



Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business

*A Practitioners' Guide to Family Literacy
in the Workplace*

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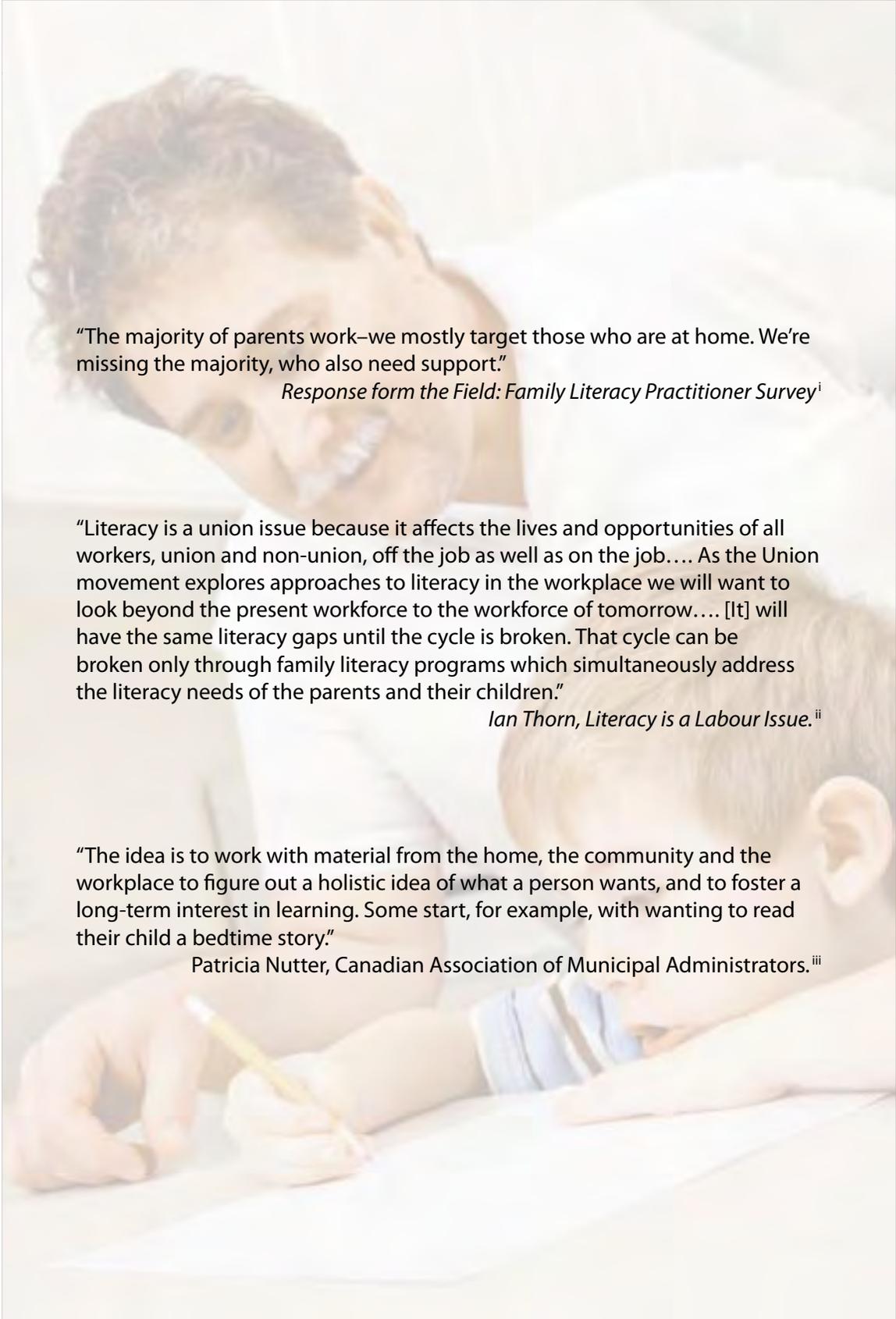
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“The majority of parents work—we mostly target those who are at home. We’re missing the majority, who also need support.”

Response form the Field: Family Literacy Practitioner Surveyⁱ

“Literacy is a union issue because it affects the lives and opportunities of all workers, union and non-union, off the job as well as on the job.... As the Union movement explores approaches to literacy in the workplace we will want to look beyond the present workforce to the workforce of tomorrow.... [It] will have the same literacy gaps until the cycle is broken. That cycle can be broken only through family literacy programs which simultaneously address the literacy needs of the parents and their children.”

Ian Thorn, Literacy is a Labour Issue.ⁱⁱ

“The idea is to work with material from the home, the community and the workplace to figure out a holistic idea of what a person wants, and to foster a long-term interest in learning. Some start, for example, with wanting to read their child a bedtime story.”

Patricia Nutter, Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators.ⁱⁱⁱ

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1. Introduction

Background

Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business: A Practitioners' Guide to Family Literacy in the Workplace is one component of a two-year research project undertaken by the Centre for Family Literacy and funded by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The Workplace Family Literacy Project (2008-2010) looked at the feasibility of offering family literacy programs in the workplace. Specifically, it looked at whether this is feasible:

- in terms of awareness in the business sector of the importance of literacy to achieving their goals
- in terms of business' willingness to support family literacy programming in the workplace
- in terms of capacity of literacy providers to offer this type of programming
- in terms of employee participation

Extensive surveys of business and industry in the province, input from family literacy practitioners, a literature review, and three pilot projects all provided important information on the potential and challenges of offering family literacy programs in the workplace.

One of the key findings of the project is that much more education is needed to raise awareness of the connections between family literacy and workplace skills, in order to move employers from the view that, *in general*, the concept makes sense and is a good idea, to a place where they see benefits for their own business and their own employees, and are willing to offer such programs in *their own workplaces*. It can be difficult for family literacy practitioners to find business partners for such initiatives, and even when employers or workplace partners are willing, the conditions are not necessarily in place to make program delivery possible. However, the pilot programs offered as part of the Workplace Family Literacy Project, and other examples of family literacy in the workplace, do demonstrate that such programs are not only feasible but can successfully demonstrate benefits for employees and employers alike.

The Workplace Family Literacy Project also produced a guide for business and industry, entitled *Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business: An Employers' Guide to Family Literacy in the Workplace*. The employers' guide is intended to support partnerships between business and family literacy organizations, and has been distributed to over 500 businesses across the province of Alberta.

Purpose of the guide

Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business: A Practitioners' Guide to Family Literacy in the Workplace is intended to assist literacy organizations in considering and implementing family-based programs in the workplace. It describes a process to enable family literacy organizations and businesses to partner in delivering such programs.

The guide is not intended to replace training for family literacy practitioners, neither foundations training nor training in specific models. It does not create new models of family literacy programming, but rather gives suggestions for introducing and adapting existing programs to the workplace. Specific adaptations, of course, will depend on both the family literacy model chosen and the specifics of each business or industry where the program is offered.

This guide will help you to:

- understand the connection between family literacy and workplace-related skills
- demonstrate those connections to people in the business sector
- develop partnerships with the business sector
- plan and deliver programs tailored to specific workplaces

About the Centre for Family Literacy

The Centre for Family Literacy was one of the first centres in Canada to focus on the development of literacy in the context of the family. With a 30-year history of serving families and communities, the mandate of the Centre is to:

- develop and deliver family and adult literacy programs in the Alberta Capital region
- provide training to family literacy professionals in Alberta and across the country
- serve as an information and program resource to family literacy professionals in Alberta
- raise awareness surrounding the importance of literacy and its impact on individuals, families, and communities
- serve as the location for intensive and long-term research on the effectiveness of family literacy programs
- pilot and implement innovative new approaches to learning and education.

We have an outstanding track record of working in collaboration with a wide range of community agencies to provide programs and services that best meet the needs of families and communities. As a leader in the country, we provide a continuum of services that enable individuals and families to participate at many points in their own development. In the past year, over 15,000 Alberta adults and children accessed our programs, training, and services.

2. Rationale for family literacy in the workplace

Why family literacy in the workplace? The answer is largely the same as the rationale for family literacy programs in general. A high number of Albertans do not have the skills they need for everyday reading and writing tasks, and this has significant implications for their children's literacy development, as well as for Alberta's workforce and economy. (See "Literacy rates in Alberta," next page, for statistics and sources.) Despite these high numbers, very few people take part in tutoring, upgrading, or training programs, in the community or at work. There are a myriad of reasons for this, including lack of time, competing priorities, lack of recognition of the benefits of improving skills, and the unfortunate stigma attached to reading and writing difficulties.

Years of evaluation in family literacy tell us that adults will join a family literacy program out of motivation to help their children, where they might have never joined an adult literacy program. And that same research tells us that once adults experience success in a family literacy program, they often go on to other types of educational programs. Family literacy programs yield benefits to both adults and children—to adults in their roles as parents, community members, and employees, and to children who can be better prepared for success in school, in life, and in future careers.

Policy changes and funding priorities in the United States, Canada, and beyond have led to an interest in integrating employment-related and essential skills training into family literacy programs. While resulting in valuable initiatives and useful research for practitioners,

this approach does not address how to reach working parents who are too busy trying to provide for their families to take part in family literacy programs in the community, or workers who do not recognize the important influence they have on their children's development.

Literacy rates in Alberta

The most recent Statistics Canada survey shows that 40% of adults aged 16-65 in Alberta lack the basic literacy skills to function effectively in society^{iv} or perform competently in most jobs in our modern economy.^v That represents over 700,000 people.

Fourteen percent of Alberta's adult population is at level 1—the lowest level on the five-point scale. These individuals have trouble reading instructions on a product label and are unable to read a bedtime story to their children.

A further 26% are at level 2, which means they can only deal with reading material that is simple and clearly laid out. They may have adapted their lower literacy skills to everyday life, but would have difficulty learning new job skills requiring a higher level of literacy.^{vi}

Level 3 is the internationally recognized minimum level of skills required to manage everyday literacy tasks. Thirty percent of adult Albertans are at this level.

Despite these high numbers, fewer than 10% of adults with low literacy skills ever enroll in literacy or upgrading programs to improve their skills.^{vii}

Literacy and the workforce

Literacy skills are critical in today's information-based society and economy, and yet one in 4 Canadians in the labour market has literacy skills at level 2.^{viii} A further 17% score at the lowest literacy level. There is a cost to business and the economy from these low literacy levels, especially in terms of safety and lost productivity. Although estimates of economic costs are by definition imprecise, the Canadian Task Force on Business estimated that low literacy levels in 1988 cost businesses about \$4.1 billion annually in lost productivity, or approximately \$6 billion today when adjusted for inflation.^{ix}



Looking at it another way, there is a benefit from investing in literacy programs. A 1% increase in literacy skills would yield a 1.5%, or \$18.4 billion, permanent increase in our GDP and a 2.5% increase in productivity.^x (Figures from a 2004 report.)

Literacy and essential skills are just two of a myriad of factors that affect productivity and performance in the workplace, but they are vitally important factors.

We know about the economic benefits of improving literacy levels through workplace initiatives and there are many success stories about workplace programs. Studies such as Michael Bloom's *The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace*^{xi} detail clear benefits to employers (improved quality of work, lower costs, etc.).

However, the Conference Board of Canada and others find that upper level 2 and lower level 3

employees are “generally overly confident about their literacy skills and unaware of reasons for upgrading their skills.”^{xii} Fewer than 30% of adult workers in Canada participate in job-related education and training, compared to almost 35% in the United Kingdom and nearly 45% in the United States.^{xiii}

Moreover, training is usually offered to, and taken by, employees in supervisory or management level positions. Only 18% of Canadian workers with high school education or less receive formal workplace training.^{xiv}

Key Facts About Literacy and the Labour Force^{xv}
<p>Literacy outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One in 4 Canadians in the labour market (aged 16 to 65) has literacy skills at the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) Level 2, on a five-level scale, where 3 is the minimum required for everyday reading and writing tasks, and 5 is the highest level.
<p>Labour market participation and literacy outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 66% of working-age Canadians at IALS levels 1 and 2 participate in the labour market, as opposed to 83% of levels 4 and 5 working-age Canadians. • Almost 84% of working-age Canadians at IALS Level 2 believe their readings skills are “not at all limiting” to their opportunities at work.
<p>Participation in adult education and training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 29% of Level 2 Canadians participated in adult education and training, as opposed to 40% of Level 3 and 60% of levels 4 and 5 Canadians. The Canadian total participation rate is 38%.
<p>Income and earnings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of six predictor variables that determine earnings variance, respondents’ literacy proficiency is the most significant.

Another consideration is the number of employers who offer workplace literacy or essential skills training to their employees. According to Leger Marketing’s 2009 survey of over 500 Alberta employers, half report providing workplace education programs, but these are often likely to be one-off workshops, basic computer skills, and team building. Of businesses offering workplace training in the 12 months prior to the survey, only 18% provided training in reading, 18% provided writing-related training, and 12% provided basic math.^{xvi} There are clear benefits in improving workplace literacy cited by employers—improved learning facility of employees, their ability to work together as a team, and improved labour-management relations to name a few—but these perceived benefits have not yet resulted in actual programs in many Canadian workplaces.

Barriers to participation in traditional workplace programs

Very few people will enrol in a training course simply because they wish to help their organization be more productive. Taking an approach to learning that develops the whole person, rather than just skills for one component of his or her job, helps encourage individuals to develop themselves to their full potential.

Profiting from Literacy: Creating a Sustainable Workplace Literacy Program,
Conference Board of Canada, 2005

Increasing participation in workplace training programs has been the subject of a number of studies, as has the subject of motivation to participate in adult learning programs.

In *Literacy, Life and Employment*, Campbell and Gagnon report that participants in their study (“target group,” as opposed to “higher literacy group”) cited financial reasons and lack of time as two key reasons why they did not take part in available job-related training.^{xvii} However, the authors point out the IALS findings on self-assessment and over-confidence (cited above), and note the need to make individuals with low levels of literacy aware of the benefits of improving and upgrading skills.

The Conference Board of Canada also reports that, for adult learners who may have had negative experiences with formal schooling, deciding to take part in any type of learning program can be difficult. They may fear the repercussions of failure or be concerned about confidentiality, or may not be aware that a learning program could help them build needed skills.^{xviii} Similarly, Calder and Jensen find that “adult and workplace literacy programs may be under prescribed because of employee fear or sense of stigma.”^{xix}

I used to do orientation—I would say “you need to let me know if you can’t read,” but they didn’t—[they were] afraid, embarrassed. We knew some could not.
Safety Coordinator, Lakeside Packers^{xx}

Haggart lists the following psychological barriers as preventing people from getting involved in learning^{xxi}:

- low self-esteem as a result of previous negative experience of learning
- fear of failing, or lack of confidence in their ability to take part in a group
- feeling that learning is for “other people” but not for them—inability to recognize themselves as “learners” despite what they have learned through life’s experiences
- adults who have left school with few or no qualifications may not feel good about returning to learning.

