



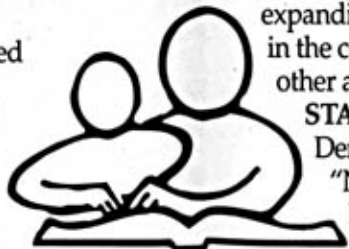
After Federal Funding Ends...

EVEN START is a family literacy program based on the premise that since literacy is a family legacy, illiteracy may be passed on from one generation to the next. The purpose of **EVEN START** is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. This goal is accomplished by improving the educational opportunities of low-income families through integrating early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education and support into a unified family literacy program (Public Law 103-382, Part B, Section 1201). The program is funded through the U.S. Department of Education.

While the issues and difficulties among **EVEN START** projects vary in magnitude and urgency, the biggest challenge that each project will probably ever face is - What happens when the federal dollars come to an end? The following describes a chapter in the story of the Fort Collins **EVEN START** project, which suggests that the loss of funding does not necessarily imply closing one's doors. In fact, other new doors were unexpectedly opened.

History of the Fort Collins Even Start Project

The United States Congress authorized funding to create the **EVEN START** program, which is "intended to help parents be their children's first teachers and become more literate in the process..." (Federal Register,



1989). The Fort Collins **EVEN START** project began as one of the first seventy-five demonstration projects with the United States Department of Education in October, 1989. The project was developed and continues to be administered jointly by the Poudre School District and the School of Education at Colorado State University (CSU). Guiding the project is the belief that educational empowerment of all persons is beneficial to society.

During the initial years of operation, the bilingual and bi-cultural staff developed and field tested a number of strategies and programs to determine their effectiveness in educating and meeting the needs of the most academically at-risk families in the community. The **EVEN START** Family Centered Learning program model which evolved incorporates three critical components: home-based instruction, center-based classes, and community-based enrichment activities. Classes, activities, and program services continue to be based on the ideas, needs, and interests of the participant families. A double-wide mobile home, which was purchased with federal grant funds, serves as the primary site for delivery of services in one of the at-risk neighborhoods that is supported by **EVEN START**.

In 1992, the future indeed looked "bright" for the Fort Collins project with the discussion shifting to possibly expanding program services to other neighborhoods in the community, as well as replicating the model in other areas around the state. The Fort Collins **EVEN START** model had recently been featured on the Denver Channel 4 evening program and on NBC "Nightly News," and the U.S. Department of Education had also recommended this project to former President Bush as exemplifying

the America 2000's Tract IV Strategy, "Communities Where Learning Can Happen." However, the state department of education did not award additional funding, for a second grant cycle, when the first competitive statewide Request-for-Proposals (RFP) process was conducted. Federal funds ended in 1993.

Is There Life After Death?

Although the immediate impact resulted in the elimination of most of the staff positions, the project directors were determined to do "everything possible" to continue the core program services. Brainstorming sessions with key community partners and leaders were conducted to identify potential funding sources, grant proposals were submitted to local and state foundations, discussions of ways to institutionalize **EVEN START** were presented to the administrators from the district and university, and fundraising projects were planned and organized. In general, it became critical to find ways to develop and expand the sense of ownership of **EVEN START** within the Fort Collins community. While grants slowly started to trickle in and staff were re-hired on a part-time basis, the coordinator also focused on strengthening as well as developing new collaborative partnerships with programs in the school district, the university, and the general community. Since 1993, the salary and benefits for the project coordinator have been paid for by the district and CSU. The district provides in-kind service such as center space and equipment, administrative, accounting, and maintenance support, and technical assistance in a variety of areas. CSU faculty expertise, student interns, student volunteers, support and enrichment resources continue to be provided to the project. Grants continue to be written collaboratively with the Development Office at Colorado State University and the Research and Development Center.

Present Status

The Fort Collins program has not only survived the loss of funding, but it has truly become stronger from the process. **EVEN START** continues to be recognized locally, statewide, and nationally for its effective programs and practices. In addition to serving as a training site for high school and university students, educators, and human service professionals, the project has provided technical assistance to the Governor's Commission on Families and Children, in the development of family centers throughout the state, and training for Title 1 state directors, **EVEN START** coordinators, and other educators and professionals at state and national conferences. The project coordinator has recently been contracted to serve as trainer for the **EVEN START** projects in the state of Colorado.

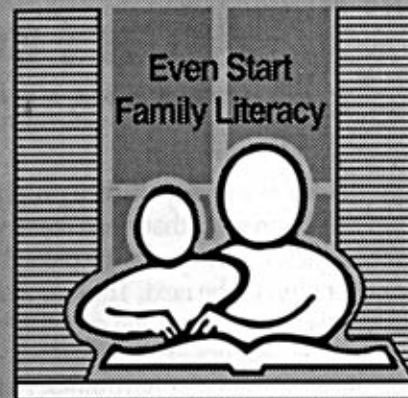
Current Federally Funded Programs

During 1998-99, there are eleven federally funded **EVEN START** programs implementing family literacy services in Colorado. These programs serve the following communities and in some cases surrounding areas: Colorado Springs, Commerce City, Coftez, Custer County, Durango, Glenwood Springs, San Luis Valley, Trinidad, Windsor, and metropolitan Denver (where there are two programs, one provided by Metropolitan State College and the Focus Points Family Resource Center, and another provided by the Southwest Family Resource Center in collaboration with the Denver Public Schools Family Resource Schools).

In many of these communities the family literacy services which **EVEN START** provides are an integral part of school restructuring efforts.

EVEN START is a collaborative partner in such schoolwide programs as these:

Aguilar Elementary in Aguilar; Helen Hunt, Sand Creek, and Stratmoor Hills Elementaries in Colorado Springs; Manaugh Elementary in Cortez; Ebert, Munroe, and Remington Elementaries in Denver; Park Elementary in Durango; Marsh Elementary in Monte Vista; Centennial Elementary in San Luis; and Tozer Primary in Windsor.



*Even Start
in Colorado*

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Update

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