. Attendees decided that a combined database of CDE-funded projects and their contact people was desirable. That database has been designed and compiled from various hitherto separate mailing lists. With these survey results, that combined list of programs and contacts will be reviewed at a late summer/early fall coordinating meeting. Decisions about how to proceed together in evaluating all of CDE's family literacy efforts will folllow.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about this study or other projects of the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative, contact: Keith Curry Lance, Library Research Service, 201 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 309, Denver, CO 80203-1799, (303) 866-6737, fax (303) 866-6940, e-mail klance@csn.net

Colorado Family Literacy Project
Survey Results 1999

1. Does your program currently operate a family literacy project?
Mark (X) one.

       41% a. Yes
       16% b. No, but planning
       14% c. Not currently, but did in the past
       16% d. Never

    1a. If c., why was the project discontinued? Mark (X) all that apply.

       7% a. Reduced need
     21% b. Insufficient client involvement
      0% c. Quality of project design or performance
    43% d. Reduced funding
    14% e. Reduced staffing
    21% f. Change in program priorities
    57% g. Other please specify:

       Apartment complex in district
       Integrated into existing LCLC project

       Networking with other agencies

       State funded

of hours per typical week it is offered through your project. (Enter "0" if a

	Average	
a. Adult Basic Education (ABE)		990
	14	
c. Parent and Child Time (PACT)		136
	4	

3. How many families, parents, and children were involved in the project at the end of the last project year? For each category, what was the total cumulative number of contact hours for the last project year?

	1) Number		2) Cumulative contact hours	
	Average	Sum	Average	Sum
a. families	47	1,188	1,132	18,111
b. parents	50	1,246	788	11,825
c. children	56	1,335	1,450	23,196

4. What are the numbers of children by age involved in the children's component? Mark (X) all that apply.

28% a. Birth to less than age 1
31% b. Ages 1 & 2
42% c. Pre-K (ages 3 & 4)
41% d. Kindergarten (age 5)
34% e. Grades 1 & 2
25% f. Grades 3 & 4
22% g. Grades 5 & 6
17% h. Grades 7 & 8
8% i. Grades 9-12

5. What other agencies and organizations are partners in providing your family literacy project, and what kinds of resources do they contribute to the effort? Mark (X) all that apply.

Type of agency/organization	1) Funds/shared expenses	2) In-kind support	3) Other— please specify:
a. Public school districts (including Title I)	27%	34%	space
b. Even Start	16%	9%	
c. Head Start	8%	17%	referrals, MOU
d. Government/public agencies & services	17%	14%	training, emergency assistance
e. Funding sources (United Way, foundations)	27%	5%	volunteers, became UW project
f. Health agencies & organizations	8%	19%	referrals
g. Businesses	16%	8%	occasional donations
h. Community organizations (Zonta, Rotary)	13%	17%	volunteers, donations
i. Child-focused programs	6%	16%	Part C
j. Higher education institutions (community colleges, colleges, universities)	17%	23%	salary (all, half), grant writing, placement
k. Job training programs	6%	19%	referrals
l. Libraries	3%	23%	space, volunteers
m. Women's resource organizations	6%	6%	
n. Family centers	8%	9%	referral
o. Other—please specify:	0%	4%	housing, handicapped services

6. Identify strategies the program has pursued or is pursuing to insure the sustainability of its family literacy project. Mark (X) all that apply.

34% a. Seeking local contributions
8% b. Marketing program services and/or materials (e.g., assessment contracts, instructional publications/software, curriculum kits)
23% c. Pursuing fundraising projects (community run, "spell-abrations," raffles, other benefit performances or events)
44% d. Writing grant proposals specifically for support of family literacy project
11% e. Other

7. Which of the following types of outcomes or impacts can your project document for participating families, parents, and children? Mark (X) all that apply.

a. Families

Whether families ...
39% 1) increased reading together time involving parents and children
34% 2) participated together more in school activities
31% 3) remained involved in the project
9% 4) decreassed violence in their household
39% 5) acquired library cards

b. Parents

Whether parents ...
39% 1) acquired a job or better job
17% 2) improved one or more grade levels on Mainstream English Language Training (MELT)
39% 3) improved one or more student performance levels in Spoken English or English as Second Language (ESL)
25% 4) received certificates of accomplishment
34% 5) earned a GED diploma
33% 6) pursued further education (technical, higher education, on-the-job training)
20% 7) Discontinuance of public assistance
44% 8) Increased self-esteem

c. Children

Whether children ...
38% 1) increased their reading activities
9% 2) avoided special education placement
14% 3) avoided Title I placement
22% 4) started school at grade level
22% 5) progressed from grade to grade (reduced grade retention)
11% 6) placed in gifted/talented classes
10% 7) performance well on standardized tests
14% 8) were involved in extra-curricular activities

8. Which of the following kinds of documentation of your project's impact on participating children are available? Mark (X) all that apply.

39% a) Project records
22% b) Parent observation records
28% c) Teacher observation records
20% d) Test score reports — please specify test(s):

9. Do you know of any new family literacy programs in your area that may be unknown to OAE? If so, please provide the following contact information:

Boulder Youth Services – NCFL Grant Brenda Gifford 1311 N. College Ave. Boulder, CO 80301 303 441 4357
Cameron Elementary Family Literacy Project Brenda Lyle 1424 13th Ave. Ft. Collins, CO 80524 303 442 8979
Family Learning Center Cherie Wilson 3164 34th St. Ft. Collins, CO 80525 970 352 2790
Head Start Barton Early Childhood Center Principal 703 E. Prospect Greeley, CO 80631 970 490 3204
Boulder Family Independence Initiative Kara Stevens 2160 Spruce St. Boulder, CO 80302 303 441 1913 fax 303 441 4348 stevensk@ci.boulder.co.us