Family literacy in the workplace

Results from family literacy programs that impact workplace skills and participation

In the family literacy field it has been demonstrated that adults with low literacy skills will often participate in literacy programs to benefit their child. At the same time, they gain confidence in themselves as learners and often go on to other upgrading programs.

In a discussion about the development of learning motivation in families, Smith and Spurling (2001) argue that parenthood “remoulds the parents’ own awareness in such ways that their whole approach to motivational assessment can be altered” (p. 54) and that parenthood is “of central importance in the whole motivation story, and has profound effects on wider social realities”. In other words, adults who may not be motivated to learn for themselves, find that the experience of being a parent not only increases their learning aspirations for their children, but through active involvement their own learning motivation increases, which in turn helps their children’s motivation—thereby stimulating a positive learning spiral for both generations

Benseman et al^{xxii}

The Centre for Family Literacy’s quantitative and qualitative data from over 17 years of family literacy programs show that 93% of adults participants feel their literacy skills had improved; 72% wished to further improve their education levels; and 62% felt their work situation had improved.

The U.K. study *Assembling the Fragments: A Review of Research on Adult Basic Skills*^{xxiii} is one of several that found that adults in family literacy programs have higher attendance, retention, and completion rates than those in “general provision,” and that their movement to further study and employment is high.

Other researchers such as Nancy Padak and Tim Rasinski^{xxiv} and Andrew Hayes^{xxv} have documented benefits from family literacy program participation related to employment, such as enhanced employment status or job satisfaction, increased employment, and increased participation in job training.

Although research clearly shows the positive benefits of family literacy for adult participants and for children, it has been largely overlooked as a strategy for developing effective workplace literacy programs.

Family literacy enhances other types of education and training

Research suggests that workplace programs that aim to do more than increase job-specific skills, that use functional materials from not only the workplace but also home and community, are more effective than programs with a narrower scope. Family literacy activities and materials can enhance the effectiveness of workplace training.

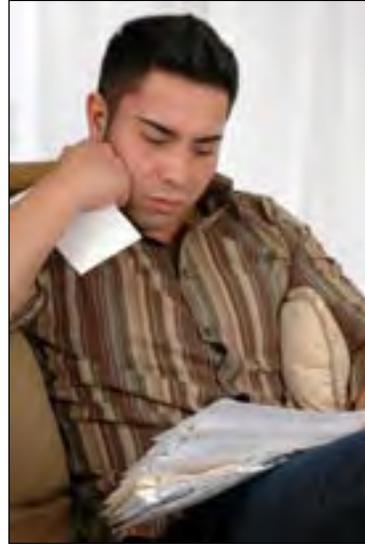
In the *Work-Related Learning Guide for Family Literacy and Adult Education Organizations*, the authors assert that people are more likely to retain and employ new concepts and skills when they work on tasks that emerge from their family, community, or work lives:

In contrast, when learners practice skills divorced from the actual uses of these skills in the world, they often have difficulty transferring what they have learned from the classroom to real-world situations.

By working on real problems and tasks, learners not only deepen their understanding of academic skills, such as those involved in attaining literacy and numeracy, but they also have the opportunity to learn other important workplace skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. By offering contextual learning experiences, both within and outside the classroom, family literacy and adult education programs can help individuals, particularly those with limited experience in the labor market, develop a broad array of skills and behaviors valuable both to employers and to their own ability to pursue a career.^{xxvi}

In *Too Little Time and Too Many Goals: Suggested Remedies from Research on Workplace Literacy*^{xxvii} Larry Mikulecky notes that the ability to take literacy skills used in one mode of text and content, such as literature, and apply them to another, such as chart reading, is fairly limited for most people. He suggests that one way to address these challenges in literacy transfer is to anchor instruction in workplace programs to functional materials and tasks that learners regularly encounter outside of the classroom. This functional context could include using materials used by learners for child rearing; Mikulecky points out the need to design workplace instruction to expand literacy use and effectiveness outside the classroom, using a mix of learner and workplace goals and activities. In the programs studied, many of the learners who expanded their literacy practices reported reading to children or reading with children.

Union involvement in and support of workplace literacy programs also reflects the importance of curriculum and materials related to workers' lives. The Canadian Union of Public Employees' list of best practices for literacy in the workplace states that unions support programs that address the needs of the whole person, enriching learners' lives as individuals, workers, union members, family members and citizens.^{xxviii}



In a summary of key factors in workplace literacy programs, Benseman cites three studies that indicate the importance of curriculum related to context ("real life"): Workbase (1999), Mikulecky and Lloyd (1995), and Belfiore (2002).^{xxix} The findings of Benseman's literature review are presented as tentative, but suggest that a curriculum that is linked to authentic literacy events experienced by learners in their daily lives appear likely to enhance learner gain.^{xxx}

Finally, a study by Victoria Purcell-Gates exploring the relationships between the type of literacy instruction and changes in literacy practices among adult learners addresses the question of authenticity, which is defined as those literacy activities and purposes used by people in their lives, excluding those that are structured solely around learning to read and write in school settings. A key finding of the study indicated that adult learners in classes using real-life (authentic) literacy activities and texts read and write more often, and use a greater variety of texts, in their lives outside class.^{xxxi}

The potential of family literacy in the workplace

Given the connections outlined above, the potential of family literacy programs in the workplace can be summarized as:

- a means to get reluctant learners into a program where skills learned can be transferred to their work tasks^{xxxii}
- a way for family literacy programs to reach busy parents who are otherwise unavailable^{xxxiii}
- a "hook" to get workers into company training programs^{xxxiv}
- a means of getting "double duty dollars"^{xxxv} from workplace training, in terms of increased skills in the current and future workforces
- a way to maintain a broad perspective on training and education that addresses workers as employees, individuals, and family and community members^{xxxvi}
- a way for companies to exercise their social responsibility by supporting literacy development in the broader community, and helping to develop a culture of learning in which all may reach their full potential^{xxxvii}

3. What should this look like? Good practice in workplace family literacy programs

A great deal of work has gone into developing "good practice" and "best practice" statements for family literacy programs, workplace literacy and workplace education programs, essential skills, and adult literacy programs. In considering workplace training that includes a family literacy component, what generally constitutes "good practice" in the aforementioned initiatives still applies.

The Workplace Family Literacy Project developed a set of statements intended to specifically address family literacy programs offered in the workplace. The statements are derived from the good practice work mentioned above, as well as from additional research. The statements have been summarized here; please see Appendix D for the complete good practice statements.

Good practice in family literacy programs in the workplace is defined by the following characteristics. Quality family literacy programs in the workplace are:

- intergenerational, and work with employees and their children, directly or indirectly, to establish an intergenerational cycle of literacy achievement
- collaborative, and are planned and delivered as a partnership
- integrated, part of an overall, long-term workplace training plan
- well-promoted, with an ongoing awareness campaign to attract and retain participants and to gain support for the program from all stakeholders
- accessible, being voluntary and scheduled at convenient times and places
- strengths-based, building on what employees already know and do and adding new strategies to further enrich literacy activities at home and at work
- culturally appropriate, sensitive to and respecting diversity in the gender, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds of participants
- adequately funded, with the necessary resources to effectively deliver services
- methodologically sound, following adult education principles and supporting the development of transferable skills and lifelong learning
- staffed by qualified personnel, appropriate to specific roles and responsibilities within a particular delivery model and workplace
- careful with assessment, using a variety of flexible, appropriate procedures that develop self-confidence and support employee goals
- properly planned and evaluated, with an on-going, appropriate, and participatory planning and evaluation process that produces information useful for program development and accountability.

4. Is the family literacy organization ready?

We asked family literacy practitioners across Alberta in 2008^{xxxviii} about their capacity to offer family literacy programs in the workplace. The answers were not surprising; people responded with the same enthusiasm and dedication that has long sustained literacy programming in this province. Practitioners noted existing capacities that would stand them in good stead in offering this type of program, and also outlined areas where capacities or resources would need to be developed.

Existing capacities and resources

Practitioners felt that family literacy workers in Alberta have the knowledge, skills, and expertise to deliver family literacy in the workplace. Capacities here included “outside the box” learning and facilitating; having experience in developing and maintaining partnerships; knowledge of literacy and family literacy; knowledge of essential and workplace skills; strong organizational experience and a background in various literacy program deliveries; and being seen as credible within the community.

Literacy practitioners felt they would be able to apply their training—in both foundations of

family literacy and specific models of family literacy—to this new concept. There are experienced, knowledgeable, and well-trained facilitators across the province, including those with adult literacy expertise.

Needed capacities and resources

Family literacy practitioners identified additional time, either for existing staff or new hires, as needed to offer family literacy programs in the workplace. Specifics included extra time for pre- and post activities, becoming familiar with the workplace, developing suitable programs for particular workplaces, and time to take additional training.

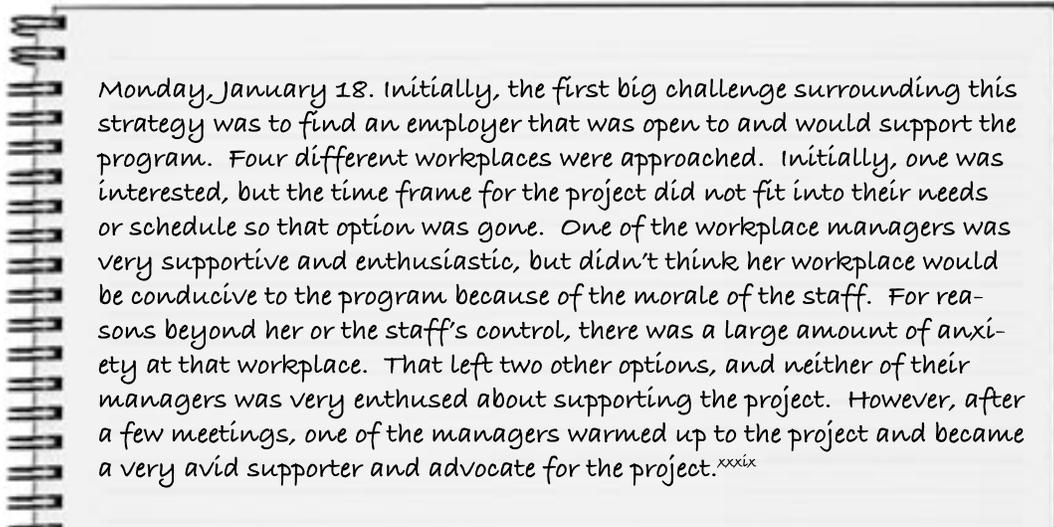
Some respondents felt that additional training would be necessary in order to deliver programming in the workplace. The types of training suggested include workplace literacy, essential skills, adult education, Canadian Language Benchmarks, knowledge of transferable skills, cultural sensitivity, and information on how to adjust programming to a specific workplace environment.

To be capable of offering such a program, literacy coordinators felt they should have or be able to form good relationships with businesses, and literacy organizations should have a background in building community capacity and forming partnerships. Depending on training activities at the workplace, the family literacy practitioner’s relationship with the person delivering workplace literacy or essential skills programs is also important.

Above all, when it comes to capacity to delivery family literacy in the workplace, practitioners pointed to the need for adequate funding to deliver effective programs. It may be that the literacy organization has funding in place and wants to find a partner in the business community so as to run a family literacy program in the workplace, or it may be that it wants to negotiate funding for the program with the potential partner. Whichever it is, readiness means knowing what it is you can offer and what you will ask of your potential partners.

Checklist for family literacy organizations	
Staff are flexible and innovative when it comes to program planning and delivery.	✓
Staff have experience in developing and maintaining partnerships.	✓
The family literacy program is well established, with experienced facilitators.	✓
Staff are knowledgeable promoters of literacy and family literacy,	✓
Staff are familiar with workplace literacy and essential skills.	✓
Staff have strong organizational experience.	✓
The family literacy program is known in the community and seen as a credible organization.	✓
Staff are prepared to learn about the culture, history, needs and interests of the workplace and its employees.	✓
The family literacy program is able to identify the resources needed to delivery the program in the workplace.	✓

The pilot programs delivered as part of the Workplace Family Literacy Project underscored another quality required of family literacy practitioners: perseverance. The following email from one of the pilot site coordinators (who also had to deal with things like the factory being shut down due to equipment failure on the day she was to deliver her information session) speaks to the benefits reaped by continued effort. (See the case studies in Appendix A for more information.)



Monday, January 18. Initially, the first big challenge surrounding this strategy was to find an employer that was open to and would support the program. Four different workplaces were approached. Initially, one was interested, but the time frame for the project did not fit into their needs or schedule so that option was gone. One of the workplace managers was very supportive and enthusiastic, but didn't think her workplace would be conducive to the program because of the morale of the staff. For reasons beyond her or the staff's control, there was a large amount of anxiety at that workplace. That left two other options, and neither of their managers was very enthused about supporting the project. However, after a few meetings, one of the managers warmed up to the project and became a very avid supporter and advocate for the project.^{xxxix}

5. Partnering with business

Awareness of literacy issues

According to surveys conducted by Leger Marketing for the Centre for Family Literacy in 2008-2009, there is a high level of recognition among business and industry in Alberta of the need for improved literacy and essential skills among the workforce. Similarly, there is a high level of concern regarding the essential skill levels of the future workforce in this province.

Alberta employers perceive that there is a need for improved literacy and essential skills in the province, and employers in general should provide more workplace education than is currently offered. Employers are concerned about the essential skill levels of future employees; however, their opinions are mixed regarding whether their own organizations require improved literacy and essential skills at the present time.

Most employers are not surprised when presented with statistics about low literacy leading to greater unemployment or literacy challenges that immigrants face. However, many are surprised to hear that nearly half of Canadians struggle with low literacy.

Employers' views about the perceived need for improved literacy and their comfort with some of the supporting statistics could make them supportive of specific literacy education efforts.^{xi}

Leger Marketing 2009 Business Survey–Awareness of literacy^{xli}



Use of workplace training programs

Employers in Alberta believe there are many different benefits of workplace education, particularly improving employees' abilities to handle new responsibilities, productivity, ability to implement new changes, and quality of products or services. Other benefits, listed in order of importance, include increasing organizational competitiveness, attracting employees, improving safety, improving labour-management relations, and reducing employee turnover. Emphasizing these benefits would add strength to family literacy messages targeted to Alberta employers.

