

Minnesota Family Literacy initiative summative evaluation

*A report on the Even Start statewide
Family Literacy initiative*

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Introduction

Purpose

The Family Literacy state initiative sought to strengthen and expand state level collaboration for Family Literacy, build public awareness among legislators, policymakers and the public, support the development of new Family Literacy programs and strengthen existing programs, expand the current Family Literacy training system, and improve evaluation strategies.

The impetus for applying for the Statewide Family Literacy Initiative grant came from the belief that increasing numbers of families with literacy needs could best be addressed through a holistic program. Minnesota had a few established Family Literacy programs but there was need to make this programming more widely available. Also there was the need to bring some programs from a “parent-child reading together” concept to the understanding of a four-component integrated Family Literacy program.

Background and need

Minnesota is a state comprised of both urban and rural areas: slightly over half of the state’s population resides in the Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area. The rest of the population resides in greater Minnesota, which consists primarily of small towns and rural communities. Many greater Minnesota residents are in isolated areas, with long distances between services and community resources. The virtual demise of the mining industry, the financial straits of farmers, and seasonal employment in farming and resort areas all contribute to increasing poverty in rural Minnesota.

The immigrant population in Minneapolis and St. Paul has climbed dramatically over the past decade, fueling a nearly 50 percent increase in the number of foreign-born residents in Minnesota. At the same time the rural areas are also realizing a huge increase in non-English speaking residents. It is estimated that 200,000 individuals are in need of English as a Second Language (ESL) services and approximately 35,000 permanent residents of Minnesota lack citizenship.

A report from the Office of Minnesota State Planning states: “Minnesota’s minority children are very disadvantaged economically relative to white children. For example, Asian or Pacific Islander children in Minnesota have the third highest poverty rate in the country, American Indian children the fourth highest, and African American children the seventh highest.”

Children and families are greatly impacted by low literacy and low incomes in Minnesota. More than 514,000 people in Minnesota over the age of 20 lack a high school diploma or GED. The dropout rate nearly doubled from 1985 to 1997. In 1998, 45 percent of the adult learners served in Adult Basic Education in Minnesota were unemployed and 44 percent were on public assistance.

Grant management

The developers and managers of the initiative were the State Family Literacy Specialist and the Even Start Coordinator, both in the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning. Since the grant was co-managed by the Even Start State Coordinator, who works in the division housing Title I, and the Family Literacy Specialist who works in Adult Basic Education, the level of involvement by both groups has been the backbone of the initiative. The organizational location of the initiative is in the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning under the direction of the Adult Basic Education supervisor.

Consortium

Even before beginning to apply for the grant, the initiative developers formed a Family Literacy Consortium which met frequently to discuss the literacy needs of their constituencies and plan the grant application. The work of the consortium has been guided by its vision to make Family Literacy available to all areas of Minnesota. The members of the consortium have served as advisors and brought Family Literacy to their programs. Several members have provided training and made use of the promotional materials developed through the grant.

The consortium has met on a regular basis, with a co-manager of the grant serving as facilitator. E-mail and the Family Literacy Newsletter have been the major means of communication outside of the quarterly meeting.

Key players of the Consortium have remained essentially the same over the past three years. Those key players represent Even Start, Adult Basic Education, Early Childhood Family Education, School Readiness, Head Start, Migrant Education, Reading Excellence Act, Regional Family Literacy Coordinators, representatives of local programs, and the Minnesota Family Initiative Program. There has been some loss of membership, due to job changes and new members added for that reason.

Evaluation of the initiative

Wilder Research Center was contracted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Statewide Family Literacy Initiative. The evaluation was designed to assess the five goals of the grant with regard to implementation and effectiveness. The goals included: 1) strengthen and expand state-level collaboration; 2) build public awareness of Family Literacy; 3) support the development of new programs and strengthen existing programs; 4) expand the current Family Literacy training system; and 5) improve evaluation strategies and data collection.

Researchers documented progress toward these goals and collected information from key informants. Regional coordinators, consortium members, and Family Literacy program directors were all asked to provide feedback about the effects of initiative activities. Training participants were also surveyed regarding training effectiveness. An outline of the evaluation questions and examples of instruments are included in the Technical Appendix.

Activities and outcomes

Goal 1: state-level collaboration

The first goal of the grant was to strengthen and expand state-level collaboration for Family Literacy. This involved expanding the Family Literacy Consortium and educating members about Family Literacy. New members were added and the Consortium played an important role in overseeing the initiative goals and objectives. At the end of the initiative, Consortium members identified several accomplishments and lessons learned from their involvement. Many indicated plans to continue with the consortium even after the end of the grant period.

Activities

State Family Literacy staff identified the importance of convening key state-level staff to address collaboration for enhancing the quality and building the capacity of Family Literacy programming in Minnesota. The Family Literacy Consortium was created in 1999. Two primary objectives were identified to help increase the statewide collaboration: expanding the Consortium membership and introducing Family Literacy concepts to all members.

