

# Family Literacy Program Model

developed by the

Colorado Family Literacy Consortium

and the

Center for At-Risk Education  
Colorado Department of Education  
August 2005

**CARE**  
Center for At-Risk Education cde

# THE BASICS

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## What do you mean by 'family literacy services'?

The term 'family literacy services' means programming that is of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family and that integrates all of the following activities:

- ✓ Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children;
- ✓ Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children;
- ✓ Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; and
- ✓ An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life.<sup>1</sup>

Family literacy programs are by definition family-centered; these programs provide long-term support for the entire family as its members develop literacy skills and work towards educational goals. Family literacy recognizes that all families have strengths. Program staff partner with families to promote the absolute best in educational outcomes for participating adults and children. Services are culturally relevant, and families are respected for the depth and richness of their life experiences. Family literacy promotes meaningful partnerships between families and schools; such programming is viewed as an effective strategy for closing the achievement gap for low-income children.

Family literacy programs are built on the following core principles:

- ✓ The value of education for success in life;
- ✓ The central role of the parent in a child's development;
- ✓ The identification of individual strengths; and
- ✓ The value of experiential learning.<sup>2</sup>

## Why should we offer family literacy?

**School Success-** A parent's educational background affects the school success of her/his children more than the family's economic situation, where they live, or whether the family is headed by one or two parents. Family literacy promotes the school success of children by addressing the literacy needs of the entire family.<sup>3</sup>

**Parent Involvement-** Children make stronger educational gains when parents and schools are full partners in the process. Family literacy engages the entire family by emphasizing the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education.<sup>4</sup>

**Job Readiness-** Opportunities for employment increase with an adult's educational level. Family literacy programs support adult participants as they achieve educational goals and develop workplace literacy skills.<sup>5</sup>

**Self-Sufficiency-** Meaningful employment and knowledge of community resources have an impact on family stability. Family literacy programs help parents develop the skills and knowledge they need to be self-sufficient.<sup>6</sup>

# THE STAKEHOLDERS

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## Where does family literacy happen?

Family literacy can happen within any community that holds a vision of excellence for all community members. Family literacy programs occur in schools, nonprofits, community colleges, libraries, and for-profit entities. This intergenerational model of education can be found in all fifty states and other locations including Samoa and Puerto Rico; from rural to metropolitan areas, family literacy services are seen as a means to a greater end: improving the overall education of a community.

Family literacy targets families most in need of literacy services. Indicators of need include:

- ✓ Low income level;
- ✓ Low literacy level; and/or
- ✓ Limited English proficiency.

Often, such families might not have access to literacy services or aren't able to afford them. Because cost and accessibility can pose barriers for participation, it's important to consider location and available resources when implementing a family literacy program. Many neighborhood-based family literacy programs are successful in providing literacy services for families because of the close proximity of the sites to locations where people live and socialize.

## Who needs to be at the table?

Collaboration is a key ingredient to the success of any family literacy program. First, be sure to identify agencies in your community that are committed to providing strengths-based services for families. These agencies may already be supporting one or more of the components of family literacy through their work. Begin exploring ways that interagency relationships might ultimately benefit families through shared services or a system of cross-referral. **A quality family literacy program complements, rather than duplicates, high quality services within a community.** To ensure that seamless educational services are provided for families both during and beyond their participation in family literacy, it's important that the local educational agency be an active partner in this endeavor. And of course, families are primary stakeholders throughout the process; from the outset, their input should be actively solicited with regards to needed services, potential collaborators, and recruitment efforts within the community.

Additional community partners might include:

- ✓ Adult Education Programs
- ✓ Child Care Facilities (homes & centers)
- ✓ Colleges/Universities
- ✓ Colorado Preschool Program (CPP)
- ✓ Department of Human Services (local)
- ✓ Even Start
- ✓ Faith-based Organizations
- ✓ Family Centers
- ✓ Federal, State, and Local Governments
- ✓ Head Start
- ✓ Health Department
- ✓ Libraries
- ✓ Local Businesses
- ✓ Migrant Education Even Start (MEES)
- ✓ Migrant Education Program
- ✓ Non-profit Organizations
- ✓ School Districts (local)
- ✓ Social Service Agencies
- ✓ Title I, Part A Programs

# THE COMPONENTS

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## **How do we structure a family literacy program?**

A family literacy program has four components\*: 1) Early Childhood Education; 2) Adult Education; 3) Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time; and 4) Parenting Education.