Among the wide range of specific skills that are perceived to require improvement are teamwork, verbal communication, and reading and writing. Organizations are likely to feel most supported by workplace education if it addresses the skill areas they believe are most important to improve on.

As mentioned above, half of Alberta employers indicated to Leger that they provide some type of workplace education, although this includes one-off workshops and broadly interpreted essential skills such as team building. According to the marketing firm, opportunities exist to expand programs offered by employers to address a wider range of needs, and to serve an even greater number of employers.

Size of businesses in relation to training

According to the Leger survey, employers with more than 100 employees express a greater need for improved literacy and essential skills, and these larger organizations are also more likely than smaller employers to currently offer some type of workplace education programs. This may be a reflection of the economies of scale present in larger organizations, which could also be created by smaller organizations partnering with each other or offering programs through a third party organization. (See “Small communities and small companies” in Section 6.)

Competition, resources, productivity and performance all mean very different things to employers in small, medium-sized and large organizations, since these employers operate in very different worlds. Consequently, their employee learning needs are unique and the steps they may take to address those needs must take these differences into account.

Conference Board of Canada, *Profiting From Literacy*^{xliii}

Views of partnerships

All employers in the Leger survey were asked to provide their agreement to statements related to partnerships. Most of them—over 75%—indicated there could be benefits to partnering with external literacy providers. Organizations with 100 or more employees are the most likely to see the benefit of this type of arrangement. If looking to approach organizations to establish such partnerships, literacy organizations could target employers of that size as their first priority given the greater probability of success. Alternatively, more education about the benefits of partnerships with external literacy providers could create more widespread support.

Awareness of family literacy

When it comes to family literacy as opposed to workplace literacy or essential skills, the Leger surveys showed that there is less understanding on the part of employers of the nature of these programs, and of the connection between family literacy and labour market outcomes.



In their initial survey of over 500 businesses,^{xliiii} Leger found that while 74% of Alberta employers agreed that employees are more likely to upgrade their skills if their children directly benefit, opinions were mixed regarding whether learning as a family is more effective. Leger concluded that more employer education is needed for many organizations to be ready to pursue this type of literacy training. (See also “Is the business ready?” later in this section.)

In Leger’s follow-up survey^{xliiv}—130 interviews with Alberta employers—one-third of organizations expressed an interest in offering family literacy training programs, regardless of whether the program involves only the worker (36%), the worker and their children (35%), or the worker and another adult (33%).

In the next section of the same survey, organizations were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements regarding aspects of family literacy programs. At least

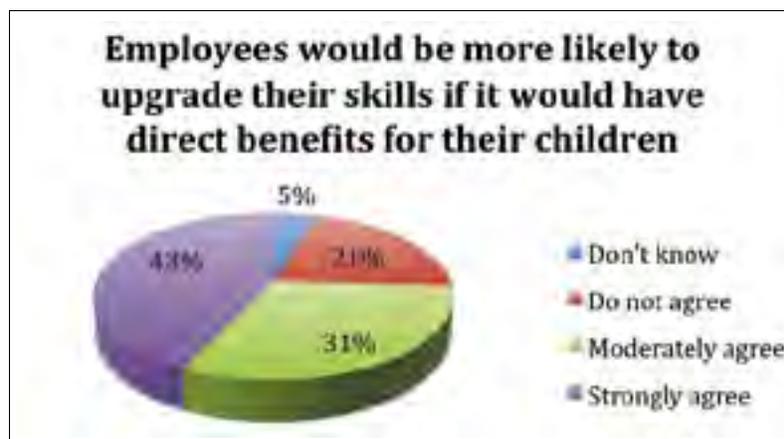
three-quarters agreed that family literacy programs would be beneficial for the employer (81%), or that family literacy programs would improve adult workers' personal literacy and essential skills (75%).

Seven in 10 said that family literacy programs would improve the organization's ability to handle new responsibilities or communication practices (73%), provide a non-threatening way to re-enter the learning system (72%), increase workforce skill level (71%), improve productivity (70%), and improve the quality of products and services (69%).

At least six in 10 organizations agreed that family literacy would motivate employees to pursue other types of training (65%), improve the ability to implement new technology, production processes, or other changes (63%), improve safety (62%), and have unique advantages over other types of literacy and essential skills programs (60%).

Employers also agreed that family literacy programs would increase their competitiveness (59%), improve labour-management relations (59%), and attract employees (49%).

Leger Marketing 2009 Business Survey–Awareness of family literacy^{xiv}



Approaching a potential partner

Finding a partner

It is a common refrain that partnerships are all about relationships between people, and family literacy in the workplace is no exception. It goes without saying that working with a business that is already a partner to your literacy program would be the easiest way to go. Having offered essential skills programming in the workplace, or having employees referred to your tutoring or ESL program, would mean that many of the basic steps of establishing a partnership are already taken care of, and that you and your organization are already “known entities.”

If, however, you are looking for potential partners in your community, the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, and local employment centre are potential sources of information about local employers.

When you begin looking for business partners, consider the following:

- *Use established contacts.* When approaching employers, start with people you know, whether it's through formal or informal, professional or personal contacts.
- *Use established contacts to reach other employers.* Business owners know other business owners. Ask your existing contacts to refer you to others in the local business community.
- *Find a champion who will encourage their peers.* One of the most recommended strategies from people in the business community is to find and develop champions who strongly support work-related learning and will promote it to other employers, which can be far more effective than someone who is not recognized as "speaking their language." People tend to trust their peers, people like themselves. In presentations and promotional materials, use images and the perspectives of the group you are targeting.
- *Approach local unions.* Labour in Canada has a long history of support literacy and education for their members. Local labour unions or labour councils may help you identify those employers most receptive to learning in the workplace.^{xlvi, xvii}

Leger's surveys indicate that the decision to develop or implement family literacy programs rests with high-level decision makers of organizations such as the president, CEO, or other senior management rather than middle-management or human resource professionals, an important consideration when approaching a business for the first time.^{xlvi}

Do your homework. Learn as much as you can about the business before you approach them. How many people does it employ? Does it have a history of involvement in the community, and if so, in what way? Use the local library, newspaper files, and the World Wide Web to learn as much as you can about the company before you make contact.

Making a case

According to Wiebe^{xlix}, the key components in a making business case to initiate a literacy program in the workplace include a) the need to justify the program to obtain support and commitment by those who supervise the potential participants; b) the need to link [family] literacy to existing technical training; and c) the need to establish a mechanism evaluating the effectiveness of the program. Wiebe's research is in the area of workplace literacy, but it applies equally well to family literacy in the workplace. The program must be seen as relevant and beneficial by those who make training decisions.

Information to use in justifying a program can be found in the "rationale" section of this guide in Section 2. Linking the family literacy program to other training is a matter of identifying what has been and is offered at the workplace, and making the connections between the outcomes for adults in family literacy programs and the objectives of workplace literacy or essential skills programs.



In terms of Wiebe's third point, you will already have evaluation methods for the family literacy programs you offer, and they can be adjusted as needed through negotiation with your business partner, to ensure all stakeholders' needs for information are met. Please see more information in Section 7 on assessment and evaluation.

Given the findings above, that more education about family literacy is required in the business community, it is essential to make the case for family literacy in the workplace clearly and concisely, using key messages that are relevant to the business you are approaching.

Telling businesses three of five people can't read pill bottle instructions is so far out of their day-to-day reality. The literacy organizations have to speak the language of human resources, for example, about recruitment and retention, job satisfaction and performance management.

Workplace Family Literacy Project Evaluation¹

Motivation

Recognize that different stakeholders will have different motivations for exploring the idea of starting a program, as there are different but overlapping benefits for each stakeholder group. For employers, investing in a program—whether time, money, or other resources—must be a means of meeting the company's business goals. In addition to "the bottom line," this might include things like attracting and retaining employees in a small community, integrating foreign workers into the workplace, boosting company morale, or giving employees motivation to continue taking courses that will improve their English beyond meeting immigration and work visa requirements. Businesses may engage in projects as part of what they consider their corporate or social responsibility, or their motivation may be community-related or to do with productivity, safety, or innovation.

Employers have many reasons to participate in these programs. For example, one purpose of a family literacy program is to break through intergenerational boundaries by enhancing the literacy skills of parent and child. In achieving that goal, a good family literacy program will also result in a higher-skilled workforce, which is a clear benefit of participation for employers.

A recent Jobs for the Future study of the welfare-to-work programs of U.S. firms documented three broad motives employers recognize for their participation in work-related learning.

- *Business reasons:* Entry-level labor needs spur many employers to expand their sources of qualified staff. Also, public subsidies for hiring, training, and/or support services can influence employer decisions to participate.
- *Corporate citizenship:* Many employers, particularly those with a significant, local customer base, are committed to improving the quality of life in the community and earning local goodwill. Recognition as a good corporate citizen is frequently an important motive.
- *Peer influence:* Firms are frequently influenced by others they see as competitors for leadership in an industry or community. Peer recruitment of corporate CEOs can play an important role in initial decisions to participate.ⁱⁱ

For employees, the motivation for joining a family literacy program comes in wanting to do what is best for their child and what will help prepare children for success in school and in life. Learning skills that will help them on the job is also important. For foreign workers, the opportunity to practice English may be attractive, as are the social aspects of attending a program with other parents.

For labour, motivation relates to the belief that literacy helps workers to succeed at work and in life, is a critical foundation for further training and education, and is an important vehicle for inclusion and participation.^{lii} According to one of the labour representatives on the Workplace Family Literacy Project steering committee,

At a fundamental level, people need basic literacy skills to work safely and effectively, and they need to be able to understand aspects of employment that tie into rights, e.g. understanding their paycheck, reading company and union letters, memos and posters.^{liii}

Recognizing what stakeholders' motivations or drivers are for offering and taking training will help you to ensure your approach is consistent with that motivation. For example, with the "Books and Business" project at the Ford Motor plant in Dagenham, England, the company benefited from the partnership because it demonstrated their wider role in society and social responsibility, as well as the positive impact on recruiting, retaining, and motivating quality staff.^{liv} This is similar to the rationale given by many employers who open their workplace learning centres to not only employees but employees' families as well; the Durabelt manufacturing plant in Montague, PEI made its workplace program available in such a way so as to "promote a culture of learning beyond its own workforce."^{lv}

The evaluation of the Workplace Family Literacy Project pilot programs (see Appendix A) illustrates employers' motivation for hosting or implementing family literacy in the workplace:

We, as a company, want to give our employees every chance to improve their skill sets. Literacy is critical to employees' well-being since they must learn to read complex directions in Standard Operating Procedures, MSDS sheets and operators' manuals if they are to perform more than manual labour.

At a monthly meeting, a whole area will have a session on safety. People might ask more questions if they know a little more.

Family literacy helps to produce young adults [who will] enter the workforce with the ability to read directions carefully and thereby reduce waste in the form of accidents and mistakes.^{lvi}

Employers interviewed in the WFLP evaluation also identified family literacy as "a clever and safe entry point because it helps adults get around their reticence to acknowledge they do not have basic literacy skills."^{lvii}

Connecting family literacy and what businesses need

When making a case for family literacy in the workplace, considering using a tool such as the one following, based on Susan Devins' "Desirable Employee Traits," developed for workplace literacy programs.^{lviii} Family literacy-related outcomes have been added that relate to Devins' list of desirable traits for workers. (Note: there are many different types of family literacy programs and each have particular outcomes. The following list should not be construed or presented to others to mean these outcomes result in every type of family literacy program.)

Desirable Employee Traits		How family literacy can support the development of these traits
Knowledge (What you need to know)		
1	High school completion	Higher attendance in family literacy-enhanced GED programs than traditional GED classes ^{lx} ; high number of parents express desire to continue in other learning program after attending family literacy programs; high number of parents move on to adult learning programs; parents' literacy improves from interaction with their children, reading practice, learning about reading strategies, and increased comfort in school settings. ^{lx}
2	Safety training/certificates in specialized areas	Increased literacy practice for adults means higher levels of confidence for attempting other training.
3	Essential skills (reading, writing, document use, numeracy, computers, working with others, problem solving, continuous learning, use of computers)	Most of these skills can be incorporated in all types of family literacy programs, and the transfer of skills facilitated. Adults who participate in intensive family literacy programs enhance their academic skills, increasing their reading, writing, and math proficiency. ^{kxi}
4	Computer skills (Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint)	Computer skills are often learned informally at home, as children use information gained at school to help parents use new technology. Where facilities exist, computer practice can be incorporated in a number of family literacy program activities, including parents' writing for their children, journaling, preparing photo stories, and class projects.
Attitude (How you do your job – behaviours)		
5	Workplace ethics	Reading and talking about the themes in children's books are an excellent way of opening up discussions of ethics, social mores, and cultural differences, both in the workplace and beyond.
6	Get along with others (team player, good collaborator, supportive, caring)	Reading and talking about the themes in children's books, as well as discussions about parenting, also facilitates the development of co-operative behaviours. "In addition to enhancing academic and social skills, adults in family literacy programs increased their job skills and employment possibilities." ^{kxii} See also #20.
7	Safe–minimizes risks, safety-oriented	Parallels between safety as a parenting issue and safety in the workplace can be addressed, as can other work- and safety-related topics such as organizational skills (#19).
8	Action-oriented, goal-oriented, achievement-oriented	Adults can develop their ability to set goals and learning objectives in family literacy programs, practice in which can be applied to goal setting at work.
9	Flexible, versatile	Flexibility is directed related to confidence, to the belief that one's capabilities are sufficient to meet unforeseen and unexpected tasks and challenges. Development of adults' confidence is one of the most commonly cited outcomes of family literacy programs.
10	Creative, resourceful and innovative	Family literacy programs are strengths-based, focusing on assets rather than deficiencies, and this building on what adults already know and do with their children underscores how creative, resourceful, and innovative their parenting is, and gives them confidence to develop that creativity further.
11	Responsible and accountable (cost-wise, accept responsibility for your decisions)	See #5, #6.