Objective 1. Increase understanding of Family Literacy among state-level policy makers

Several strategies were employed to help achieve greater understanding of Family Literacy statewide. First, several state administrators and staff were added to the Family Literacy Consortium. Originally there were 10 members, and 12 new members were added during the first year of the grant. There was some turnover in membership over the grant period, and the Consortium included 19 members at the end of the initiative (including the two grant co-managers). Consortium members attended half-day quarterly meetings as well as annual full-day retreats. The majority of members attended at least two meetings in the past year. Documentation of Consortium membership and a description of meeting topics are included in the Appendix.

Objective 2. Increase capacity of each Consortium member to articulate the concept of Family Literacy

Two primary strategies were planned to help build the capacity of Consortium members to promote Family Literacy. They included providing information to Consortium members regarding definitions and information about Family Literacy and helping members examine the roles of their respective programs in relation to Family Literacy.

These activities were completed during the first year of the grant at a Consortium meeting on March 29, 2000. Consortium members were provided with the federal definition of Family Literacy along with the history of Family Literacy in Minnesota. Specific programs were discussed in relation to connections with Family Literacy.

Results

Consortium members were surveyed at the end of the first year (fall 2000) and again at the end of the grant (fall 2002). Responses from both surveys were similar, with the exception of member responses in 2000 focusing more on meeting the initiative goals and objectives. Generally, respondents indicated a value for the Consortium and a commitment to continue to contribute and promote Family Literacy statewide. A brief summary of responses from the 2002 survey is provided below.

Consortium member feedback

Family Literacy Consortium members were asked to complete a brief survey in November 2002. The survey asked for their comments in a variety of areas including: the accomplishments of the Consortium so far, what they had learned as a result of their participation, how they had used Family Literacy concepts in their work, what the Consortium should try to accomplish in the next year, how they hoped to contribute to Consortium efforts in the next year and beyond, and suggestions for upcoming meetings. Twelve members completed the survey, representing a response rate of 71 percent. Consortium members reported attending an average of three meetings in 2002, with all but one Consortium member attending at least one meeting during the past year.

Respondents indicated the Consortium's accomplishments to date included the following: sharing information, ideas, resources and expertise across disciplines and program areas; implementing regional networks and coordinators; increasing awareness of Family Literacy statewide; implementing training and in-services; and developing promotional materials including the brochure, data sheets, and video.

When asked what they had learned from their participation in the Consortium, respondents indicated they had gained knowledge of the people, programs, and activities in the field of Family Literacy in Minnesota. Several others said they had learned that there was an interest in collaboration in this field and that there was value in such collaboration.

Respondents indicated that they are using the concept of Family Literacy in the work of their organizations. Many indicated they were using the concept by continuing to promote it and apply it in their work. Others said they were using the concept to expand their program.

Respondents had a number of suggestions for what the Consortium should try to accomplish in the next year. These included the following: address Family Literacy funding issues, secure legislative support, expand membership diversity, raise awareness of Family Literacy and disseminate information to Minnesota agencies, and continue to meet and maintain communication and relationships across disciplines and programs.

Respondents hoped to contribute to Consortium efforts in a variety of ways during the next year. These potential contributions included staying involved with the Consortium and continuing to attend meetings; encouraging and supporting collaboration between family literacy programs; and seeking resources from federal, state, and local sources.

A variety of suggestions were offered for topics to be discussed at future Consortium meetings. These included: techniques for increasing involvement and buy-in from other potential collaborators, the impact of the new government administration on current and future initiatives, cultural diversity issues, and techniques for gaining the support of government officials and legislators.

Connection to long-term outcomes

Feedback from the Family Literacy Consortium members suggests that the group has been successful in meeting many goals. The Consortium has brought together individuals from a variety of programs and disciplines across the state and educated them about Family Literacy. Consortium members played a key role in implementing initiative strategies. Most members indicated satisfaction with the accomplishments of the Consortium, and many indicated plans to continue with the Consortium in the future. These findings suggest that the establishment of the Family Literacy Consortium has been successful at increasing state-level collaboration.

Goal 2: build public awareness

The second goal of the initiative was to build public awareness of Family Literacy among legislators, policymakers, and the public. Several activities were planned to help achieve this goal. Educational materials were designed and presentations about Family Literacy were developed and offered at conferences and trainings. To assess the effects of the training events, participants were surveyed regarding their satisfaction with the training. In general, the initiative strategies seemed to be successful in helping to build public awareness of Family Literacy.

Activities

Two primary objectives were identified in order to help accomplish the goal of building public awareness. The first involved developing materials to increase awareness of Family Literacy. The second objective called for making presentations to audiences introducing Family Literacy as a strategy for undereducated families. Progress toward these specific strategies is outlined below.

Objective 1. Develop and distribute materials to increase awareness of Family Literacy

Several materials were developed in order to help build public awareness of Family Literacy (see Figure 1). Completed materials included an informational brochure, a statewide directory, and a promotional video. A few of the materials were still in progress at the time of this report, including the informational data sheets, the information packet, and the public relations kit. These are expected to be completed soon and will be distributed by the Statewide Family Literacy Conference in March 2003.

