



EVEN START IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

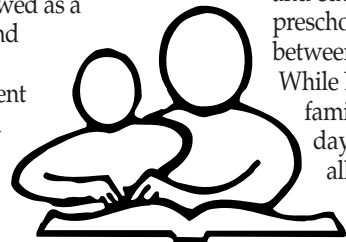
Even Start is a family literacy program based on the premise that since literacy is a family legacy, illiteracy may be passed on from one generation to the next. The purpose of **Even Start** is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy.

Reform Initiatives in Colorado

As school districts in Colorado have adopted curriculum standards in the areas of reading, writing, and the language arts in response to House Bill 93-1313, and as districts have begun to implement the requirements of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (House Bill 96-1139), literacy in its broadest sense has become the focus of many schools in the state.

Schools have initiated using data from the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), also created by House Bill 93-1313, to align their improvement efforts to the State Model Content Standards. This single uniform, statewide measurement assesses schools' progress to raise the achievement levels of all Colorado students, in reading and writing and math. Again literacy, particularly the performance of third-grade students, is becoming a focal point.

Similarly, House Bill 98-1267 requires a school accreditation process focused on student achievement results, as measured by standards-based assessments. Literacy, especially family literacy, is viewed as a means of facilitating the development and maintenance of school and community partnerships for the ongoing improvement of public education, and of providing an emphasis on basic skills, both of which are goals of accreditation.



Southern Ute Community Action Program Even Start

An **Even Start** Family Literacy Program is flexible enough to meet the needs of many people in many different ways. An example of such an **Even Start** program, working in coordination with a local school district to support efforts to raise achievement levels of students, as it implements the requirements of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act, may be found in Durango. There, Southern Ute Community Action Programs, Inc. provides education, support, information, and opportunities for families and their children at three different sites.

Entrada houses an alternative education program for high school students. As a component of **Entrada**, **Even Start** offers early childhood education for children whose parents are still in high school, parenting classes for those parents, and Parent and Child Together (PACT) time to support those important interactions between parents and children. Two other sites are located at **Park Elementary School** and **Fort Lewis Mesa**

Elementary School, where **Even Start** provides adult education, English as a second language, and job skill training services; parenting support; and infant/toddler care and education. Additionally, both elementary schools have preschool classrooms, funded through a collaboration between the Colorado Preschool Program and Head Start. While **Entrada** operates five days each week, **Even Start** families at **Park and Fort Lewis Mesa** attend classes two day per week for 6 1/2 hours each time, participating in all program components each day.

The Even Start program adds a special dimension that no other program can offer. It has made a significant difference in parent involvement at Park.

*- Marcie Denham, Principal
Park Elementary School*

As a single parent I was worried about my finances, a better paying job, and my parenting skills. The family literacy program offered me adult education, computer classes, a parent support group, and more! I will succeed as a single parent thanks to this program.

- Tanya Wilson

Although **Even Start** is not funded through the school district, the program is an integral part of the district's educational services, particularly at both of the elementary sites.

- School staff members support the importance of family literacy by actively making referrals to **Even Start** throughout the year.

- During student conferences in the early fall, as well as through their ongoing dialogue, classroom and Title I teachers encourage appropriate families to participate in **Even Start**.
- Title I and **Even Start** staffs meet monthly to coordinate services to specific families,

with a focus on sharing successful learning strategies for individual **Even Start** children.

- Title I and **Even Start** staffs cooperatively provide summer enrichment classes for families.
- **Even Start** personnel are a part of the Student Support Team which meets weekly to address children's needs and to support contact with families, in order to facilitate the home/school connection.
- **Even Start** services are identified on the Individual Literacy Plans of participating children as a means of assisting students to meet grade-level expectations.
- Through **Even Start**, Spanish-speaking families are gaining skills in English literacy, enabling them not only to obtain employment for themselves but also to support their children in attaining high educational standards.

We consistently see both children and adults make wonderful gains, both academically and in their relationships with each other. Building on family strengths and providing support and information to families is making big differences!

- Libby Boles, Even Start Coordinator

Family Literacy and the Primary Grades

Schools in Colorado, such as Durango's **Park Elementary** and **Fort Lewis Mesa Elementary**, are accessing family literacy programs like **Even Start** to assist parents in raising the achievement levels of their children. Title I teachers and literacy coaches are sharing reading strategies with **Even Start** families during regularly scheduled classes and special family literacy events. **Even Start** is facilitating parent involvement for schools

I am just so impressed with the program because it takes mothers with low education levels, and provides them with opportunities to increase their own education while at the same time providing academic support for their children.

*- Michelle Young, Principal
Fort Lewis Mesa Elementary*

in return. Preschool programs funded through Colorado Preschool Program, Head Start, Special Education, and Title I are being used as sites for **Even Start** children prior to their beginning kindergarten. **Even Start** teachers are participating as reading partners and mentors in core literacy programs in the primary grades. Classroom and Title I teachers are coordinating the provision of PACT time in primary classrooms, where **Even Start** parents are actively supporting their children's learning. **Even Start** staff members are re-enforcing classroom objectives

FLAG introducirme a otras personas y yo estoy aprendiendo ingles. A mi me gusta conocer diferentes culturas y ahora yo estoy ayudando a mi hijo con su tarea.

- Dolores Lozano

through activities with parents and home visits. And, as at **Park** and **Fort Lewis Mesa**, the advocacy/support which **Even Start** provides for parents is becoming an integral part of Individual Literacy Plans as they are developed.

In Colorado, **Even Start** is being used as an important resource to assist schools in the implementation of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act, and to assist parents in helping their children to meet state academic content standards.

All schools, in the ideal world, should have an Even Start program. Working with the entire family makes lifelong changes that truly affect a child's education and her children and on and on.

*- Carol Brandon, Director of Elementary Student Achievement,
Durango School District 9R*

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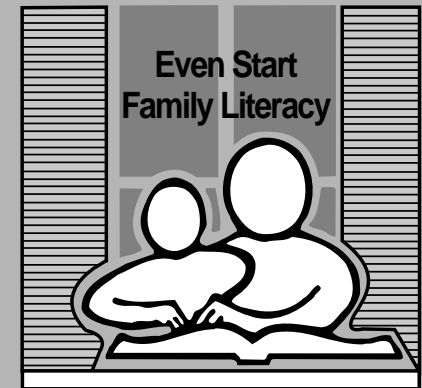


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Even Start in Colorado

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