### **Early Childhood Education**

The early childhood education component supports the growth and development of children birth to eight years of age. This component promotes the following practices:

- ✓ Participating children are supported in all domains of their development;
- ✓ Parents are welcomed as full partners in their children's education; and
- ✓ The learning environment reflects the home culture and language of families.<sup>7</sup>

The early childhood classroom within a family literacy program provides a language-rich environment for children. Books and other print material are readily accessible to young learners, and are in the home language of participating families. Teachers and parents provide intentional opportunities for child-initiated learning. Play is viewed as a way in which children expand their world views by acquiring new skills and knowledge; vocabulary development is integrated into all learning activities. The curriculum used in the early childhood classroom is research-based, and supports local school and state standards. Assessment of participating children is embedded in instruction, and includes observations by staff and parents, the creation and maintenance of portfolios, and documentation of progress. As educational partners, parents work closely with program staff to make sure that activities are relevant to children's interests, knowledge, and experiences.<sup>8</sup>

### **Adult Education**

Adult education classes include English language classes, Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, preparation for the General Education Development (GED) examination, and workplace literacy. The purpose of the adult education component is to:

- ✓ Assist adults in raising their literacy levels and gaining the knowledge and skills needed for employment and self-sufficiency;
- ✓ Assist adults who are parents in gaining the educational skills they need to be full partners in the educational development of their children; and
- ✓ Assist adults in completing their secondary school education or its equivalent.<sup>9</sup>

Research-based curriculum and classroom activities promote learning in contexts which are relevant to the lives of participants. Instruction includes a combination of individual and group activities, and encourages cooperative learning. Assessment, both formal and informal, occurs on an ongoing basis to provide adult learners with feedback about progress they've made toward goals.\*\* Participants are actively engaged in the decision-making process with regard to their education. Program staff support adult learners in being self-directed. Adult education builds upon the knowledge, experiences, and roles of participating adults (parent, employee, community member), and recognizes that long-term self-sufficiency is supported by the development of workplace skills.<sup>10</sup>

\*Home visitation is also considered a component by many family literacy programs. You'll find a description of this "fifth component" at the bottom of page 4.

\*\*In Colorado, three standardized assessments are used: Basic English Skills Test Plus (BEST Plus), Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), and Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE).

# THE COMPONENTS (cont.)

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## **Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time**

The PACT component promotes parent-child interaction while supporting the literacy development of participating children. Key elements of this component include:

- ✓ A focus on the literacy development and growth of children;
- ✓ Activities which are easily transferable to the family's home environment; and
- ✓ An emphasis on the role of parents in supporting their child's development and education.<sup>11</sup>

PACT provides families the opportunity to share activities that are child-centered and developmentally appropriate. Literacy is a primary focus during PACT, where participating families are encouraged to share stories, play together, and explore the early childhood classroom environment. This component is designed to provide intentional space for observation and play, and allows parents to learn about their children while discovering ways to bridge classroom experiences to home life. PACT activities are sensitive to the culture of participating families. Whenever possible, activities in this component are carried out in the family's home language.<sup>12</sup>

## **Parenting Education**

Parenting education provides education and support for parents regarding their children's literacy development. Parenting education is designed to meet the following goals:

- ✓ Building partnerships between parents and schools;
- ✓ Supporting parents in maintaining literacy-rich home environments; and
- ✓ Strengthening parents' ability to advocate for their children.<sup>13</sup>