1. Materials developed to build public awareness of Family Literacy

Product	Description	Progress
Brochure	Develop a brochure promoting Minnesota's Family Literacy programs	Done
Data sheets	Develop data sheets and information for legislators, communities and local school districts	In progress
Information packet	Develop informational packet (brochure, data sheet and PR materials) to be distributed to all Consortium members	In progress
Statewide directory	Update the Statewide Family Literacy Directory with a statewide interagency distribution	Done
Family Literacy video	Produce an informational video to inform a variety of audiences about Family Literacy	Done
Public service announcements	Create public service announcements to assist local programs in raising awareness about Family Literacy	Done
Public relations kit	Create a packet of information to assist local programs in telling the story of Family Literacy	In progress

Sources: Consortium meeting minutes and State Family Literacy staff.

Objective 2. Make presentations to audiences introducing Family Literacy as a strategy for undereducated families

A full-day Family Literacy training was developed and presented at eight Early Childhood Family Education regional in-services. These were completed in the fall of 2000. In addition, Family Literacy presentations were made at three conferences including Title I, Adult Basic Education, and Head Start in 2000. Participants at those three conferences were surveyed about the presentation and a brief summary of the responses is provided below.

Results

Surveys were distributed at all three conference presentations offered in 2000 (Title I, Adult Basic Education, and Head Start). A total of 87 participants from all three conferences completed the survey. In general, respondents gave positive ratings to survey questions that referred to the overall quality of the workshop, the presenter's ability to involve the group, and how well the presenter responded to questions. Many indicated that the video and the handouts were helpful. Several respondents made suggestions for improving the presentation, including allowing more time for the

workshop, providing more specific ideas for programming and activities, and offering more information on how to implement new Family Literacy programs.

Connection to long-term outcomes

Many strategies were employed to help promote Family Literacy across the state of Minnesota. Several materials were developed and distributed and several trainings and presentations were provided. Participants indicated that the presentations, the video, and the other handouts were all helpful. In addition, participants indicated interest in receiving more information on Family Literacy programming and other activities. These findings suggest that the initiative strategies were effective in meeting the goal of building public awareness of Family Literacy.

Goal 3: support Family Literacy programs

The third goal of the initiative involved supporting the development of new Family Literacy programs and strengthening existing Family Literacy programs. Educational materials were designed in order to assist new and established programs, and a regional network system was created. To assess the effects of these additions, regional coordinators and program directors were surveyed. Regional coordinators and program directors generally reported satisfaction with the initiative activities.

Activities

In order to support the development of new Family Literacy programs and to strengthen the existing ones, two objectives were identified. The first involved the development of materials and resources to help create new programs and strengthen existing ones. The second objective called for a reorganization of the programs statewide in order to increase communication, mentorship, and support.

Objective 1. Develop and distribute materials to assist Family Literacy programs in Minnesota

The development of several materials was planned to help meet this objective (see Figure 2). These included the creation of a program development guide, a newsletter, and a website. The program development guide was completed and is available for use. The Family Literacy Newsletter was first published in December 2000 and continues to be published quarterly. The website was still in progress at the time of the report, although it is expected to be completed before the Statewide Family Literacy Conference in March 2003. In addition, a Family Literacy Resource Center was established at the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning.

2. Materials created to assist Family Literacy programs

Product	Description	Progress
Program development guide	Write a Program Development Guide on how to develop a Family Literacy program	Done
Newsletter	Write a quarterly newsletter	Completed each quarter
Website	Develop and maintain a Family Literacy web site	In progress
Resource Center	Establish a Family Literacy Resource Center at the MN Dept. of CFL	Done

Sources: Consortium meeting minutes and State Family Literacy Staff.

Objective 2. Increase communication between providers for purposes of establishing Family Literacy programs and increasing quality

Several strategies were also planned to help establish and improve Family Literacy programs statewide. Family Literacy programs across the state were organized into regions to help increase connections and support among programs. A Family Literacy site was chosen within each region to serve as a model for the other programs. In addition, the director of each of the model sites was chosen as a Regional Network Coordinator. These coordinators completed several site visits within their respective regions, offering support and suggestions to the program staff. A total of 47 site visits had been completed at the time of this report.

3. Activities to help improve Family Literacy programs and increase quality

Product	Description	Progress
Regional networks	Establish four regional networks to provide training, mentoring, and support	Done
Model program sites	Identify four model Family Literacy sites	Done
Site visits	Complete site visits to 10 community-funded Family Literacy programs and continue to visit all Even Start programs each year	47 completed

Sources: Consortium meeting minutes; State Family Literacy staff; Regional Coordinators.

Results

Information was collected from Family Literacy program directors and the regional coordinators. In general, the educational materials and the regional network system received favorable comments. Many program directors reported improvements to their programs and the coordinators rated the regional network system positively. Results indicate that these initiative strategies appeared to be helpful to Family Literacy programs across the state.

Feedback from Regional Coordinators

Each of the four Family Literacy Regional Coordinators completed a survey in the fall of 2002 regarding their activities and experiences in their coordinator position. Survey questions addressed topics such as service provision in the last six months, recent successes, barriers to providing services, and important lessons learned. Regional coordinators were also asked to provide suggestions for making the position more effective in serving Family Literacy programs. All four regional coordinators completed the survey and a summary of their responses is provided below.

