



ADULT EDUCATION IN EVEN START

Even Start is a literacy program that serves families. Even Start programs provide adult education, early childhood education, parenting education, and time for parents and children to learn together. The success of an Even Start program often pivots on educational opportunities for parents.

"They showed me how to help myself and do something with my life."

The adult education component of an Even Start program can help adults build basic reading and computation skills, improve English language skills for

second language learners, or earn a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Even Start adult education services are often provided through collaboration with institutions such as school districts, community colleges or community based organizations.

Trinidad State Junior College Even Start

Trinidad State Junior College (TSJC) houses one of the few full-time adult education centers in the state. Mimi Zappanti, the director of TSJC Adult Education Services, also serves as the director of TSJC



Even Start. With this strong connection, Even Start participants benefit from extensive and flexible adult education services.

Program Description

At the TSJC adult education center, students can participate in as much as 26 hours of instruction per week. The center is open four days a week, with morning, afternoon and evening hours. Even Start participants have ready access to the center and receive an additional three hours a week of instruction through Even Start programming.

The center is staffed by an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teacher and at least one Adult Basic Education (ABE) teacher, with a staff-to-student ratio of one-to-eight. Members of the Even Start staff also serve as instructors for the adult education center. Every student has an education plan. Short and long term goals are included in the plan. The plans are updated each time a student visits the center.

When a student comes to the center, she typically spends time with an instructor and time working individually. Students working on Adult Basic Education (ABE) or toward earning a GED set their own schedule for using the center. ESL students are encouraged to commit to attending three

"I got my GED with my kids coming with me."

hours of conversation classes each week. These are provided at varied times in ninety minute sessions. ESL students set their own schedule for using the center's computers (for software-based instruction) or working on writing skills.

Instructors work with GED students to achieve an 80% success rate on the GED tests. If a student's score on any test is lower than 80%, the staff will reinstruct in that subject area. This strategy provides students with more successful testing experiences.

Program Impact

During the past year 50% of the TSJC Even Start parents earned a GED. This compares to a national average of approximately 10% of Even Start participants earning a GED*. Over half of the TSJC Even Start parents who earned a GED are enrolled in a training program or higher education.

In addition to improving their education, TSJC Even Start families have become more self-reliant. Five families have reduced their public assistance or stopped receiving it completely over the past year. Four parents have obtained full-time employment and one parent started working part-time. Three parents have gotten a drivers license. With extensive assistance from Even Start staff, one family had a child returned from foster placement.

"Now that I read more to Bridget, she is learning more words and she is trying to speak."

"I have learned a lot of parenting skills. Things I never realized were so important."

Going "back to school" is a hard step for many adults. Once adults make the decision, a

program such as TSJC Even Start will foster, encourage and strengthen their efforts. The TSJC staff share this story:

An adult learner, who first came to us eighteen years ago as a teen-ager, returned to finish her GED. She had tested eighteen years ago and was seven points shy. We had tried for many years to get her to return. She came back this year, was very consistent in her attendance, and finished her GED. She was our graduation speaker.

"I have a full-time job to take care of my children and I'm not on welfare anymore."

- * Tao, F., Khan, S., Gamse, B., St. Pierre, R. and Tarr, H. (1998). *National Evaluation of the Even Start Family Literacy Program: 1996 Interim Report*. U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service.

Quotes are from participants in the TSJC Even Start program.

"I'm going to college now and before I wasn't interested."

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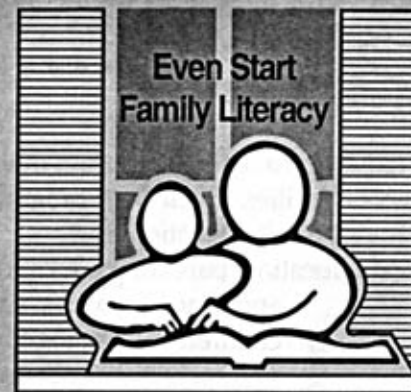


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Even Start in Colorado

Update

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