12	Confident, believe in your abilities and others believe in them	Adults in family literacy programs experience personal growth and social development as well as academic gains; they exhibit more confidence. ^{lxiii}
13	Look for opportunities, take initiative (proactive), want to improve, grow, learn new things	Increased self-esteem enables adults to engage in self-advocacy and risk-taking, which are necessary to learning.
14	Trustworthy and honest	See #5, #6.
15	Committed to company vision, mission, and charter, dedicated	Recruitment and retention are cited by employers as the reasons for offering family literacy in the workplace. It is a win-win situation; the employer offers something of greater benefit to workers than what is needed for the job, and in return, employees feel a greater sense of loyalty to and respect for the company.
16	Hardworking, ambitious and energetic	See #5, #6. Brodine ^{lxv} includes work-related goal setting and negotiation activities in her toolbox on incorporating workplace skills in family literacy programs.
17	Works with integrity (do what you say you will do)	See #5, #6.
18	Positive attitude, willingness to be open minded	See #5, #6.
Skills and abilities (What you do – performance)		
19	Organizational skills (work efficiently, effectively)	Brodine ^{lxvi} includes work-related time management activities in her toolbox on incorporating workplace skills in family literacy programs.
20	Interpersonal skills (able to get along with difficult people)	Adults in family literacy programs exhibit more awareness of social practices. ^{lxvii} See also #6. Brodine ^{lxviii} gives examples of group effectiveness, negotiation, and conflict resolutions activities in her toolbox on incorporating workplace skills in family literacy programs.
21	Communication skills (active listener, incorporate feedback)	“Learners are more likely to retain and use new concepts and skills when they work on tasks or problems that emerge from their community, family, or work lives.... By working on real problems and tasks, learners not only deepen their understanding of academic skills, such as those involved in attaining literacy and numeracy, but they also have the opportunity to learn other important workplace skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. By offering contextual learning experiences, both within and outside the classroom, family literacy and adult education programs can help individuals, particularly those with limited experience in the labor market, develop a broad array of skills and behaviors valuable both to employers and to their own ability to pursue a career.” ^{lxix}
22	Competent in nine essential skills	
23	Problem solver (seek other points of view, open minded, implement solutions, use experience to solve complex issues)	
24	Manage conflict (confront difficult situations)	
25	Establish boundaries	
26	Use good judgment	
27	Maintain confidentiality	

In addition to the nine essential skills defined by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (see Appendix C), there are many matrices of job-related skills that can be used in the same way as they above chart to demonstrate how family literacy programs can enhance what’s needed in the workplace. For example, the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration looks at workplace competencies (working with resources, people, information, systems, and technology) and foundation skills (basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities).

Before you make the first contact with a potential business partner, make sure you're ready to answer the tough (or at least direct) questions about the proposed initiative. Here are some examples of questions employers are likely to ask, adapted from *Jobs for the Future's Work-Related Learning Guide for Family Literacy and Adult Education Organizations*:

- How will my organization benefit?
- What role is my organization being asked to play?
- What responsibilities would my employees be asked to assume?
- What role would the family literacy organization play?
- What does a program like this cost?
- Who would pay for this?
- How would participants be selected?
- How has this kind of program been successful in other businesses like mine? In this community or other communities?

Suggested approach

Suggested steps for approaching a potential business partner:

1. Send a letter of introduction. Introduce the family literacy organization, give a brief explanation of why you're contacting them, and say that you will be calling them to follow up. If you do not have a specific contact at the company, address the letter to the owner or president if it is a local business, or to the head of human resources or personnel if it is a branch of a larger company.
2. Make telephone contact. Explain that family literacy can be an important tool in helping employers meet their company goals, in helping workers develop the skills they need at work, at home, and in the community, and in helping children learn the skills they will need to succeed. Request a time to meet with the employer to discuss opportunities to work together. Follow the telephone call with a letter or email confirming the meeting and including a brief information sheet on the connection between family literacy, workplace-related skills, and participation in workplace training.
3. Meet with the employer. A face-to-face meeting is essential, but keep it brief and focused. Encourage the employer to ask questions about family literacy and why it's relevant to the workplace. Leave the employer with an information kit that includes a brochure or description of your organization, a fact sheet on literacy rates in Alberta, definitions of family literacy and essential skills, and a short description of how family literacy programs can benefit employers and employees. Finally, agree on next steps before you leave the meeting, such as a presentation to the company's management team or training coordinator.
4. Send the employer a note of thanks and confirm next steps or a future meeting date if that was established.

See the following pages for a sample letter of introduction broaching the idea of a family literacy partnership, an information sheet, an outline for a presentation, and a hand-out for the meeting.

Sample Letter to Potential Business Partners

March 1, 2010

Mr. John Smith
Smith Enterprises
1234 Smith Street
Smithville, AB T5K 2E5

Dear Mr. Smith,

I was speaking with Sam Jones of Jones Industries last week, and he suggested I contact you. Our organization is looking for a partner in the business sector, and he thought our working together could be beneficial for everyone involved.

I've attached an information sheet on how family literacy in the workplace can help to address employers' needs for a skilled workforce, employees' desire to help their children learn, and Smithville's need for a healthy, literate community where all can contribute and succeed.

The Smithville Learning Association is a non-profit literacy organization here in Smithville. I have enclosed an information brochure about our organization and our work with various community partners.

I will follow up with you via telephone, and you can also contact me at (123) 456-7890 for further information.

Sincerely,

Sue Chang, Manager
Smithville Learning Association

Sample Information Sheet

In a new century in which knowledge and learning are crucial for remaining competitive, it is important that all Canadians be able to achieve the levels of literacy they need to participate fully in society and to succeed.

Much work has been done to document the economic benefits of improving literacy levels through workplace initiatives and to explore delivery of these initiatives. However, the *Literacy, Life and Employment* report of the Conference Board of Canada (2006) and several other studies find that upper level 2 and lower level 3 employees¹ are “generally overly confident about their literacy skills and unaware of reasons for upgrading their skills.”

In the family literacy field it has been demonstrated that adults with low literacy skills—many of those in this target group—will often participate in literacy programs to benefit their child. As a result of participation, they experience changes in their literacy-related behaviors and attitudes, and often go on to other upgrading programs.

The Centre for Family Literacy’s quantitative and qualitative data over many years shows that 93% of adults participating in their programs feel their literacy skills had improved; 72% wished to further improve their education levels; and 62% felt their work situation had improved.



Although research clearly shows the positive benefits of family literacy for adult participants, we found that the area of family literacy has been largely overlooked as a strategy for developing effective workplace literacy programs. It is time to adopt a more innovative and proactive approach to literacy development and family literacy programs have shown great promise.

What does it mean to offer family literacy programs in the workplace? It could be anything from having a small collection of children’s and adult books for employees to borrow, to having employees meet for an hour before or after work once a week to talk about kids’ books and reading-related topics, to having a more intensive program that involves employees and their children and programming to help both with their literacy and learning. Examples of companies that have offered family literacy in the workplace range from one of the world’s largest auto makers to department stores to food processing plants.

For more information about how family literacy can support your business, contact (insert name and contact information).

¹ Level 3 is the internationally recognized minimum level of skills required to manage everyday literacy tasks. See the International Adult Literacy Survey, <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Dli/Data/Ftp/ials.htm>.

Sample Presentation Outline

1. Adult literacy statistics for Alberta (see Section 2)
2. Definitions of literacy and essential skills (see Appendix C)
3. Impacts: Key facts about literacy and the labour force (see Section 2)
4. Rationale for family literacy in the workplace (see Section 2)
5. Definition of family literacy (see Appendix C)
6. Examples of family literacy in the workplace (see Appendix A and Appendix B)
7. Information about the community literacy program, what they can offer, what they're looking for in a partner



Sample handout (for union)

Why family literacy in the workplace?

Forty percent of adult Canadians struggle with everyday reading and writing tasks. Yet only 10% of those who could use assistance are enrolled in literacy programs, whether in the community, at an educational institution, or in the workplace.

Fewer than **30% of workers** in Canada participate in job-related education and training. And training is often offered to, and taken by, employees in supervisory or management level positions.

The reasons for this low level of participation in training are many: concerns about confidentiality and job security; having had negative experiences with schooling in the past; being unaware that a learning program could help build needed skills; and the stigma attached to struggling with reading and writing are only a few.

Research has clearly shown that reluctant learners will join a family literacy program because they want to do what's best for their children. These programs have **benefits for both parents and children**, and often prove a stepping stone to further education and training for the parent.

The Centre for Family Literacy's program evaluation shows that 93% of adults felt their literacy skills had improved; 72% wished to further improve their education levels; and 62% felt their work situation had improved.

Labour organizations have recognized that in order to be effective, workplace programs need to use material and content that address a range of workers' activities and interests, whether from work, home, the union, or the community. From auto workers and the Trade Union Congress in the U.K. to a range of labour groups in Canada and the U.S., awareness is growing of the need to support workers' literacy development through relevant, meaningful learning opportunities. Family literacy is just such an approach.

"They are not always job-specific," says Patricia Nutter, who heads up literacy initiatives for the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA), which partners with CUPE in its literacy program. "The idea is to work with material from the home, the community and the workplace to figure out a holistic idea of what a person wants, and to foster a long-term interest in learning. Some start, for example, with wanting to read their child a bedtime story."¹

¹ www.abc-canada.org/en/workplace_literacy/training_matters/united_front

Is the business ready?

Hopefully the outcome of your approach to business is positive and they are interested in the possibility of hosting a family literacy program. The next step is to assess whether the business is ready to become a partner, or if there are conditions or barriers that need to be addressed before a program could be successfully delivered.

Literacy practitioners' point of view

We asked family literacy practitioners in Alberta^{xxx} to identify criteria for determining the readiness of a business to engage in workplace family literacy. Responses included:

Positive attitude toward literacy development of staff

There is, unfortunately, still a stigma attached to having low literacy skills, and it is this stigma that keeps many people away from programs. What is the attitude in the workplace toward staff development? Have there been other types of literacy-related training at this workplace? With what results? Is there a learning culture in the workplace, where all training is seen as a positive opportunity and all employees are encouraged to develop to their full potential?

Good employee/employer relations

Employers should have a positive attitude toward their staff and see the proposed program as a way of supporting their employees. The project will not work if the employer imposes the program, and it needs to be a team process with all levels of the company represented.

Interest and buy-in

Practitioners indicated that such a project would only succeed if the employer understood the importance of literacy to their business, understood the literacy issues affecting their staff, encouraged employees to take part, and if there was buy-in and co-operation at all levels of the company.

Buy-in was identified in various ways, including having an employer who values the importance of lifelong learning (beyond just reading and writing) and having workers who are ready to participate. In order to obtain such buy-in, practitioners emphasized that the program must be relevant and tailored to the needs and interests of the employees.



Another consideration here is to determine what pressures there are on employees that could impact participation. (For example, have there been lay-offs recently, or difficult contract negotiations?) Will the proposed program be perceived as adding to these pressures, or creating unwanted expectations of employees? Training must be seen as “apolitical,” with both management and employees supporting it.

Tangible support from employer

In addition to the interest and buy-in mentioned above, practitioners suggested a number of types of tangible support from employers that would enhance program success:

- allowing staff the time to discuss the program and identify needs before implementation
- resources to promote the program and recruit the workers
- appropriate space for the program

The question of funding to offer and to continue the program can't be generalized and depends on the resources available in each community and the role played by partners in each initiative.

Another question that can only be answered locally is whether employees attend the program on their own time, on company time, or on a combination of both. Having at least some paid time to attend the program sends a strong message to employees that the program has value.

Sufficient number of participants

Practitioners also stated that there would need to be enough participants to make the project worthwhile, with considerations given to staff turnover, and a sufficient number of parents in the workplace to warrant a program.

Employers' perspective

When considering workplace education programs in general, employers perceive a number of factors to be important to have in place to ensure success, most notably attitude and motivation of the workers, and support and involvement of the employer. Other important factors identified are having resources available to provide the training, demonstration of positive impacts on the bottom line, funding, and flexible hours for workers to participate. Also cited are confidentiality regarding the participants, and having many workers who have a need for the programs.^{lxxi}

Looking at family literacy programs specifically, as opposed to the comments above regarding workplace education, the follow-up Leger surveys found that in order to develop or offer a family literacy program in the workplace, employers say they require more information to assess employee demand or determine the necessity of such a program. Some employers also identify the need for subsidies or financial support, and opportunities to partner with other organizations if they feel their company is too small to offer a program independently.^{lxxii}

The first consideration—more information to assess employee demand or determine the necessity of a family literacy program in the workplace—is related to

- the employer being aware of literacy rates in Alberta, and understanding the connection between family literacy and workplace skills, which you will be providing in your initial approach and information you will provide as a follow-up
- understanding the literacy skills of their employees, which is difficult given the stigma attached to difficulty reading, writing, and using other essential skills
- gauging the interest of their employees in taking part in a family literacy program, which can be addressed by using a version of the interest inventory included in this guide—an easy, non-threatening way of determining interests and which program models would match the ages of employees' children, etc.

The second consideration—the need for subsidies or financial support—may be less of a significant issue once employers are made aware of the low cost of family literacy programs compared to other types of training. There are costs, to be sure—facilitator wages, materials, refreshments—but these costs are not likely as high as employers may have thought when identifying them as a barrier. (See Resources in Section 6.) However, until there is more widespread acknowledgement of the benefits of family literacy in the workplace, and given the current view of education being a public responsibility (as expressed in the Leger surveys

conducted for this project), practitioners should be cautious about assuming that employers would be willing to take financial responsibility for programs.

The last consideration—opportunities to partner with other organizations if their company is too small to offer its own program—is entirely valid and should be part of initial planning. Rather than working with one business partner, it may be more feasible to work with a number and offer the family literacy program to a group of employees from various workplaces. This might also include working with local labour councils or employment agencies as well. (See Small Communities and Small Companies in Section 6.)

Helping organizations ensure these conditions are satisfied, thereby removing the perceived barriers to successful workplace education programs, will help pave the way for family literacy—business partnerships in Alberta.

The most prominent hurdles that must be overcome include employers' perception that this type of training is not required within their workplace, a perceived lack of employee interest, and an insufficient number of employees to make the program worthwhile.

Leger Marketing^{lxiii}

How would family literacy fit?

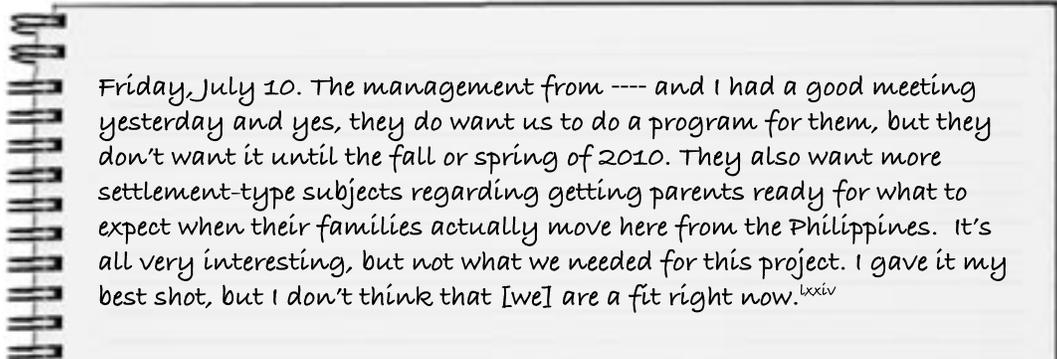
Another consideration in whether the business is ready to host a family literacy program lies in the question of whether there is a larger training program that could have family literacy added to it, or whether the family literacy program would be a stand-alone initiative.