When asked about their biggest accomplishments during the past year, all four respondents indicated that the site visits were very beneficial. One coordinator wrote, “The site visits were very informative and programs truly appreciated having someone visit so that issues and concerns could be addressed.” Another acknowledged the benefits of working together: “Whenever we were able to share a solution, the sites saved time and dollars.”

Respondents also described barriers that kept them from accomplishing everything they had planned. Two expressed concerns about the large regions and lack of time, which made it difficult to complete additional or follow-up site visits. One respondent noted that the grant got off to a slow start, while another indicated that some sites did not respond to her site visit overtures.

When asked about the most important thing they have learned in their position, regional coordinators stressed the importance of securing buy-in of the Family Literacy concepts. One wrote, “The programs must be supported by the bosses/districts/communities that are served by the program.” Two respondents indicated they learned about the complexities of Family Literacy and the difficult issues faced by families served by the program.

Respondents also offered suggestions for how to make the regional coordinator position more effective in serving Family Literacy programs. Their suggestions included providing administrative support to help keep mailing lists and contacts current, adding

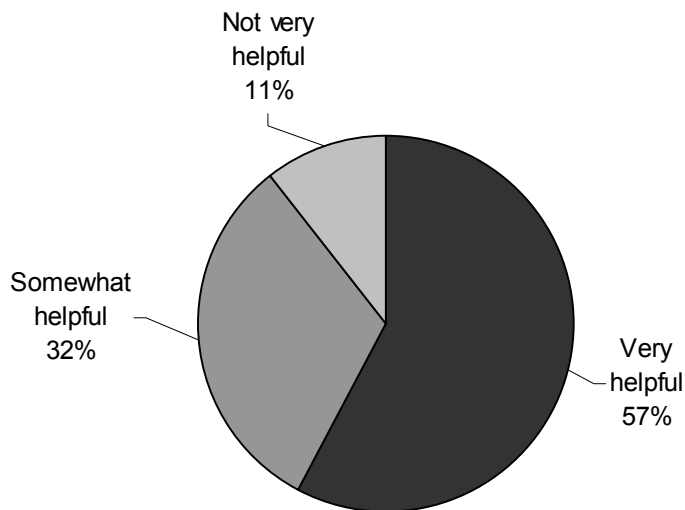
regions and coordinators to ensure that all programs have the opportunity to receive site visits and other assistance, and putting together a guide for future regional coordinator efforts.

Feedback from Family Literacy program directors

Family Literacy program directors were contacted regarding the impact of initiative activities. Interview questions included the amount and helpfulness of assistance provided by their regional coordinator, changes made to their program as a result of assistance received, attendance and satisfaction with regional trainings, and how programs promoted the awareness of Family Literacy in their community. Respondents from all 61 of the programs completed the interview, representing a response rate of 100 percent. A summary of the findings is provided below.

Many of the respondents (71%) reported having contact with their regional coordinator. Of those, most found their interactions to be helpful or very helpful (see Figure 4). According to respondents, the most common types of assistance received were: site visits; the provision of suggestions, information, and advice; trainings or in-services; and informal contacts at meetings.

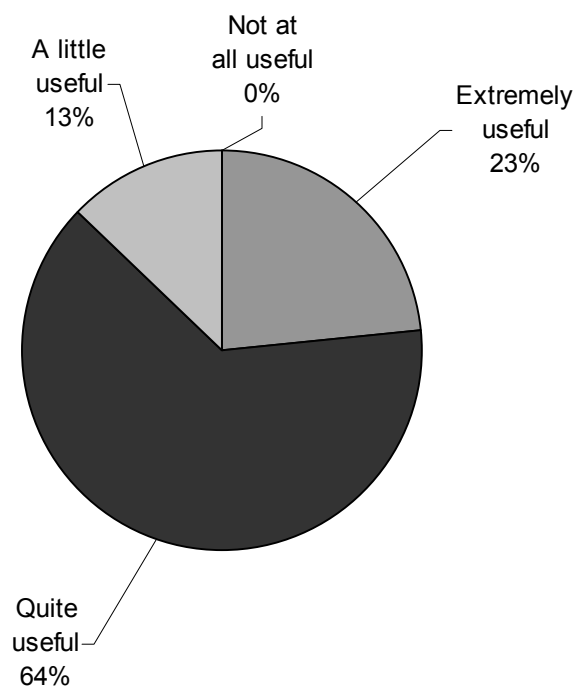
4. Helpfulness of contact with regional coordinator (n=38)



When asked what they did differently as a result of this assistance, most respondents indicated that they used the ideas and information to make general program improvements. Some described specific changes, including the restructuring of programs and revising enrollment and attendance policies. Ten of the 61 respondents reported they had not made any changes as a result of the assistance, although some indicated they planned to do so in the future.

Most respondents (81%) reported that staff from their program participated in regional Family Literacy training events during the past two years. Participating programs sent 1 to 10 staff members to participate in at least one training event, with an average of 4 staff members attending per program. All respondents who participated indicated that the trainings were useful (see Figure 5).