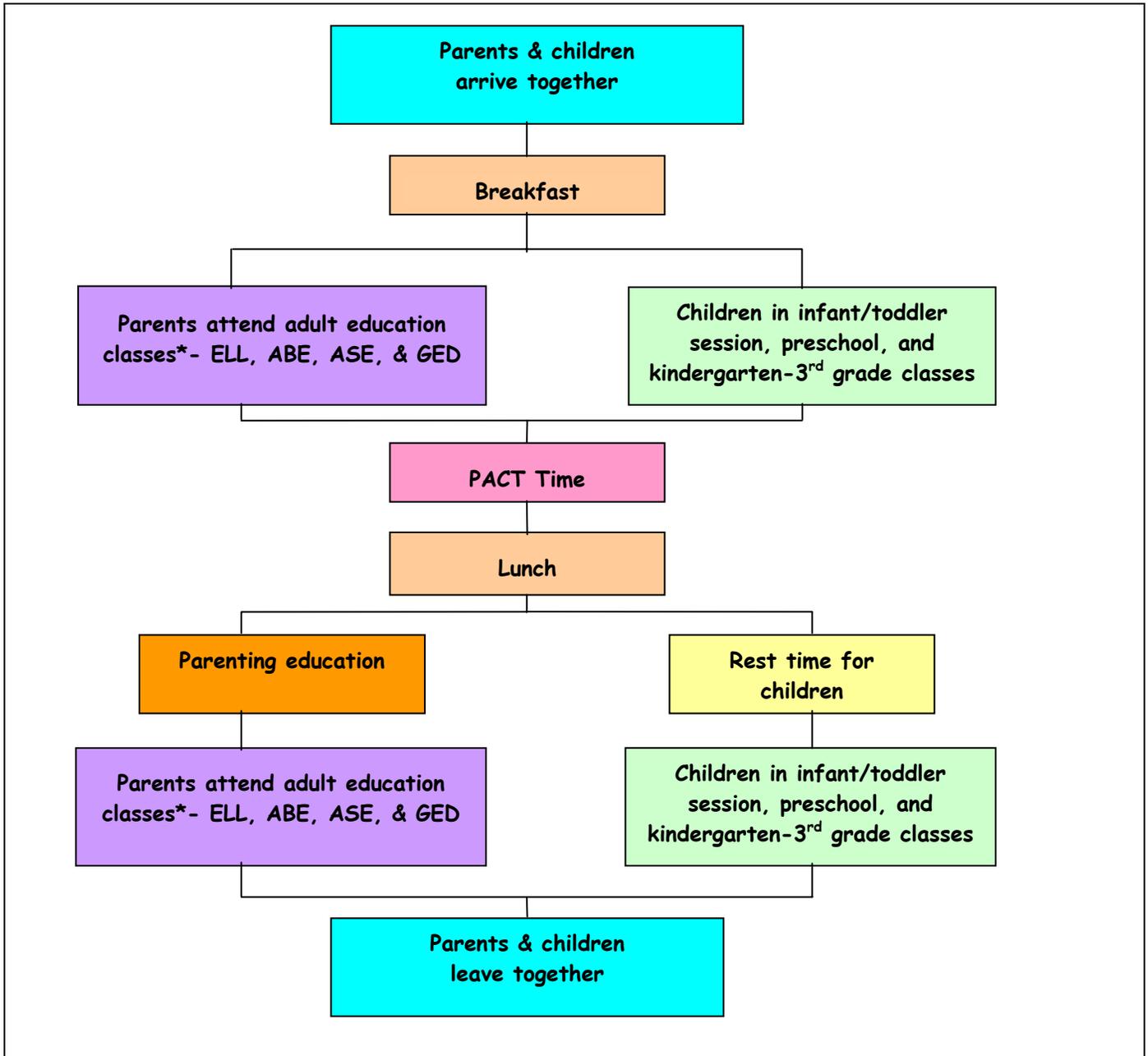
Parenting education responds to the questions and experiences of participating parents. This component presents topics about early literacy and family development while reinforcing the message that parents do, in fact, have a significant impact on their children's education and development. As with the other components of family literacy, materials and activities presented during parenting education are relevant to the culture and home language of participating families. Parents are actively engaged in learning how everyday experiences can nurture the literacy development of their children. Parenting education strengthens partnerships between parents and schools. This component provides opportunities for parent volunteerism within the school, and familiarizes parents with school activities and parent-teacher conferences. Throughout the process, parents learn how to effectively advocate for their children within a variety of settings, including school, child care, and human service agencies.<sup>14</sup>

## **The Fifth Component: Home Visitation**

Home visits support families in transferring what's been learned in class to the home environment. These visits are individualized for each family - parents have an active role in planning the visit in advance with the home visitor. Home visits provide the opportunity for families to learn how their play and interactions reinforce the home as the child's first and most important educational environment. Home visits are an extension of classroom learning, and enhance the effectiveness of the center-based components of family literacy.<sup>15</sup>

# THE SCHEDULE

Each of the four components of family literacy is seen as an instructional program that supports skill development for participating families. Family literacy programs assume an integrated approach to services; programming is individualized for each family member, while occurring within a greater framework of family strengthening. (Note: The daily schedule for family literacy programs can vary depending on the unique needs of individual communities.)