There are advantages to introducing family literacy into the workplace by integrating it into existing programs, whether essential skills, English as a Second Language, or job-specific training. It places family literacy on the same footing as other training and educational initiatives, and “normalizes” it. As the research cited earlier indicates, family literacy components can support and enhance benefits of other types of training.

Family literacy programming can also be run independent of other training, or in a workplace where there isn't other training or educational activity. Offering the program on its own means that you may attract employees who are not yet ready, for any number of reasons (as described in the previous section) to participate in other types of training or learning opportunities. In this case, however, partners may want to take a graduated approach, starting with a small initiative like a book-lending library (see Appendix B, examples of family literacy in the workplace), leading to taster sessions or demonstrations of family literacy activities (held during staff functions or professional development days), and then following up with actual programming on site.

Be realistic

If a review of both the literacy organization and the potential business partner indicate that there are reasons why a joint project isn't feasible, be realistic and propose addressing barriers before programming is offered.



Partnership agreements

Consider using a simple partnership agreement such as the one following to outline what each partner will contribute to the program. Such a document can help to clarify roles and responsibilities and keep both the business partner and the literacy partner on track over the course of the program.

Sample Partnership Agreement

Partnership Agreement Between ABC Family Literacy and XYZ Industries

Roles and Responsibilities of Partners:

ABC Family Literacy and XYZ Industries agree to the following roles and responsibilities regarding the delivery of a family literacy program in the workplace, to be offered between September 30, 2010 and November 30, 2010.

ABC Family Literacy agrees to:

- Manage the family literacy program to be delivered at XYZ Industries
- Work on a steering committee with management, employee, labour, and training/HR representatives from XYZ Industries to plan and oversee delivery of a family literacy program on-site at XYZ Industries
- Work with the steering committee to develop promotion and recruitment materials (poster, flyers) for the program
- Work with XYZ Industries to conduct an interest inventory amongst its employees
- Provide a qualified facilitator to deliver the family literacy program
- Conduct participant assessment and program evaluation
- Provide the materials necessary to deliver the family literacy program
- Provide certificates of achievement to participants
- Prepare a final report
- Acknowledge XYZ Industries as a program partner in promotional materials and agency information

XYZ Industries agrees to:

- Provide management, employee, labour, and training/HR representatives for the steering committee
- Provide an employee representative to act as the contact person named on promotional and recruitment materials
- Promote the program and recruit participants, in partnership with ABC Family Literacy, using company communication channels as well as posters and flyers
- Provide an appropriate space in the workplace where the program will be offered
- Provide coffee and tea during sessions
- Allow employees .5 paid time to attend the program
- Participate in program evaluation and contribute to a final report
- Acknowledge ABC Family Literacy as a program partner in promotional materials and company information

ABC Family Literacy

Date

XYZ Industries

Date

6. Planning and early stages

Seats at the table: forming the steering committee

Why form a committee?

The importance of bringing together a group of employee, employer, and, where applicable, labour representatives to plan and implement the program cannot be overemphasized. Having people from each of these groups involved and championing the initiative greatly increase its chances for success. Because the concept of family literacy in the workplace is a new one, gaining support and buy-in at all levels—from employees to upper management—is essential.

The attitudes of supervisors, employees, senior managers and union officials toward learning are strong indicators of their future commitment to and support for a learning program. Support “from the top down”—or lack thereof—can make or break a learning program. Management’s attitude toward learning will undoubtedly be perceived by the rest of the organization, and it will colour everyone else’s opinion of the value of the program.

Conference Board of Canada, *Profiting from Literacy*^{lxv}

Who should be on the committee?

The company’s training manager, HR personnel, or workplace education coordinator should be on the steering committee, and the family literacy program planned in conjunction with existing training. If English as a second/additional language training is offered in the workplace, the instructor or coordinator from that program should be involved as well.

Supervisors should be involved as well as management. Their support is needed; they need to understand the benefits to be gained in the workplace by improving employees’ skills, and how the family literacy program will lead to those outcomes.

Where employees attend programs during work hours, it is especially important to involve line management or supervisors in planning from the outset, in order to lessen the impact on production.



An employee or preferably two should be on the committee as well. In addition to bringing an important perspective to planning and promotion, their involvement is an important signal to employees and will help to create a sense of ownership of the program.

In the case of unionized workplaces, having a union representative involved and on the committee is essential. Issues such as paid versus unpaid time to participate, assessment, and program evaluation will require union input. Their participation and support can determine whether employees participate in the program.

What do committee members need to know?

Committee members need a clear understanding of what family literacy is, what family literacy programs are, and the rationale for offering family literacy in the workplace.

Roles and responsibilities for committee members should be clearly defined and communicated. (Do members provide information and feedback at meetings, or do they also take an active role in promoting the program, recruiting participants, and other elements of the project?) In terms of defining roles, although decision making should be inclusive, ultimate authority and responsibility for the project needs to be clearly articulated and understood.

When determining roles and responsibilities, consider what strengths, expertise, experience, and availability each member can bring to the project. Encourage trust and respect for others as equals, acknowledge others' areas of expertise, respect differences between members of the partnership, and accept others' judgment. Each partner must realize that the vested interests of other members are as valid as their own.

Respect is not only essential between members of the partnership, but between the members of the partnership and the people the project is meant to serve as well. This is a basic tenet of literacy programs: being sensitive to and respectful of the culture, norms, abilities, and values of the people who take part.

The frequency and number of meetings should be decided early on by the group and dates agreed upon so as to prevent scheduling conflicts. Even when meeting dates are set in advance, however, members will need to acknowledge the need for flexibility and change.

Time frames for the committee (decisions, actions, etc.) and for the project itself need to be established.

Having management, employees, and labour work together is not always easy. It takes willingness on all sides, and a commitment to the project and its objectives. All committee members must collaboratively develop solutions to problems that arise and agree upon how the program will be developed and delivered.

Partners need to be kept informed of progress and changes in the program as it evolves. Communicating successes about the program to committee members and within the workplace will help to keep people motivated and attract new participants.

What will the committee do?

- Guide, develop, and implement an interest inventory to assess the need for the program
- Identify available and required resources
- Review, select and/or adapt a program model that will address interests identified and be possible given the available resources
- Examine successes and challenges of previous training initiatives in that workplace, and what they might mean to the proposed program
- Determine whether and how the family literacy program could fit into other training initiatives in the workplace
- Develop realistic objectives for the project and an action plan to meet those objectives
- Guide the development and delivery of the program
 - a. Ensure material and content address a range of workers' activities and interests (from home, work, union, community), and that the program provides relevant, meaningful learning opportunities
 - b. Provide feedback on adjusting and refining the program as it's delivered. (Participants may feel more comfortable expressing concerns, needs, and suggestions to one of their

peers on the committee than to the instructor. The same may apply to other stakeholders such as supervisors, etc.)

- Support and play a lead role in ongoing promotion and recruitment
- Help to develop assessment and evaluation strategies, making sure that they are appropriate and realistic, and help to implement them
- Provide information and feedback for the evaluation of the program

Suggested tool

Using an action plan is one way to ensure common understandings of roles and responsibilities for partners and committee members, as well as objectives and timelines for the project. If you don't already use an action plan, consider a version of the following:

What we need to do	When we aim to have it done	What resources are needed	Who will do it	How will we know it's done	Date completed

Resources

Some assurance of support for the program would be in place before this stage, either in the way of program funding available to the literacy organization, or resources negotiated with the employer. Specific resources needed will depend on the type of program model identified to address the interests of a particular workplace (see below), but you and your business partner should have agreed on where the resources will come from to promote the program and recruit participants, support the partnership, and cover the costs of delivering and evaluating the program.

Resources are not only funding, of course, but also materials, facilities, and other types of support. For example, if the literacy organization has box sets of children's books that can be used for a workplace project, that will be an important contribution and will significantly lower the cost of the project overall.

Company time and/or employee time?

If the issue is not negotiated in the initial discussions between the literacy organization and the employer, one of the important decisions the steering committee will face when planning the program is whether it will be offered outside of work hours, during work hours, or a combination of both. Paid versus unpaid time to attend the program is, of course, not only a scheduling decision but one involving company resources, employee motivation, and labour involvement as well if the workplace is unionized.

As the steering committee negotiates this issue, they should bear in mind that there should be no financial burden on employees for participating in the program.

One argument made in relation to workplace training (Wiebe, 2001) is that not only does delivering part of a program on employees' time facilitate accessing some government funding, but it also ensures a commitment to the program by participants. Employees take responsibility for their own learning when investing their own time, in the same way the company commits to and takes responsibility by providing paid time for part of the program.

The Conference Board of Canada identifies a 50/50 time commitment (one hour of paid release time for every hour of personal time) as a "best practice idea for action" for workplace literacy programs.^{lxvii} If the employer is willing to contribute company time it sends the message to employees that the project is important; however, participation must be voluntary.

In one of the pilot projects related to this publication, the company paid workers to attend an information session on the proposed family literacy program. The actual program was delivered as a series of lunchtime seminars.

What precedents are there in your partner's workplace regarding training on or outside of company time? The perceived value of the family literacy program could be diminished if it differs from other types of training in this regard.

In addition to the employers' views regarding paid time to participate in the program, employees must also be consulted about when they would prefer to participate. This is an item for the interest inventory discussed in the next section.

Access

The family literacy program should be open to all employees so as to encourage participation and avoid stigma. It should be scheduled at convenient times and location; conducting an interest inventory with employees will help to identify when employees are most likely to attend.

Depending on whether the program is held during or outside of work hours, the steering committee should consider whether transportation is going to be an issue for participants. For example, if there is a bus, shuttle, or car pool taking workers to and from the job site, and the program is offered outside of work hours, what impact will that have on participation and how can that be addressed?

Setting the stage: initial promotion

Before trying to determine who future participants are, and what their interests are, you need to do some initial promotion to give employees notice of the upcoming program, and generate interest and excitement. Initial promotion is also very important in terms of gaining employees' trust.

General posters and brochures such as this example can be used to generate interest and curiosity about the upcoming program. The key messages, images, and contact person should be developed with steering committee input, and the contact person on the promotional materials should be one of the employee representatives (one of the champions mentioned above) on the steering committee, rather than a supervisor or management.

Put the posters up in the workplace at least a month in advance of recruiting participants. Flyers or handbills can be attached to pay cheques or pay stubs; they should be directly distributed, rather than left for people to pick up.

Helping children learn is everyone's business



Contact Doug at 000-000-0000 or doug@thiscompany.com to find out more about a family reading program coming this fall.

A partnership of This Company and The Family Literacy Program.

Tear-off contact information

Notices about the program should be placed in employee or company newsletters and other company information, and notices sent by company email if applicable.

The most important aspect of initial promotion is not print materials, however. Personal contact and face-to-face interaction is by far the most effective means of generating interest in the project. Steering committee members can present information at staff, team, and union meetings, and these same "champions" can promote the program on an individual basis and by word of mouth.

Effective promotion in a given workplace will depend on the working culture of that organization; having obtained buy-in from all stakeholders, and having representation by management, supervisors, and employees on the steering committee will ensure effective promotion and give the message that the program is 'apolitical.'

In addition to promotion throughout the workplace, members of the steering committee should hold information-sharing sessions with supervisors to educate them about the benefits of the proposed program and the links between family literacy and job performance, employee retention, and participation in training. These sessions are also an opportunity to gather input from supervisors on how to integrate the proposed program with existing and upcoming training, how best to schedule the program, and how best to recruit participants.

Compiling an interest inventory

Identifying interests relating to family literacy among the workforce and tailoring the program to meet those needs is a vital part of planning for a number of reasons:

- it helps to determine the readiness of an organization to host a family literacy program, and identify barriers to implementing a program
- it provides the information needed to show employers that this type of program is desired by their employees
- it builds ownership, support, and awareness for the project, and gives people some control over what they learn and the way they learn it
- it can be used to make a case for financial support
- it helps to determine which type of family literacy program would be best suited to meet the needs and interests of the employees of a particular workplace, and which they would be most likely to take part in
- it can be used to clarify or modify goals set for the initiative
- it can be used as a baseline for evaluating the success of the project

There is a fundamental difference between conducting an interest inventory as opposed to a more traditional type of needs assessment. According to Smythe and Sanders:

An interest inventory may be less threatening to people than a conventional needs assessment because it focuses on what families want—on what their interests are—rather than on their perceived deficits or what others may think they need.^{lxvii}

An interest inventory is an asset-based approach to finding out more about literacy issues in families and communities, and can be used to develop responses to these interests without “targeting” individuals or families.^{lxviii} It is ideally suited for use in the workplace as it removes potential risks related to job security and confidentiality. Participation in the interest inventory should be voluntary.

Suggested process for using an interest inventory	
1	<p>The steering committee decides on who will be involved, how the information will be collected, and what information is required.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage all to participate and try to ensure participation from good cross-section of workforce: gender, age, level of education, new/longer-term employees. b. If other training is offered in the workplace, those involved should be included to determine if and how the family literacy program could fit into other training initiatives. c. Management should be included for their perspective on what resources are available to support the program.
2	<p>Create a communication strategy to raise awareness about the interest inventory.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Let people know ahead of time that the interest inventory is going to take place. b. Use as many methods of communication as possible: word of mouth, company and/or union newsletters, a mailout with paycheques/stubs, regular meetings. c. Consider whether translating notices, etc. is necessary. d. Have “training champions” from all levels of organization who act as ambassadors and promoters of the initiative let people know about the interest inventory and why it’s being used.
3	<p>In addition to a checklist to be completed by employees, conduct a document review or ask for compiled information that will help to determine interests. (Compile general information only, rather than employee-specific data. Demographic information might include education levels, number of children, ages of children/dependants/grandchildren, ESL training, etc.) In addition to personnel files, other sources might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous organizational needs assessments or workplace needs assessments conducted by the business • Training records • Social committee documents • Employee assistance files • Information gathered for other purposes that might document learning goals and needs • Supervisors’ or management’s recommendations regarding training
4	<p>Distribute the interest inventory.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Make the form as easy to complete as possible, such as a simple “tick box” survey. b. Consider having the form completed as a group activity (lunch hour, staff meeting, union meeting, etc.) with the option of taking it away to complete.
5	<p>Consider having an incentive to complete the form, such as a coupon for a free coffee in the company cafeteria.</p>

Considerations regarding interest inventories and needs assessments:

- When people lack confidence, they may not be able to tell you directly what they want or are interested in.
- There can be an imbalance of power when “professionals” or people in a position of authority ask questions; may intimidate learners who may not speak up for themselves.
- Care must be taken not to raise expectations that can’t be met.
- Some people are more vocal than others; must take care to ensure that all are heard.
- People may not use “learning” terminology, but rather talk of hobbies, or what they do as a family, or what they do to have fun.
- Have information on other services available in the community ready for when there are suggestions and interests that lay outside of the mandate of the program

There are many examples of tools developed to assess individual and workplace needs. Check the National Adult Literacy Database at www.nald.ca and the National Institute for Literacy website at www.nifl.gov for further information.