5. Usefulness of regional training events (n=49)



Almost all of the respondents (97%) indicated they had helped to promote or increase awareness of Family Literacy during the past two years. Respondents reported using a variety of promotion methods, including: submitting press releases and advertisements to newspapers, radio, and television; sharing information directly during collaboration with individuals and other programs; hosting an open house; putting up posters and fliers; and making presentations and speeches about Family Literacy.

Respondents from Even Start programs were asked about their use of the Minnesota Even Start Guide and most indicated they used the guide as a reference or resource.

Respondents indicated that the guide was useful: 78 percent reported that the guide was “extremely useful” or “quite useful” and 22 percent reported it was “a little useful.” Two respondents had specific suggestions for improving the guide, including adding more sample forms and background information, and adding specific suggestions about how to organize program data.

Connection to long-term outcomes

Overall, information collected from surveys and interviews with the regional coordinators and program directors indicated that the initiative activities have strengthened Family Literacy programs. Program directors reported that their programs benefited from the regional coordinator site visits and feedback. Program directors also indicated that the trainings were helpful. In addition, regional coordinators reported success in their roles as part of the regional network system. These findings suggest that Family Literacy programs have benefited from the increased connections and communication that have resulted from these initiative strategies.

Goal 4: staff training and development

The fourth goal of the initiative was to expand the current Family Literacy training system and to establish an intensive and systematic staff development plan. New training events and a peer review process were planned to help meet this goal. All activities were accomplished by the end of the initiative and participants rated the trainings favorably overall.

Activities

In order to expand staff training and development opportunities, new training and review practices were developed. Several regional and statewide trainings were planned and training modules were developed to increase the number of educational opportunities for Family Literacy program staff. In addition, a peer review training was offered to help establish a peer review process.

Objective 1. Provide staff development through statewide and regional trainings

All of the trainings were offered as planned, including the annual fall Regional Family Literacy Institute, the annual winter ESL/Family Literacy Conference, and the annual spring Family Literacy State Conference. Specific training dates and attendance counts are provided below in Figure 6.

6. Regional and statewide Family Literacy trainings

Training	Date	Attendance
2002 Fall Institute	Oct 11, 2002	110
2002 Family Literacy Conference	Feb 27 - Mar 1, 2002	294
2002 ESL/Family Literacy Conference	Jan 25, 2002	97
2001 Fall Institute	Dec 6-7, 2001	31
2001 Family Literacy Conference	Feb 28 - Mar 2, 2001	161
2001 ESL/Family Literacy Conference	Jan 26, 2001	121
2000 Fall Institute	Dec 1, 2000	58
2000 Family Literacy Conference	Mar 1 - 3, 2000	260

Sources: Consortium meeting minutes and State Family Literacy staff.

Objective 2. Capitalize upon individual expertise to increase training opportunities

To address this objective, the development of at least five training modules was planned. Family Literacy program staff and independent consultants developed ten training modules. Module topics included recruitment and retention, team building, evaluation, and continuous program improvement. The modules will be made available for individual Family Literacy programs to utilize for their own staff development. A complete list of training module topics is provided in Figure 7.

7. Regional and statewide Family Literacy trainings

Training Module topic	Author(s)
Recruitment and retention in Family Literacy programs	Marion Jones
Infant and toddler literacy activities	Jenna Ruble
Integration in Family Literacy programs	Mary Maher
Evaluation and continuous program improvement	Jackie Silver
Team building	Deb Campbell
ESL programming in Family Literacy programs	Jody Schwarzhoff
Strategies for transitions	Beth Yokum & Mary Maher
Funding sources	Jackie Johnston & Bonnie Herman
Understanding Family Literacy	Wendy West
Collaboration in Family Literacy	Jackie Johnston

Sources: Consortium meeting minutes and State Family Literacy staff.

Objective 3. Expand the current Family Literacy training system to establish an intensive and systematic staff development plan

A peer review process was established to assist with program improvement. Regional coordinators and the State Family Literacy staff were trained in using the peer review process. Training included the use of Minnesota Family Literacy Quality Indicators, Even Start and Family Literacy evaluation instruments, Minnesota Graduation Standards, information from the National Center for Family Literacy, and research on effective programming. The regional coordinators completed 47 site visits and written reviews by the end of the initiative period. Feedback about the site visits is provided under Goal 3 of this report.

Results

Surveys were distributed at many of the regional and statewide Family Literacy trainings. Overall, respondents rated the trainings favorably and the trainings offered in 2002 resulted in the highest attendance to date. Findings from the 2002 Fall Institute are provided below.

Family Literacy program staff members who attended the 2002 Fall Institute completed a survey regarding their satisfaction with the training. Of the 110 training participants, 81 completed evaluations for a response rate of 74 percent. Respondents were asked to rate the overall training, the facilities, the keynote speaker, and the “creating the plan”

session. Respondents also were asked to share what they had learned in the training and what they would like to learn in the future. Several respondents also offered suggestions for improvements. A brief summary of their responses is provided below.