\*Adult Classes: English Language Literacy (ELL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and General Education Development (GED)

# THE IDEAL

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## **Some Thoughts on Best Practices**

Building a quality family literacy program happens incrementally. As awareness develops about the benefits of family literacy, a community may eventually apply for funding from Even Start and/or the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), which is Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Even Start and AEFLA provide support for communities committed to offering high quality literacy services for participating families. The following guidelines are based on Even Start and AEFLA standards, and provide a framework for best practices within a family literacy program.

## **Staff Qualifications**

- ✓ Family Literacy Coordinator has a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education or related field, in addition to administration training through the National Center for Family Literacy.
- ✓ Adult educators have a degree in adult secondary education or a related field, and will have completed the Colorado Department of Education's Literacy Instruction Authorization by January 2007.
- ✓ Early childhood educators have an Associates degree or higher in Early Childhood Education.
- ✓ Home visitors are certified through either Parents as Teachers (PAT) or Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY).
- ✓ There are program staff who speak the home language of participating families.

## **Program Qualifications**

- ✓ Family literacy services are offered year-round for a minimum of 40 weeks per year.
- ✓ Program is closed for no more than four consecutive weeks each year.
- ✓ Early childhood education classrooms are licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services.
- ✓ Early childhood education classrooms are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).\*
- ✓ Adult education instruction is offered a minimum of 60 hours each month.
- ✓ Infant/toddler programming is offered a minimum of 60 hours each month.
- ✓ Preschool programming is offered a minimum of 65 hours each month.
- ✓ Parenting education and interactive literacy activities (PACT) are offered a minimum of 20 hours each month (in addition to adult and early childhood instruction).
- ✓ Participating families receive monthly home visits.
- ✓ Instruction is learner-centered and research-based.
- ✓ Family literacy services are culturally relevant.

## **Community Partnerships**

- ✓ Community collaborations are an integral part of programming, and include partnerships with the local educational agency (LEA), nonprofit agencies, and institutions of higher education.
- ✓ Family literacy programming is integrated into Title I, Part A services within the LEA.
- ✓ Family literacy services support the school district's accreditation contract and implementation of Individual Literacy Plans (ILPs).
- ✓ Family literacy is viewed by the LEA as an effective strategy for closing the achievement gap for low-income and minority children, and programming supports the LEA's content standards.

\*NAEYC requires that programs be licensed and operational for at least one year before seeking accreditation.

# THE BUDGET

## When is the right time to implement a family literacy program?

Sustainability, in terms of resources, partnerships, and funding, is an important consideration when starting up a family literacy program. The program budget is based on the following assumptions:

- ✓ 20 families, including 20 adults, 15 preschoolers, and 10 infants/toddlers\*
- ✓ 20 hours of services per week for 40 weeks each year
- ✓ 5% dollar increase for 2006 maintenance budget

ITEM	2006 Budget Start-Up	2007 Budget Maintenance
<b>PERSONNEL</b>		
□ 1 Family Literacy Coordinator (\$26/hr x 30 hrs/wk x 44 wks)	\$34,320	\$36,036
□ 1 Adult Education Teacher** (\$22/hr x 25 hrs/wk x 42 wks)	\$23,100	\$24,255
□ 1 Adult Education Aide** (\$12/hr x 22 hrs/wk x 42 wks)	\$11,088	\$11,642
□ 1 Preschool Teacher (\$22/hr x 25 hrs/wk x 42 wks)	\$23,100	\$24,255
□ 1 Preschool Aide (\$12/hr x 22 hrs/wk x 42 wks)	\$11,088	\$11,642
□ 1 Infant/Toddler Teacher (\$22/hr x 25 hrs/wk x 42 wks)	\$23,100	\$24,255
□ 2 Infant/Toddler Aides (\$12/hr x 22 hrs/wk x 42 wks)	\$22,176	\$23,285
□ 1 Bilingual Administrative Assistant (\$15/hr x 22hrs/wk x 42 wks)	\$13,860	\$14,553
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$161,832</b>	<b>\$169,923</b>
<b>OPERATING</b>		
□ Rent		
• 1 Adult Classroom [26'x27']		
• 1 Preschool Classroom [23'x23']		
• 1 Infant/Toddler Classroom [19'x19']		
• Office [12'x12']		
• Storage [7'x7'] = 1785 sq. ft. x \$15 sq. ft.	\$26,775	\$28,114
□ Telephone (\$80/mo x 12 mos.)	\$960	\$1,008
□ Copying, Printing & Postage (\$75/mo x 12 mos.)	\$900	\$945
□ Supplies [Office, Children's Consumables and Toys, Paper, Books, Room Charts & Posters, etc.] (\$125/mo x 12 mos.)	\$1,500	\$1,575
□ Custodial (\$12/hr x 8 hrs/wk x 42 wks)	\$4,032	\$4,233
□ Professional Development (\$1,200 x 4 Professional Staff; \$250 x 3 Aides)	\$5,550	\$5,828
□ Travel [Home Visits, Trainings, etc.] (600 mi./mo x \$0.36 x 12 mos. for 3 staff)	\$2,592	\$2,721
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$42,309</b>	<b>\$44,424</b>