A sample interest inventory, adapted from Sanders and Smythe, can be found on the following page.

Sample interest inventory



Helping families learn is everyone's business

We are interested in general information to help us plan a no-cost family literacy program here at XYZ Industries. All responses are confidential. Thank you for taking part!

Circle your answer:

Are you the parent of a young child? (Birth to grade 6)					yes	no
Are you a grandparent or other caregiver helping to raise young children?					yes	no
Do you care for foster children?					yes	no
If yes to any of the above, are they	0-2 years	3-5 years	6-9 years	9-12 years		
Do you have questions about how to help your child learn?					yes	no
Would you attend a 4–8 week program (once a week):						
Before work starts (adults only)					yes	no
Right after work (adults only)					yes	no
At lunchtime (adults only)					yes	no
Saturday mornings (adults and children)					yes	no

Please ✓ as many as you are interested in:

- A free lending library at work (books for kids and adults)
- A series of lunchtime sessions on why it's important to read to young children
- A program for parents of infants and toddlers that helps with the child's early language development
- A program for parents of preschoolers, focused on simple things that can help get a child ready for school
- Sessions on helping your children with homework (elementary school), reading report cards, and dealing with your child's teacher
- Sessions to help parents create a fun reading environment in the home and encourage reluctant readers
- Sessions on helping your child learn while retaining your home language (What language? _____)
- A program where you practice skills that will help you in your job *and* help you to help your child learn

What other ideas do you have?

Simple things can make a world of difference to a young child. Share a bedtime story tonight.

Finding a program model that fits

Family literacy practitioners in Alberta identified a number of programs they saw as best suited to adapt to the workplace in a survey in 2008. In short, people saw the parent-only models—BOOKS/Homespun, LAPS, Storysacks, Help Your Child to Read and Write, etc.—as the most suitable for most workplaces. Programs that involve parents and children—Rhymes that Bind/Parent-Child Mother Goose, Building Blocks, etc.—were seen as possibilities for workplaces with on-site daycare. The type of model would depend on the employees at the particular workplace (given the ages of their children), the parents' interests, and the resources and expertise available. See Appendix E for brief descriptions of different family literacy program models.

Some practitioners also suggested that workplaces offer a series of family literacy activities and programs, progressing from the very simple to the more intensive. This is often how programs are offered out in the community, with contact initially coming in the form of a book bag for new parents in the hospital, with an invitation to attend a Rhymes that Bind program, for example, followed by participation in a Homespun program.

Family literacy-employer partnerships can introduce the idea of family literacy to the workforce through a simple book lending program, or a reading tent at the annual staff picnic. They could integrate a seminar on the importance of reading to children into the on-site essential skills program, and invite participants to a BOOKS or LAPS program offered once a week before the morning shift begins. There are many possibilities for family literacy programs in the workplace, whether stand-alone, integrated with other training programs, direct instruction, or special events that offer indirect support and encouragement.

It should be noted that in addition to the family literacy programs currently offered in the province, and mentioned here and in Appendix E, there are additional examples from other jurisdictions that we can consider using in the workplace. From very indirect approaches, such as taster collections of books placed in cafeterias and on factory floors, to more direct and intensive programs, there are many possibilities for introducing family literacy into the workplace. Appendix B contains descriptions of projects that we can replicate or adapt to suit the needs of our communities.

Questions to ask when looking at program models:

- Do the program objectives respond to the interests identified in the company interest inventory?
- Are the program objectives and evaluation results from similar programs seen as valuable and relevant by the project stakeholders?
- Is the length of the program (or number of sessions) appropriate for this setting? How many sessions are required for it to be an effective program? Is there a sufficient length of time available to allow a social network to develop?
- Does the length of the session fit with workers' schedules? Can the length of the session be modified and still be effective? (This depends on whether the program is delivered before or after work, at lunchtime, etc.)
- What would the program cost to deliver, and is it considered good value for the money?
- How many participants can be effectively included in a program? Is the size of group acceptable to members of the steering committee? What will happen if the program is over- or under-subscribed?
- Are the materials well-designed and would they appeal to this group of workers?

- Are facilitators already trained in offering the program? If not, how will they be trained and what will it cost?
- What ways have been developed to evaluate the program and monitor its effectiveness? Would those ways work in this setting?
- Are there ways of sharing good practice with other people using this model, and if so, what are they?

Adapting a family literacy program model to a particular workplace is really no different from the learner-centred approach most practitioners take, regardless of the setting. Family literacy programs are usually tailored to meet the needs of particular groups, taking into account the interests of parents and their children, ages of family members, scheduling considerations, etc. The difference, of course, is that you will be selecting a model and making adaptation to suit the needs of a specific workplace, such as looking at ways to link the content with a English as a Second Language program, or selecting children's books related to a specific trade or industry.

When adapting a family literacy model for the workplace, consider making the curriculum flexible enough that participants can choose various topics and activities, and that there are different kinds of progression possible (while staying within parameters set for the program at the outset). (See the case studies of the Workplace Family Literacy Project pilot programs in Appendix A for more information.)



Integrated programming

In *A Family Literacy Toolbox: Incorporating Workplace Skills in Family Literacy Programs*,^{lxxxix} Janine Shinkoskey Brodine gives examples of family literacy activities that contain workplace skills. Based on family literacy programs in Washington State that were broadened to include workplace skills—the opposite of what is proposed in this guide—the *Toolbox* still provides useful information about how to blend children's curriculum, parenting, and workplace-related literacy. Sample activities described by Brodine include:

- dialogue journal writing
- journals in circle time
- family literacy newsletters
- preschool newsletters
- discipline on the job
- disciplining children
- time management
- quality parenting time management
- recipes: following directions
- teaching critical thinking through a process of arguing with integrity
- group effectiveness and negotiation
- goal setting

The enhanced curriculum is divided into family reading strategies; children's books; adult reading selections; parent involvement projects; child development themes; ABE ideas; and parent education themes.

Scheduling

Training needs to be set up to fit employees' schedules. Remember that they may have already completed a day's work, or may have a day's work ahead of them. They also have a life outside of work, with responsibilities and activities that go along with being a parent and community member. The steering committee may want to look at developing the family literacy program so that it is offered at different times, or that it is offered in distinct modules so that missing sessions has less impact on what employees gain from the program.

Setting goals and creating a planning and evaluation cycle

Once interests and potential models have been identified, the steering committee needs to set goals for the program. Will these goals focus entirely on family-literacy related outcomes, or is it important to set goals related to workplace-related skill development as well?

You will already have planning and evaluation mechanisms for the family literacy programs your organization offers. With the help of the steering committee and program participants, you can adapt these tools and add questions or components specific to the workplace and the objectives set for the program. Elements to consider include establishing the partnership, program planning, program delivery, and outcomes. Sources of information can include planning documents (interest inventory or needs assessment), promotion and recruitment strategies; intake forms; attendance lists; session plans with brief notes or reflections about how sessions went and staff observations; parent journals and artifacts; and assessment and feedback forms (mid-point and end of session). Evaluation should capture both expected and unexpected outcomes for the program.

In addition to program participants, feedback should also be solicited from supervisors, steering committee members, and when applicable, other trainers or human resource personnel.

Example of goals, indicators, and outcomes

The following example is an adaptation of the logic model developed for the BOOKS (Books Offer Our Kids Success) program at the Centre for Family Literacy. The logic model also includes the agency's vision, mission, statement of need or rationale, a brief description of the strategy used to deliver the program, inputs, and an overview of activities.

Program Goal		Outcome	Indicators
1	Babies, pre-schoolers and elementary school-age children will improve their literacy skills.	Children's oral language and early literacy skills have improved.	Employees report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child more interested in books. • Child asks for books to be read to him/her many times. • Child has begun to recognize some words. • Child's attention span is becoming longer when read to.
2	Relationships between parents and children will be strengthened.	a. Parents interact more positively with their children.	Employees report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoying more being with child. • Making reading a more important part of family life • Encouraging other family members to read to child. Family literacy facilitator observes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents more open in talking about their children • Parents share a broader range of parenting strategies
		b. Parents have increased awareness of and comfort with using language and literacy activities with their children.	Employees report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More aware of how to share a book with a child • More aware of child's learning needs. • Parents reading more often with children. • Increase in literacy materials in the home. Family literacy facilitator observes : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation in discussion and activities such as choral reading
3	The family literacy program will enhance communication in the workplace.	Workplace communication has improved.	Employees report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater comfort in asking for assistance with print • Intention to take other work-related training • Intention to take program in the community Family literacy facilitator observes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social network developed between program participants • Participants informally mentor/tutor each other, assist with vocabulary, punctuation, etc. • Discussion of children's books often turned into discussion of work-related topics Employer/management reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater awareness of how to recognize when someone has difficulty with print materials • Value in being able to refer employees to "safe" family literacy program • Increased comfort on employees' part in asking for assistance with print materials

4	Parents, adults, and partnering agencies will understand the roles of adult and family literacy in the development of healthy families, workplaces, and communities.	Community agencies have increased knowledge about literacy issues and language and literacy development.	<p>Family literacy facilitator observes :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family literacy program brought parents into a workplace training program in a positive way • Increased recognition of need to integrate language and literacy into other kinds of programming for employees • Request from employer for information around literacy issues and for more literacy programs. • Increased number of inquiries from employees for further family literacy resources and programming <p>Employer/management reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of employees interested in attending family literacy program
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Careful negotiation of program goals, and how they will be measured, is important to ensure that all of the stakeholders have the same expectations of the program and what it can accomplish. The host company and the literacy organization may have different ideas regarding what can be expected from initial programs. For example, many family literacy practitioners realize that when a program is first starting out, having a small class may constitute a success, and that those first participants will be the program’s best advocates. To others, however, such a small class may not be deemed sufficient reason to invest time and resources. Partners providing financial or other types of support may have criteria that require a larger minimum number of participants.

Also related to expectations, family literacy practitioners know that literacy skills take time to acquire, and that time and resources need to be invested over a considerable period to see actual changes in literacy skills. Outcomes for family literacy programs are often tied to changes in literacy-related behaviors and activities, for both parents and children. Assessment methods, therefore, need to be appropriate for the type of family literacy model being delivered, in terms of the program’s duration, intensity, and especially goals.

<p>Question: How did the family literacy component fit into the larger workplace program [at Ford Motor Company in Dagenham, England]?</p>
<p>Answer: It was just another part of the offer to hook people in.</p>
<p>Question: Did the family literacy component have implications for recruiting workers into the workplace program?</p>
<p>Answer: We tried to use it engage with new learners with some success.</p>
<p>Question: What were the results of the programs?</p>
<p>Answer: It wasn’t linked to qualifications but initial and final assessments showed progress and great improvements with confidence.^{100x}</p>

Another important element to note is that, in keeping with good practice in workplace literacy, family literacy, and adult education, while participants should be encouraged and supported to provide input, all assessment and evaluation should be voluntary and confidential.

In conclusion, planning and evaluation should be a continuous cycle that is ongoing, appropriate, and manageable. It meets both accountability and program development needs. Establishing a steering committee, identifying interests and available resources, identifying and adapting a program to address those interests, and delivering the program all feed into an opportunity to reflect on practice and process. Such a review is an opportunity to affirm success, identify any barriers or challenges, and leads to strategies to further improve practice. Planning and evaluation is a way of ensuring continuous improvement, for the program itself and for those involved in delivering it. It should be a learning experience for staff as well as participants every time it is delivered.

Links to other programs and services

Initial planning is the time to identify what other programs and services are or will be available to participants in the workplace family literacy program. For example, if a participant becomes interested in further developing his math skills, is there a program offered at work that can address that goal, or would the local tutoring program be an option?

Members of the steering committee should consider how to effectively situate the program as a stepping stone to additional family and adult learning opportunities. Program staff need to be knowledgeable about learning opportunities in the workplace and in the community, and able to provide information to participants on further education and training.

A family literacy program in the workplace should ideally be part of an overall, long-term workplace development plan, and there should be opportunities for participants to move on to other training. It can be one element of a company-wide approach that fosters a culture of learning in the workplace and the community.

Staffing considerations

Having qualified and trained staff to deliver the family literacy program is important. They can become familiar with the workplace in which the program is offered, but need to have the ability to work successfully with a wide range of stakeholder groups.

The program facilitator must be someone who can support adult learners in “returning to the classroom,” and in building their self-confidence to apply what they learn in the family literacy program in other contexts, especially their jobs. When appropriate, they should be able to provide information on and encouragement to participate in other types of training, and must be able to work collaboratively with other training staff.

Having clear job descriptions for staff and terms of reference for committee members from the outset will help to avoid confusion or misunderstandings concerning responsibilities for conducting program promotion, attending partnership meetings, etc.

Rather than providing facilitators to deliver programming in the workplace, family literacy organizations may work with a business partner whose own staff will deliver the program. For example, one of the pilot programs for the Workplace Family Literacy Project, the XL Foods/

Lakeside Packers pilot in Brooks, was facilitated by an ESL instructor at the meat processing plant. Under the terms of the pilot agreement, the instructor agreed to attend the annual family literacy training institute to participate in both an introduction to family literacy course and training in a specific program model. (Please see the case study in Appendix A for further information.)

In order to avoid concerns about job security, when a program is delivered “in-house,” the literature suggests it is important to have a non-management trainer.^{lxxxix}

One of the most important qualities necessary of an instructor was the ability to liaise well among employees, management, the union and the service providing agencies. Good communication skills were essential for an instructor. A second quality was an ability to be adaptable with program curriculum.... The third quality that was mentioned in some of the case study data was the availability of an instructor before and after scheduled classes.