When asked to rate the overall training program, most respondents (90%) rated it as excellent or good, while 9 percent rated it as average. Similarly, 87 percent rated the keynote address as either excellent or good, while 11 percent gave it an average rating. The facilities were also rated highly by participants.

Respondents indicated a number of lessons learned from the training, including how words and vocabulary affect child development, the importance of parents talking to their children, and new concepts such as “tailgating” and “the social dance.” Many respondents indicated plans to work with parents directly to help them to see the importance of talking with their children. A few participants reported that the training was not particularly useful.

When asked about future assistance and training, respondents offered a variety of topics that would assist them in their work. The most frequently mentioned topics included: networking, curriculum design, understanding poverty, ESL, promoting Family Literacy to school districts and legislators, starting new programs, evaluation, and how to obtain funding.

Respondents also offered suggestions for improving future training events. Several respondents reported that the training was too long and break times were not respected. Others wanted more discussion and less time spent on the keynote address. Many valued collaborating on the lesson plans with new people, although some indicated it would have been helpful to plan with their own teams instead. A few also reported that there should have been more of a focus on diversity, especially in regard to race and gender issues.

Connection to long-term outcomes

Many strategies were employed to expand and improve the training and development of Family Literacy program staff. New regional and statewide trainings were offered and many training modules were developed. Peer reviewers were trained and they completed site visits for most of the Family Literacy programs across the state. Feedback from the programs who received site visits and the training participants indicated that these activities were helpful. These findings suggest that the training system and staff development opportunities have been improved and expanded as a result of the initiative activities.

Goal 5: improve evaluation strategies

The fifth goal of the initiative was to improve evaluation strategies and data collection. In order to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous standards for students, evaluation was identified as an integral part of all Family Literacy programs. An evaluation committee was formed to develop a state evaluation reporting form, adopt assessment instruments, and establish performance standards.

Activities

Three objectives were planned to help improve evaluation strategies. Measurement instruments were updated and revised, and program staff received training regarding evaluation methods. In addition, data from Minnesota Family Literacy programs was collected and reported annually. State performance standards were developed during 2000-01 and implemented in the 2001-02 program year. The performance standards were drafted by a group representing early childhood educators, adult basic educators, parent educators, Even Start local evaluators, and Family Literacy program representatives. The standards were reviewed by Even Start program representatives and the Consortium.

Objective 1. Standardize the information collected by Family Literacy programs

The Minnesota Even Start Family Literacy Evaluation instrument was revised by the evaluation committee and reviewed by the Consortium in the first year of the initiative. This instrument was approved by Consortium members and finalized in the fall of 2001. The revised instrument gathers data that is used to assess how programs are doing on the state performance standards.

Objective 2. Improve evaluation strategies at the local program level

In order to address this objective, a training on evaluation methods was offered to program staff. Evaluation training was provided to Even Start programs in January of 2002. Approximately 50 people attended the training.

Objective 3. Collect evaluation information on Minnesota Family Literacy programs

Data are collected and compiled from the Even Start Family Literacy Evaluation form on an annual basis. Annual reports of the findings are completed by Wilder Research Center. The report for the 2001-02 program year presents results indicating how well Even Start and other Family Literacy programs did on the state performance standards.

Summary and reflections

The Statewide Family Literacy Initiative appears to have met all of the primary goals. State-level collaboration has been increased by the addition of several new members to the Family Literacy Consortium. New educational and promotional materials were developed and used, likely resulting in increased public awareness of Family Literacy. Family Literacy programs across the state were strengthened and supported through the assistance of the Regional Network Coordinators. In addition, Family Literacy program staff were able to access additional development opportunities through new training events, educational materials, and a peer review process. Overall, feedback from key informants and training participants suggests that the initiative strategies have positively influenced Family Literacy programs as a whole.

Due to the success of the initiative, several activities were identified as important to continue even after the end of the grant period. These include the Regional Network Coordinator positions, the annual state conference, the quarterly consortium meetings, the website, and the newsletter. All of these activities have played a role in expanding and strengthening the Family Literacy efforts across the state.

The following reflections were offered by the co-managers of the initiative grant:

The status of Family Literacy in Minnesota compared to the period prior to the award of the grant is significantly changed. There is a greatly increased awareness of Family Literacy throughout the state and greatly increased numbers of programs that meet the four-component model requirements. Most importantly, the numbers of families accessing Family Literacy services have steadily increased.

The state level collaboration has greatly increased, with many programs offering training in Family Literacy and cross-program meetings on Family Literacy. Legislative support has not met expectations, largely because of the dire budget cuts in Minnesota.