ITEM	2006 Budget Start-Up	2007 Budget Maintenance
<b>START-UP COSTS</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remodeling costs [Requirements: handicap accessibility; children's toilets and sinks; carpeting; exits; paint, locks, etc.] (\$0 - \$25,000 {estimated @ \$15,000})</li> <li>• Child Care Licensing/NAEYC Accreditation (Licensing fee: \$110; Accreditation: \$1500 x 2 classrooms)</li> <li>• Safety [Fire extinguisher, installation of materials to meet code requirements for children's health/safety] (\$1,000)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	\$19,110	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Children's Education Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cribs, changing table, mats, toys, manipulatives, tables, chairs, cubbies, art materials, books, musical instruments, paints, crayons, scissors, writing materials, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		\$20,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Adults Education Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairs, desks, tables, text books, charts, maps, computers, manipulatives, teaching aids, assessment materials, black or white board, bookcases, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		\$15,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Office Equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephones and installation (2 phones: \$150; installation \$150)</li> <li>• Internet access (\$500)</li> <li>• 2 computers (\$4,000 each)</li> <li>• 1 Printer (\$400)</li> <li>• 1 Fax machine (\$250)</li> <li>• 1 Copier (\$500)</li> <li>• Tables, Desks, Chairs (\$6,000)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		\$15,950
□ General office supplies		\$800
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$70,860</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$275,001</b>	<b>\$214,347</b>

**Important Note:** Don't be daunted by the enormity of the program budget - the costs listed above aren't reflective of in-kind contributions by community collaborators. In-kind support, in the form of facilities, staff, and other resources, greatly reduces the financial burden of implementing a quality family literacy program. For example, outside play areas - a necessary part of the early childhood environment for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers - are not included in the budget. Community collaborators may provide, as in-kind contributions, the start-up and maintenance costs for such playgrounds.

\*Academic instruction for primary-grade children is the responsibility of the collaborating local educational agency; this expense is not included in the program budget.

\*\*Adult Education Teacher and Aide provide instruction in English Language Literacy (ELL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and/or General Education Development (GED).

# THE NEXT STEP

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The resources listed below are helpful for communities and individuals wanting to build a quality family literacy program from the ground up. You can also contact the Center for At-Risk Education at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for technical assistance and training needs. The Center can be reached at the following location:

Center for At-Risk Education  
Colorado Department of Education  
201 East Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203  
303.866.6674  
[www.cde.state.co.us/cdecare/index.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecare/index.htm)