Maurice Taylor^{lxxxix}

Please see additional staffing information in Section 4: Is the Family Literacy Organization Ready?

Getting them in the door: recruiting participants

It's about relationships

Putting together a steering committee at the outset of the project will ensure that you have “champions” in every part of the company: management, employee, and where applicable, labour. When the time comes to recruit participants, these champions will carry the ball encouraging employees to sign up. The steering committee will ensure that employees are approached by people they trust, be it their peers, labour representatives, or other training providers. Just as forming the initial business-literacy organization partnership was a matter of building relationships, so too is recruiting participants a matter of relationships and trust.



In addition to the steering committee champions, it's important to use the networks that exist in all organizations, and the “gatekeepers” for groups within organizations, to make contact with those who might be reluctant to come forward. As one participant in a U.K. family literacy program put it, you need “someone to talk to without committing yourself.”^{lxxxiii} This can be especially important when considering cultural barriers to participation, such as where men do not traditionally take on roles associated with child rearing.

The same is true of recruitment. Head teachers report that the ‘personal touch’ is the most important aspect of the FLLN [family literacy, language and numeracy] recruitment process: success in reaching learners is often largely attributable to the skills, confidence and cultural awareness of recruiters. One example of successful recruitment is the Parents as Learners (PALs) programme, in which former learners serve as learning champions, going out to speak to parents/carers and telling their own stories about coming into courses.

Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy^{lxxxiv}

Be prepared

In order to recruit employees to the program, you need to anticipate key questions and concerns, and provide the best possible information, including

- the aims of the program
- how they and their children will benefit
- what activities adults will do in the program
- where applicable, what activities will be provided for children
- the length of the program and how often it will meet (if there is open entry/open exit, or program start-up and completion for all participants)
- what resources, if any, they will need to provide, and what will be provided to them
- where the program will take place and when
- how participants will have input on program design

If you are oversubscribed and need to select employees for the program, make the criteria clear. Provide alternative activities or information for employees that are not selected, such as when the next program will be offered or other services in the community. Consider keeping a wait list for subsequent programs.

Emphasize strengths and existing skills

As the Conference Board of Canada points out in its study of workplace literacy, participating in training or “returning to school” can be a traumatic experience for some people. “Reducing the personal risks to individuals and emphasizing the value of their existing skill-set will help instill confidence and encourage reluctant employees to take part in the learning program.”^{lxv} Again, this is a common theme in promoting family literacy programs: the idea of adding to what parents are already doing with their children, and parents sharing ideas and strategies that help support early learning.

Demonstration and information sessions

Consider holding a demonstration session to introduce employees to the family literacy program without their having to make a commitment to participate. Similarly, having information sessions during lunch breaks, staff meetings, and/or union functions is an effective way of introducing the program and having employees become accustomed to both staff and program.

Father involvement

Depending on the gender make-up of the workplace in question, you may need to tailor recruitment to garner interest from fathers. There has been a great deal of research done in the area of father involvement, and selected outcomes such as those cited by Drs. Kyle D. Pruett and Marsha Kline Pruett (those deemed relevant and appropriate based on children’s ages, etc.) can be used to draw up key messages:

Behavioural outcomes of increased father involvement:

- reduced contact with the justice system
- delayed sexual activity
- reduced divorce rate
- less reliance on aggressive conflict resolution

Educational outcomes of increased father involvement:

- higher grade completion and income
- math competence in girls
- verbal strengths in boys and girls (literacy)

Emotional outcomes of increased father involvement:

- greater stress tolerance and problem-solving competence
- reduced gender stereotyping^{lxxxvi}

The connections between home, school, and work are emphasized in research into the significance of father involvement, as in Dr. Kyle Pruett's book *Fatherneed*:

During their child's grade school years, fathers are advised to talk to their children about work life and how it parallels children's school experience, including the need to work hard, meet deadlines, manage being "bossed around," use memorization skills, be neat, develop friendships, and work as part of a team. Fathers are also reminded to try to see the world through their children's eyes, and go easy on encouraging them to grow up too fast. Childhood should be savored, not accelerated.^{lxxxvii}

McNichol and Dalton cite many benefits to be gained from encouraging fathers to become more involved with their children's reading and education, including combating social exclusion, improving basic skills, raising children's educational achievement and widening the impact of family literacy. Their research found that family literacy projects had a difficult time recruiting fathers because many of the activities took place during working hours. "Any literacy initiatives wishing to encourage input from fathers therefore need to be planned with fathers' other commitments in mind and also in locations where men are likely to feel comfortable. Traditionally, schools are viewed as female-orientated institutions, whereas workplaces and other community venues are likely to be considered more welcoming to men' (Brookes, 2002)."^{lxxxviii}

The following two pages show examples of recruitment materials (the basis for speaking notes and a handout distributed during a Centre for Family Literacy presentation to trade union members) that focus on father involvement. (See also the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers case study in Appendix A.)

Books Offer Our Kids Success



Why are you talking to me?

Well, children really benefit from involved fathers. And research shows that if we read to children from an early age, they tend to do better at school. Plus sharing a book is a great way to bond with your child and it's fun!



What is this program about?

In a B.O.O.K.S. program we meet one evening a week for a couple of hours and share storybooks which you can borrow. We explore activities based on the story, talk about parenting issues, share our knowledge and have fun.



Why should I go to this program?

Learn how games - card games, board games, word games - support literacy & numeracy skills. Get ideas & support from other Dads. Learn fun things to do with books. Shape the program to meet your interests. Become even closer to your children.

Contact **Colleen** at **780.421.7323** or colleen_crozier@familit.ca to find out more about a **family reading program** coming this fall.



Books Offer Our Kids Success



What is family literacy?

Family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps children and adults get things done. Examples of family literacy include: writing down a phone message, reading instructions for assembling furniture, following a recipe, telling a story, teaching a child a song.

Why do we focus on the family?

Family shapes us in many ways. It is our most important support network. It is where learning and our attitude to learning first begins. Children learn their basic thinking, speaking and social skills within the context of the family.

What do family literacy programs do?

Family literacy programs show parents how rhymes, songs and stories help language development. They encourage parents to share books with their babies and preschoolers to give them the best start in language and literacy learning.

Shouldn't you be talking to mothers?

It's true, as a culture we associate mothers with a child's early years. However, research shows that fathers play an important role too.

For example, during the first 5 years of children's lives, fathers are often more influential than mothers in how children learn to manage their bodies, deal with new or difficult situations, and play.

These studies say that children with involved fathers develop better problem-solving skills and tolerate stress better. Girls develop better math skills, and boys have stronger speaking skills.

Why the IBEW?

In May 2008, with funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, we undertook a 2-year Workplace Family Literacy Project. We are offering family literacy programs at three different worksites around the province. We made contact with the IBEW Local 424, spoke about the project with Barry S....., saw the marvelous Training Centre and were given the chance to invite you to join this program.



Contact **Colleen** at **780.421.7323** or colleen_crozier@familit.ca to find out more about a **family reading program** coming this fall.



Small communities and small companies

In *Profiting from Literacy: Creating a Sustainable Workplace Literacy Program*^{lxviii}, the authors identify best practices according to the size of business: small (fewer than 100 workers), medium (between 100 and 500), and large (more than 500 workers). Small companies, the authors say, face unique challenges in providing training to workers, and these challenges apply not only to workplace training and essential skills programs, but to family literacy in the workplace as well.

Lack of time and money are common issues when small businesses try to upgrade their employees' skills. They are often short staffed and have limited access to training materials. They may not have enough employees to make an in-house program worthwhile; in Leger Marketing's 2009 interviews with business owners, 19% mentioned having a small organization or not enough employees as a reason not to consider offering family literacy programs.^{xc}

One rural community in Alberta has studied these issues and developed innovative solutions. In *Training the Rural Workforce*, authors Gross and Koersen address the question of how to best develop and sustain a skilled rural workforce. Recognizing that individual businesses and agencies do not have the capacity for stand-alone essential skills training, they propose that all community stakeholders be brought together to plan training. The Vauxhall Coalition, as the group of stakeholders became known, identified the need for training *for* the workplace, not training *in* the workplace, in small rural communities. While the study examines training in relation to essential skills, the findings are still relevant for planning family literacy in the workplace.

...The success of these examples [case studies of initiatives in rural Canada] is encouraging for essential skills growth. Their workplace framework, however, does not match the rural reality of our region, nor others like ours. Their reality focuses on a workplace location that could provide accessible training for an existing pool of employees. Our reality is that we have few single employers who can provide affordable training at the work site. Instead, we need to focus on the development of initiatives that bring together all community stakeholders in an effort to provide affordable training for the workplace.

...Because we are suggesting that workforce training will not necessarily take place within a specific workplace, we recommend that rural businesses and industries should still play a role in making training accessible and affordable. They can participate in the process in a variety of ways such as the following: (a) they can help employees or potential employees get training by paying for some or all of their tuition, (b) they can allow for some time off work or flex time to attend training, (c) they can provide work-experience placements, (d) they can offer authentic workplace materials or other learning resources, and (e) they can give input into curriculum.^{xcii}

7. Program delivery

As mentioned earlier, this guide does not contain new models of family literacy developed for the workplace. There are existing models that can be adapted to the workplace, and should be adapted with input from the stakeholders at each business, to meet the interests of those

employers and employees. Within the framework of proven models, the methods, materials, activities, assessment tools, and outcomes will be tailored to each context.

Participant assessment

Each model of family literacy will have its own methods of assessing progress. As discussed in the previous chapter on program planning, in the workplace, practitioners must be mindful of the vulnerability associated with assessment or “testing” in relation to job security, status, etc. If individual assessment is used, it is voluntary and results are strictly confidential so as to encourage reluctant employees and minimize concerns. Talk to supervisors, trainers, union representatives, and other staff at the business to discuss how best to implement assessment of participants.

Practitioners should also consider the opportunities presented by assessment for facilitating learning. Share with participants the task of assessing their progress and that of their children, and keeping track of it. What do they want to get out of the program? How will they know their goals are met? Encourage participants to keep a record of what happens as a result of participating—simple record keeping can include:

- “passports” that get stamped when there is evidence of learning or milestones
- journals where participants record their feelings on learning or family activities they have initiated as a result of the program
- photographs of family literacy activities
- checklists of participants’ achievements

The facilitator will also keep records of individual and collective assessment. Making brief notes at the end of every session is a good way to make sure you don’t omit information. It will not only inform how the program should be adjusted as it’s delivered, but will provide important information for evaluation at the end of every program. Notes such as the ones throughout this document are taken from the Workplace Family Literacy Project pilot programs, and illustrate the rich qualitative data that can be captured through such reflections.



Use a variety of flexible assessment procedures, ensuring that they develop self-confidence and support employee goals. Documentation for assessment and program evaluation can include individual and/or collective learning agreements; individual learning plans; a statement of learning objectives agreed to by the class; the program outline; and promotional materials such as flyers.

Assessment without paper:

- conversation
- group discussion
- exhibition
- games
- observation
- performance
- practical activities
- interviews
- question and answer

Paper-based assessment:

- action planning
- projects
- assignments
- checklists
- learning journal
- profile
- self-assessment form
- portfolio^{xci}

Flexibility, perseverance, ongoing promotion and retention

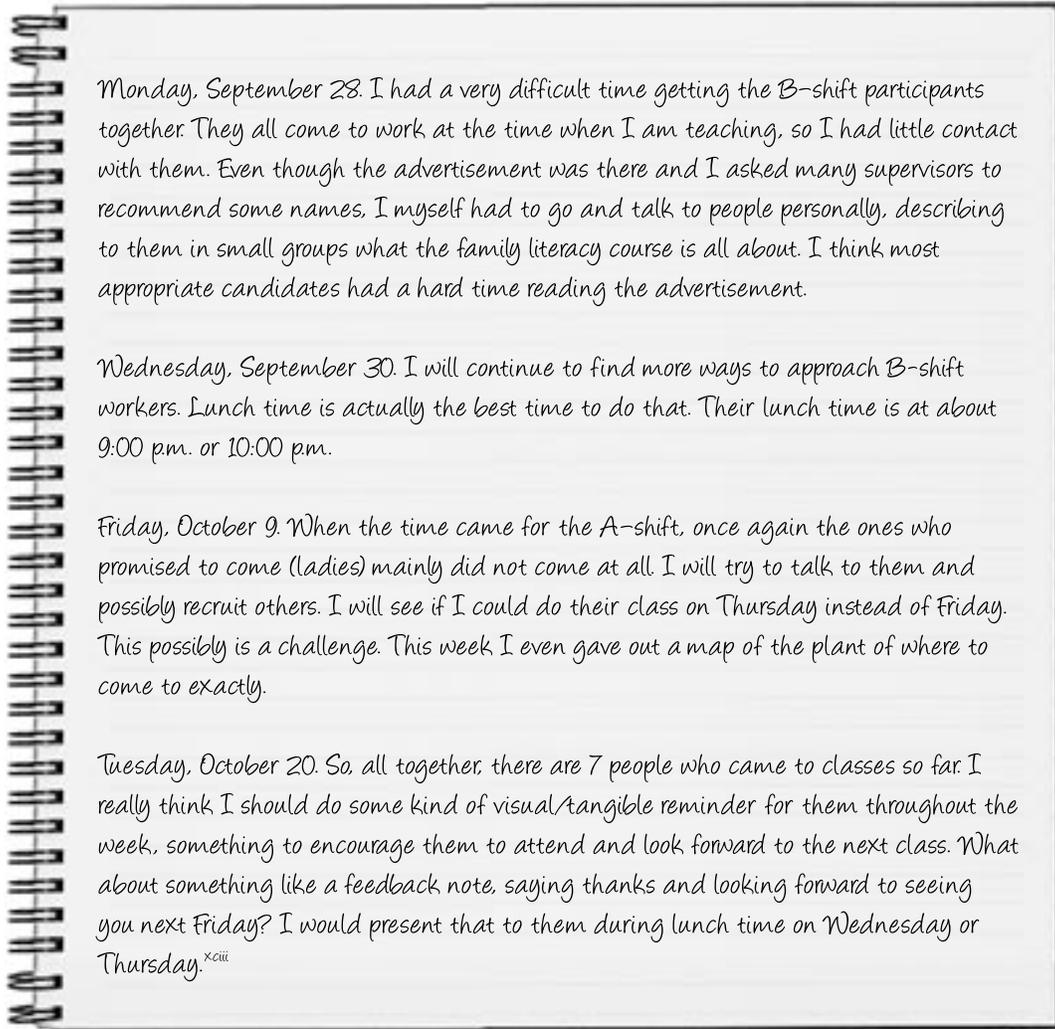
Despite effective promotion and recruitment, it is not at all unusual to experience low attendance (or no attendance) in the initial weeks of the program. Continue recruitment strategies such as personally talking to and inviting employees to attend, distributing reminders to people who attended the information session or first session, and following up by telephone with employees who signed up for the program.

