



EVEN START and Head Start

EVEN START is often confused with another federal program, **Head Start**. The primary focus of **Head Start** is to serve children, with parental involvement and literacy as integral aspects of its programming. In contrast, **EVEN START** exclusively serves families. A child alone or an adult alone cannot participate in **EVEN START**.

As different as they are, however, **Head Start** and **EVEN START** complement each other, exist as 'natural partners,' and can collaboratively provide quality family literacy programming. Rebecca Stocker, Family Services Manager and **EVEN START** Coordinator of the *Community Partnership for Child Development* in Colorado Springs, provides the following summary of how these two programs effectively work together.

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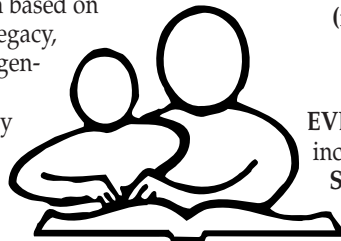
The primary goal of **Head Start** is to promote the development of social competence in the young children it serves. **Head Start** has long recognized the importance of supporting parents' efforts in attaining self-sufficiency and in being their child's first and most important teacher. Today, adult illiteracy limits the economic self-sufficiency of many **Head Start** families. The intergenerational cycle of illiteracy, low expectations, and frustration threatens the development of children. **Head Start** is mandated to respond to these challenges by incorporating a family-centered approach to promoting literacy development in the families which it serves (Refer to *Promoting Family Literacy Through Head Start*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

The intent of the federal **Head Start Performance Standards** is for **Head Start** agencies to work in partnership with each family, providing the opportunity for them to identify their needs and goals, while assisting them in obtaining greater self-sufficiency. The **Head Start Performance Standards** (Section 304.30 (e) (4) (i) & (ii)) state:

Grantee and delegate agencies must provide, either directly or through referrals to other local agencies, opportunities for children and families to participate in family literacy services by:

- (i) Increasing family access to materials, services, and activities essential to family literacy development and
- (ii) Assisting parents as adult learners to recognize and address their own literacy goals.

EVEN START is a perfect example of a means of increasing access for **Head Start** and **Early Head Start** families.



Two Programs Which Empower Parents

There is a high degree of alignment between **Head Start's** goals, as they correlate to family literacy, and **EVEN START's**. Local implementation of both programs enhances literacy development by supporting competency and self-sufficiency within families.

EVEN START is a family literacy program based on the premise that since literacy is a family legacy, illiteracy may also be passed on from one generation to the next. The purpose of **EVEN START** is to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy while increasing self-sufficiency.

Complementary Supports

A *Head Start Program Information Report* reveals that almost half of the primary care-givers for **Head Start** children have attained less than a high school diploma or G.E.D. While some parents may possess functional literacy skills, it is clear that the literacy needs of **Head Start** families are broad and very diverse. **Head Start** has the capacity to recruit, support, and retain adult learners who may not be reached through other efforts. Having services available to address such a quantity and range of needs requires strong literacy partnerships throughout the community.

The *National Head Start Association (NHTA)* in "*Reading and Writing Now! Promoting Language and Literacy in Head Start*" (April, 1999) states that **Head Start** and its partners should raise expectations for the children served, by increasing both the quality and quantity of language and literacy experiences in **Head Start** and **Early Head Start**. Although many factors influence children's ability to succeed in school and later in life, among the most important are learning to read and write. Ensuring school readiness for America's poorest and most at-risk children has always been a part of **Head Start's** mission. **Head Start** families are among

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the poorest in the nation, with 77.7% having annual incomes less than \$12,000. As parents achieve their literacy goals and increased self-sufficiency through **EVEN START**, children benefit in all areas including increased social competency, cognitive and emotional development, and economic status of the family.

Community Partnership for Child Development

In Colorado Springs, **Head Start** and **Early Head Start** operate under the non-profit agency *Community Partnership for Child Development (CPCD)*. The name of the organization implies positive outcomes through partnerships with community members and with each family served. *CPCD* is also a partner with El Paso County

School Districts 2 and 11 in providing **EVEN START** programming in Colorado Springs. Some specific areas in which **EVEN START** and **Head Start** complement each other in the Pikes Peak region include:

- targeting the economic status of at-risk families by both programs;
- recognition by both **Head Start** and **EVEN START** that the literacy level and commitment of parents is a strong indicator of the future development and achievement of children;
- provision by **Head Start** of family support services, such as transportation, which are beneficial in helping families participate fully in programs and in reaching their goals;
- use of **Head Start** staff members as **EVEN START** teachers and provision of monthly *Parents As Teachers (PAT)* home visits, once staff have been trained as *PAT* Parent Educators;
- availability of **Head Start** classrooms, equipped with developmentally appropriate materials, as **EVEN START** classrooms;
- use of **Head Start** funds to provide literacy materials and testing fees for families participating in **EVEN START**; and
- requirement of high standards and levels of accountability in both programs.

Having services available to address a range of needs requires strong literacy partnerships throughout the community.

EVEN START funds have created and greatly enhanced the opportunity for *CPCD* and Districts 2 and 11 to provide quality family literacy services. These agencies operate four *Centers for Family Learning*, providing a diversity in location and programming that enables **EVEN START** to serve not only **Head Start** families but also families from across El Paso County. The benefits of **Head Start**'s operating and/or collaborating with **EVEN START** Family Literacy Programs within the community are apparent. Seldom is everyone so clearly a winner!

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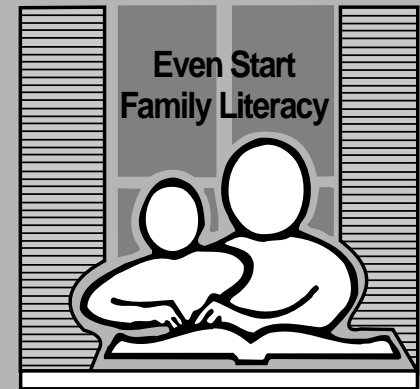


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Even Start in Colorado

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