Recommendations/next steps

In light of the findings of this evaluation, several key issues were identified for consideration, including:

- Many Consortium members and program directors indicated a need for increased efforts to explore funding sources and promote Family Literacy to state legislators.
- While the majority of program directors indicated satisfaction with the assistance they received from the Regional Network Coordinators, about 15 percent of the programs surveyed indicated they had either not received assistance or had not made improvements as a result of the assistance they received. It may be beneficial to explore ways these programs could be better served.
- A few of the educational materials were still in progress at the time of the report, including the website and the data sheets. Progress on these items has been slower than anticipated due to restrictions on how money could be spent during budget cutbacks in the department. That is, it took longer than anticipated to receive clearance to spend the funds needed to complete the items. It is expected that these items will be completed in the near future.
- Regional Network Coordinators from two of the regions expressed concerns about the size of their region and limits on their time, and one suggested increasing the number of regions and coordinators in order to limit the distance between programs and lessen the burden on coordinators. It may be important to consider this suggestion and how it could benefit Family Literacy programs.
- Given the initial grant focus on the needs of foreign-born and non-native English-speaking residents in the state, it may be informative to survey these residents regarding their experiences with Family Literacy services.

Technical Appendix: Family Literacy Consortium

Consortium membership

Calendar and topics of meetings

Consortium membership

Family Literacy State Consortium Members

Consortium Staff Members:

Bonnie Griffiths, Even Start State Coordinator

Dianne Dayton, State Family Literacy/ABE Specialist

Bella Hanson, Project Analyst

Consortium Members as of 2002:

Betty Cooke, Early Childhood Family Education Program Specialist

Matt Mohs, Comprehensive State Reform Specialist

Anne Cutler, Title I Supervisor

Debbykay Peterson, School Readiness Program Specialist

Lois Engstrom, Early Childhood Education Program

Michael Eastman, Early Childhood Special Education

Wendy West, Even Start Program, Bloomington, MN

Jackie Johnston, Even Start Program, Saint Louis Park, MN

Vickie Ostrom, Family Literacy Program, Cambridge, MN

Bonnie Herman, Family Literacy Program, Moorhead, MN

Sandy Simar, Head Start

Jan Bourdon, Migrant Education

Barry Shaffer, Adult Basic Education

Jane Delage, Minnesota Department of Human Services

Patricia King, Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning

Sheryl Lockwood, Minnesota Department of Human Services

Deb Campbell, Director of Early Childhood Programs

Calendar and topics of meetings

1A. Consortium meeting dates and topics (2000-02)

Meeting topic(s)	Date
Welcome, introductions, and overview; discussion of goals and contributions.	August 16, 1999
Discussed role of the Consortium; discussed expansion of membership; viewed National Family Literacy video.	September 20, 1999
Introduction to Family Literacy; initiative grant background; discussed models of Family Literacy; group activity of "my expertise."	March 29, 2000
"Working together to create a vision for the future"; planning initiative and grant activities.	May 30, 2000
Updates on initiative progress; vision and action plan review; planning trainings and presentations; draft of performance standards was handed out.	August 21, 2000
Update on initiative progress; program progress reports; completed consortium survey; discussed local Family Literacy programs; worked on action plan.	November 8, 2000
Updates on initiative progress (including the newsletter, staff development, reporting, and regional coordinators); ABE funding; Update on Even Start activities; dissemination of evaluation report; continued work on action plan.	February 5, 2001
Program updates; Consortium retreat planning; Family Literacy program directory distributed.	May 9, 2001
History of Family Literacy and Even Start; developed the Family Literacy work plan.	November 28, 2001
Update on initiative progress (including training modules and regional coordinators); discussed spring and national conferences; viewed Family Literacy video; discussed Reading Excellence Act; discussed ABE funding; reviewed Family Literacy articles.	March 12, 2002
Program updates; Discussed public relations; discussed future Consortium plans to support Family Literacy.	April 23, 2002
Update on initiative progress (including site visits, public service announcements); Even Start Grant update; regional workshops.	June 3, 2002
Update on initiative progress (including website, brochure, regional coordinators, and work plan review); discussed fact sheet ideas; discussed upcoming Fall Institute.	July 22, 2002

Source: Consortium meeting minutes.

Technical Appendix: Evaluation

Methods

Instruments

Methods

The evaluation of the Family Literacy initiative was designed to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) To what extent were the activities carried out as proposed?
- 2) What are project strengths and weaknesses?
- 3) To what extent did the initiative achieve proposed goals and objectives?
- 4) What unintended outcomes occurred from project activities?
- 5) What system changes occurred from the initiative?

In order to answer the above questions, researchers utilized a variety of evaluation methods. Information was collected from initiative leaders on product and activity completion and the attendance and agendas of events and trainings. This information was used to document the completion of planned goals and strategies. Training surveys were given to individuals in attendance at conferences and training events in order to provide feedback on the trainings and to plan for future training events. In addition, interviews were conducted with project stakeholders, including Consortium members and Family Literacy program staff. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain the perspectives of stakeholders on project accomplishments, strengths, and weaknesses; use of products developed; and suggestions for improvement.

Family Literacy consortium survey

**Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning
Even Start/Family Literacy**

**Family Literacy Consortium Survey
September, 2002**

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Your responses will assist us in assessing the Consortium's efforts during the three-year grant period and in planning for the future. Thanks for your help.