## Publications and Websites

- ✓ *Assessment Guidelines for Adult Education and Family Literacy Funded Programs*  
Denver: Colorado Department of Education, 2005  
[www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/download/pdf/AssessmentGuidelines05v3.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/download/pdf/AssessmentGuidelines05v3.pdf)
- ✓ *BUILDING BLOCKS to Colorado's Content Standards*  
Denver: Colorado Department of Education, 2003  
[www.cde.state.co.us/earlychildhoodconnections/early.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/earlychildhoodconnections/early.htm)
- ✓ Colorado Family Literacy Consortium - [www.coloradoliteracy.net](http://www.coloradoliteracy.net)
- ✓ *Colorado Family Literacy State Performance Measures*  
Denver: Colorado Department of Education, 2004.  
[www.cde.state.co.us/cdecare/care\\_downloads/pdf/CoFamLitPerformanceMeasures.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecare/care_downloads/pdf/CoFamLitPerformanceMeasures.pdf)
- ✓ *Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education*  
Denver: Colorado Department of Education, 1994
- ✓ *Families Learning Together in Colorado: A Report on Family Literacy*, by J. Anderson  
Denver: Colorado Department of Education, 1994  
[www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content\\_storage\\_01/0000000b/80/24/24/37.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/24/24/37.pdf)
- ✓ *The Family Literacy Answer Book*  
Louisville: National Center for Family Literacy, 1997
- ✓ *Guide to Quality: Even Start Family Literacy Programs*, by M. Dwyer  
Washington, DC: United States Department of Education, 2001  
[www.cde.state.co.us/cdecare/care\\_downloads/pdf/GuideQ.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecare/care_downloads/pdf/GuideQ.pdf)

## Publications and Websites (cont.)

- ✓ *Intergenerational Literacy Activities Notebook*  
Denver: Colorado Department of Education, 2004  
[www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/iglindex.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/iglindex.htm)
- ✓ *Literacy Instruction Authorization*  
Denver: Colorado Department of Education, 2005  
[www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/AuthorizationPage.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/AuthorizationPage.htm)
- ✓ National Center for Family Literacy - [www.famlit.org](http://www.famlit.org)
- ✓ National Even Start Association - [www.evenstart.org](http://www.evenstart.org)
- ✓ *Outcomes and Measures in Family Literacy Programs*  
Louisville: National Center for Family Literacy, 2001
- ✓ *Pathways: A Primer for Family Literacy Program Design and Development*, by King & McMaster  
Louisville: National Center for Family Literacy, 2000
- ✓ *Practitioners Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners*  
Louisville: National Center for Family Literacy, 2004  
[www.famlit.org/Publications/Practitioner-Toolkit-ELL.cfm](http://www.famlit.org/Publications/Practitioner-Toolkit-ELL.cfm)
- ✓ *Sustainability Guidebook for Colorado Family Literacy Programs*, by L. Jordan  
Denver: Colorado Department of Education, 2005  
[www.coloradoliteracy.net/download/FamilyLiteracy\\_SustainabilityGuidebook.pdf](http://www.coloradoliteracy.net/download/FamilyLiteracy_SustainabilityGuidebook.pdf)

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> National Center for Family Literacy. (2003). Retrieved June 3, 2005, from <http://www.familit.org>
  - <sup>2</sup> Guide to Quality: Even Start Family Literacy Program. V. 1, Revised, by RMC Research Corporation, June 2001, p. 106.
  - <sup>3</sup> Of Primary Interest. (2001, Fall). *The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99*. Denver, CO: National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. Vol. 8 No. 4, p. 2.
  - <sup>4</sup> Lewis, A. (1996). *Breaking the Cycle of Poverty*. Phi Delta Kappan, v. 78, p. 186.
  - <sup>5</sup> Sum, A., Kirsch, I., & Yamamoto, K. (October 2004). *Pathways to Labor Market Success: The Literacy Proficiency of U.S. Adults*. Princeton: ETS Policy Information Center, p. 6.
  - <sup>6</sup> National Center for Family Literacy. (2003). Retrieved May 28, 2005 from <http://www.familit.org>
  - <sup>7</sup> Guide to Quality: Even Start Family Literacy Program. V. 1, Revised, by RMC Research Corporation, June 2001, pp. 115-117.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp. 116-117.
  - <sup>9</sup> AEFLA Grant Information, p. 1, Colorado Department of Education, [www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult), retrieved 5/23/05.
  - <sup>10</sup> Guide to Quality: Even Start Family Literacy Program. V. 1, Revised, by RMC Research Corporation, June 2001, pp. 118-120.
  - <sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp. 125-126.
  - <sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp. 125-126.
  - <sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp. 122-124.
  - <sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp. 122-124.
  - <sup>15</sup> Ibid, pp. 127-129.



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The Colorado Family Literacy Consortium and the Center for At-Risk Education wish to acknowledge the significant contributions made by **Leigh Jordan**, Development Coordinator, Urban Peak Colorado Springs, and **Pamela Smith**, Director of Adult Education and Family Literacy, Colorado Department of Education, to the content and format of this document.