1. How many Family Literacy Consortium meetings have you attended this calendar year?
1 2 3 4 5

2. What do you see as the accomplishments of the Family Literacy Consortium so far?

3. What are the most important things you have learned from your participation in the Consortium?

4. How have you used the family literacy concept in the work of your program or organization?

5. How do you plan to use the family literacy concept in the future?

6. The Family Literacy State Initiative grant ends December 31. What role do you see for the Consortium beyond the grant period?

7. What are the main things the Consortium should try to accomplish in the next year?

8. How do you hope to contribute to the Consortium efforts during the next year and beyond?

9. Please suggest topics or issues that you would like discussed at upcoming Consortium meetings.

10. Any other comments?

THANK YOU!

Family Literacy regional coordinators survey

Name: _____

Date: _____

We are interested in the work you have done with family literacy programs in your region. Please list the name and city/town of each program with whom you have worked in the past 12 months. Then, indicate the type of service you provided using the following categories.

Type of Service
1. e-mail consultation
2. telephone consultation
3. you visited their program (site visit)
4. they visited your program (hosted site visit)
5. provided mentoring
6. conducted a training for their staff (specify type of training)
7. Other (specify)

A. Program name/city	Service provided (list the number of all that apply. If 6 or 7, specify)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

B. What one or two things do you consider your biggest accomplishments or successes as a regional coordinator during the past year?

C. Was there anything that kept you from accomplishing everything that you wanted to (e.g., barriers, obstacles)?

D. What is the most important thing you have learned from your work as a regional coordinator?

E. What suggestions do you have for making the regional coordinator position more effective or beneficial in serving family literacy programs?

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

MN Family Literacy program survey

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm calling from Wilder Research Center. You should have received a letter from us regarding an evaluation we are doing of the Family Literacy State Initiative Grant.

This grant was awarded to help strengthen Family Literacy programs in Minnesota. We are calling Family Literacy program directors to ask for their feedback on this initiative. I would like to ask you a few questions about your experiences with this initiative, benefits your program may have received, and suggestions you have to continue to strengthen Minnesota Family Literacy programs.

The interview is voluntary; it is also confidential and your answers will never be linked to your name or your program. The interview takes about ten to fifteen minutes. Would now be a good time for us to talk?

IF YES, PROCEED

IF NO, ASK What would be a better time?

RECORD INFORMATION ON FACE SHEET

Organization Code: 1626-13

CASE ID: _____

Time: _____
(24 hour clock)

MN Family Literacy Program Survey

1. Have you had any contact with your family literacy regional coordinator, _____?
(name of coordinator)
- Yes 1
No(GO TO Q. 5)..... 2

2. What type of help or assistance did you receive?
- _____

3. How helpful was it? Would you say...
- Very helpful, 1
Somewhat helpful, or 2
Not very helpful? 3

4. Did you do anything differently as a result of this assistance – that is, what affect has it had on your program, if any?
- _____

5. Have you or your staff attended any **regional** family literacy training events in the past two years?
- Yes 1
No(GO TO Q. 9)..... 2

6. What were the topics of the trainings you or your staff attended?
- _____

7. How many of your staff attended at least one of these regional trainings (including you)? _____ Number

8. How useful were these trainings? Would you say...
Extremely useful, 1
Quite useful, 2
A little useful, or 3
Not at all useful? 4

9. Have you done anything in the past two years to promote or increase awareness of family literacy in your community?
Yes 1
No(GO TO Q. 12)..... 2

10. What did you do to promote family literacy?

11. Did you use the family literacy video in these activities?
Yes 1
No 2

12. **Even Start programs only:** Have you used the Minnesota Even Start Guide?
Yes 1
No (END INTERVIEW)..... 2

13A. How useful was it? Would you say...
Extremely useful, 1
Quite useful, 2
A little useful, or 3
Not at all useful? 4

13B. Please explain.

Workshop evaluation form

**Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning
Even Start/Family Literacy
Workshop Evaluation Form**

Name of training program: _____ Date: _____

In order to help us understand the effectiveness of this workshop and improve the quality of future training events, please complete this evaluation form. Your thoughtful comments, criticisms, and ideas are very much appreciated.

1. What is your role or position in the field of Family Literacy? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ABE | <input type="checkbox"/> ESL | <input type="checkbox"/> Title I |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Head Start | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Education | <input type="checkbox"/> ECFE | <input type="checkbox"/> Even Start |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Assistant | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, describe: _____ | |

Please rate the following aspects of the workshop.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. Overall, the workshop was of high quality.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The presenter(s) related information in a clear and understandable manner.	5	4	3	2	1
4. The handouts or written material contained helpful information.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Much of the material presented was new to me.	5	4	3	2	1
6. The topics covered were relevant to my needs.	5	4	3	2	1
7. The material presented will make me more effective in my job.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I would recommend the workshop to others with similar needs.	5	4	3	2	1
9. The presenter(s) was able to involve the group in the workshop.	5	4	3	2	1
10. The presenter(s) responded well to questions.	5	4	3	2	1

- OVER -

11. What was the most useful part of the program?

12. What was the least useful part of the program?

13. If this program were offered again, how could it be improved?

14. Do you have any other suggestions or comments?

15. What additional training in the family literacy area do you need?

THANK YOU!