Promotion isn't something that should cease once the program is underway. Ongoing promotion is important to:

- build and maintain enthusiasm of current participants, and aid retention
- build interest among other employees and aid recruitment to future programs
- retain the support of key stakeholders
- celebrate milestones in the program and celebrate its successes

In addition to an active, regular promotional campaign within the workplace, consider sending out a press release when the program starts and when it concludes. Community interest in and recognition of the program will be something both the employer and employees can be proud of.

In planning future programs, encourage past participants to not only help promote the program and recruit employees, but to join the steering committee as employee representatives.



Monday, September 28. I had a very difficult time getting the B-shift participants together. They all come to work at the time when I am teaching, so I had little contact with them. Even though the advertisement was there and I asked many supervisors to recommend some names, I myself had to go and talk to people personally, describing to them in small groups what the family literacy course is all about. I think most appropriate candidates had a hard time reading the advertisement.

Wednesday, September 30. I will continue to find more ways to approach B-shift workers. Lunch time is actually the best time to do that. Their lunch time is at about 9:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m.

Friday, October 9. When the time came for the A-shift, once again the ones who promised to come (ladies) mainly did not come at all. I will try to talk to them and possibly recruit others. I will see if I could do their class on Thursday instead of Friday. This possibly is a challenge. This week I even gave out a map of the plant of where to come to exactly.

Tuesday, October 20. So, all together, there are 7 people who came to classes so far. I really think I should do some kind of visual/tangible reminder for them throughout the week, something to encourage them to attend and look forward to the next class. What about something like a feedback note, saying thanks and looking forward to seeing you next Friday? I would present that to them during lunch time on Wednesday or Thursday.^{xviii}

(By the end of the very successful program at the meat packing plant, the subject of the facilitator's notes above, she had 50 people on a wait list for the next program! See the case study in Appendix A for more information.)

In terms of retention, participation in workplace family literacy program should be voluntary. It is inevitable that there will be employees who start the program and leave before it is completed.

The program should be delivered in such a way that participants are encouraged to give feedback before they decide to drop out. Listen to their concerns, address them if at all possible, and encourage them to continue.

There are a multitude of reasons why employees may drop out of the program, including:

- the group and the program did not meet the needs of the employee
- the employee's needs were met before the program was completed
- circumstances at home
- circumstances at work

- too wide a range of abilities in the group, leading to a sense of frustration or dissatisfaction
- an employee's employment being terminated

Depending on work schedules, you will need to decide if the family literacy program can be delivered as stand-alone sessions, where employees can attend depending on their shift, or if employees are expected to attend all sessions. Make it clear right from the start which type of program it will be. If the latter, when an employee doesn't attend a session, follow up immediately and don't wait to see if they show up for the next one. Find out the reason.

Try to find ways for each person to make a contribution at every session and demonstrate that you value their participation.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a consideration that should be front and centre throughout program planning and delivery. Participants must feel that it is "safe" to participate in the program, and that there will be no negative repercussions in terms of job security, job status, etc. This applies not only to program records and related documents (assessment, recruitment, registration, etc.) but also to the classes themselves. Establishing an atmosphere of trust and respect is essential. This is a basic tenet of every type of literacy program, and applies every bit as much to family literacy in the workplace.

Space

The partnership agreement that you sign with the company should state that they will provide appropriate space in which to offer the program. Details relating to that space will be negotiated in the steering committee meetings, and considerations include:

- chairs and tables appropriate for the number of people and the type of work they will be doing
- displays (learning- and parenting-related posters, etc.) for the walls to provide visual interest and a pleasant environment
- well-lit entrance
- clean and well-maintained facilities
- direction signs to guide participants to the room

The space that houses the program will send out important messages to employees about the value of the program, and importance of their participation, and whether it is a safe, comfortable, non-threatening environment.

Recognizing assets

A family literacy program in the workplace should build on literacy behaviors, strengths, and knowledge already present in employees and their families, and introduce additional strategies to help further enrich literacy activities at home and at work. It's important to avoid language and actions that imply people are deficient or lacking.

Family literacy program staff should work with stakeholders to promote a positive attitude toward staff development and ensure there is no stigma attached to program participation.



In the sessions themselves, it's important to establish an atmosphere of equality, respect, and empowerment, where everyone is treated the same regardless of workplace status and skill level. One way of ensuring a respectful atmosphere that focuses on strengths is to use a set of simple ground rules, which can help to

- provide a comfortable environment where people feel safe in sharing and listening, without the fear of judgment, gossip and discourtesy;
- provide a standard of behavior that will help group members know what to expect; and
- give responsibility to the group for encouraging appropriate behavior.

To set ground rules, use the following examples or prepare a draft yourself. Discuss the need for rules with the group in the first session, and ask them which rules would be helpful, making modifications and additions as the groups sees fit. The rules should be clearly stated, brief, and under a dozen in total. Print a few copies of the rules to post in the room where the sessions are held.

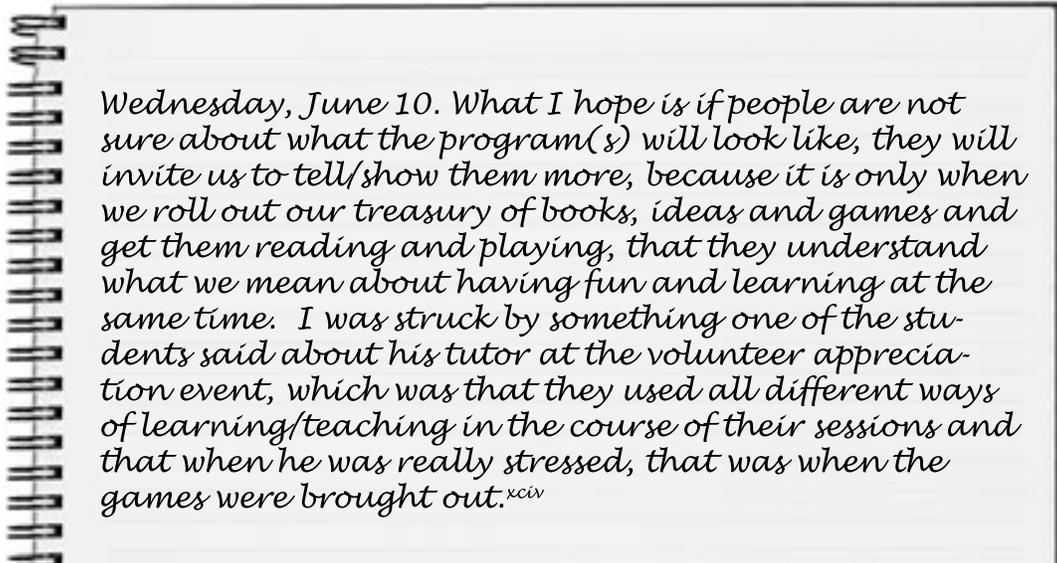
Ground Rules for Groups–Sample 1

1. Time
Our class starts at ____ and ends at _____. It's important to be here on time and stay until the end.
2. Attendance
The class meets every _____ from (date) until (date). Being here for every class means getting the most from the experience.
3. Confidentiality
Respect your co-workers and don't talk about anything of a sensitive nature with people outside the class.
4. Participation
We all have knowledge and skills to share.
Make sure everyone in the class has a chance to take part.
It's okay to ask for something to be explained if you don't understand it.
5. Respect
All ideas and opinions are important and deserve to be heard, even if you don't agree with them.
All have equal rights and will be treated with respect.
If you have something to say, wait until the other person is finished speaking.
6. Outcomes
In order to have this class at the workplace, we need to remember why we're here and work towards our goals.

Ground Rules for Groups–Sample 2

1. It's okay to make mistakes. Don't tease anyone if they get something wrong.
2. Listen carefully to each other, and don't interrupt.
3. Concentrate and try hard – don't just give up.
4. We all need help sometimes, so don't be afraid to ask.
5. Children learn at different rates. Don't compare your child with others.
6. Everyone has skills and knowledge to contribute.

Make it fun!



Wednesday, June 10. What I hope is if people are not sure about what the program(s) will look like, they will invite us to tell/show them more, because it is only when we roll out our treasury of books, ideas and games and get them reading and playing, that they understand what we mean about having fun and learning at the same time. I was struck by something one of the students said about his tutor at the volunteer appreciation event, which was that they used all different ways of learning/teaching in the course of their sessions and that when he was really stressed, that was when the games were brought out.^{xciiv}

In his insightful chapter on building a learning culture in the workplace, Wendell Wiebe emphasizes that all learning should be a positive, enjoyable activity. For many individuals, however, learning has been a negative experience. In Wiebe's research, they found it was important to make literacy a fun experience and build on the activities people enjoy. "If literacy training is viewed as a satisfying experience, reluctant employees are more likely to come forward for other technical training."^{xcv}

Materials and instruction

Flexibility, relevance, and responsiveness are key words when it comes to materials and instruction in a workplace family literacy program. As important as the facilitator's skills and resources is the ability to acknowledge, value, and encourage participants to share their expertise as parents, workers, and community members, and use this as a foundation for further learning.

The materials that you use in the family literacy program should be as relevant as possible, sensitive to and reflecting the diversity (gender, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds) of the group, while at the same time encouraging curiosity about and understanding of other cultures.

In keeping with the concept of transferable skills and contextual learning, use authentic materials as far as possible if there are adult reading components to the program. Encourage participants to bring work-related materials to class (schedules, manuals, etc.). Look for children's books related to the industry or sector. Try to follow up on group discussion and interests expressed by members, providing material and resources to support the learning that happens as the program unfolds.



Tuesday, October 20. They told me how much they enjoyed the books with their children [Aubrey Davis' *The Enormous Potato*].... They seemed to be quite interested in vocabulary and spelling. One guy from China said he was interested in forklift operation vocab./information. I told him I will provide a forklift picture dictionary next time so he can study on his own.^{xvii}

How far will facilitators go to tailor the program to meet the needs of particular groups? It depends on the skills and resources available, and the goals set for the program. In one of the pilot programs for the Workplace Family Literacy Project, the facilitator capitalized on group discussion and supported participants' learning in the manner described in the above note, while staying within the outline set for the program. (BOOKS relies on boxed sets of children's books, with enough copies for each participant to borrow, plus crafts and "storystretcher" activities to supplement the book sharing aspect of the program.) In the other pilot program, the facilitator met with staff of the food processing plant, suggested topics they might be interested in and solicited additional topics. She then developed a series of lunchtime seminars based on that initial information session:

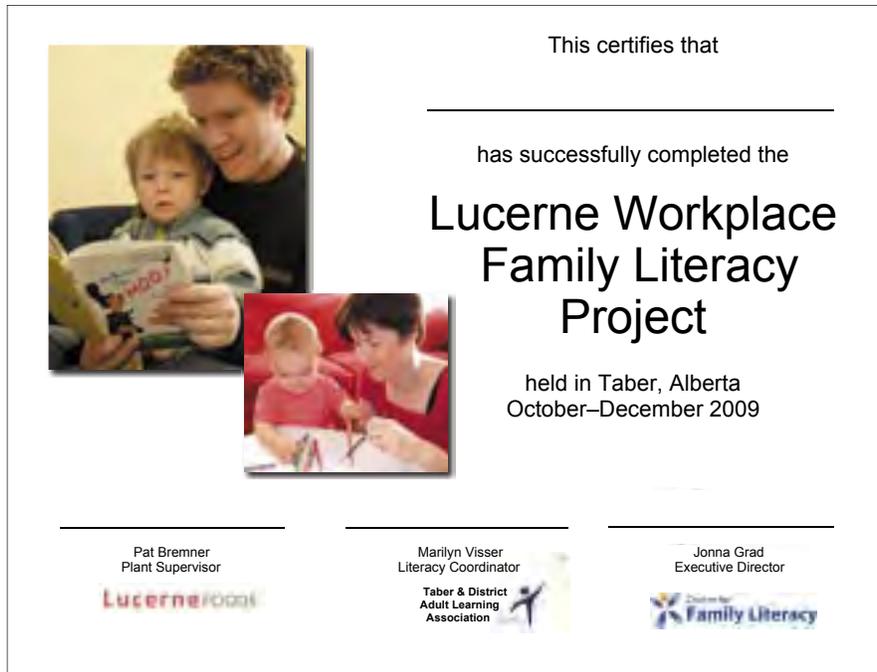


Monday, January 18. The other most notable challenge and adventure for me was making up my own curriculum for the program. As I said before, I had topics that I thought would interest them, but they picked some other topics instead. This made the program more work-intensive for me. It also added to the program and to my experience because I had to research the topics they wanted to learn about. I think it also added to their enjoyment and willingness to be involved because I showed them that I really was willing to design the program to fit their needs.^{xviii}

Program completion and participant recognition

The final session of the program is the time to collect exit feedback from participants and assess the impact the program has had. Information on assessment and evaluation is included in previous chapters.

Be sure to celebrate the end of the program, not only to honour and celebrate participants' achievements, but also to publicize the program and its value. The facilitator and class members should decide who to invite, but steering committee members, management, and others in the workplace who helped to support the program should be encouraged to attend. Work with participants and the administration to prepare a press release to let the community know about the program and its successes.



A certificate of participation is a good way of recognizing those who participated in the class, and a sample of the certificate used in one of the Workplace Family Literacy pilot programs is included above. A potluck meal or coffee and dessert event that includes participants' family members is a good way to celebrate and a good time to present certificates.

Finally, encourage program participants to become ambassadors for future programs, help with recruitment of other employees, and participate on the steering committee to help shape how subsequent programs are delivered.



The way people work and how they understand and relate to others in the workplace is intimately and inextricably linked to other aspects of their lives... (O)ne's working life is bound up with the pleasures, stresses, and commitments one finds off the job. What we want to emphasize is the importance of recognizing that how a person enters into the social, technical, and exchange relations at work will inevitably influence and be influenced by the desires and realities produced and confronted outside of paid employment....

(T)here is no such thing as "work in general." Work is always contextual and specific. Yet the context of work is not just the particular workplace where one makes a living. The context of work also includes one's particular family circumstances and the opportunities one has for enjoyable and fulfilling activities outside of the workplace.

Roger Simon et al, *Learning Work*^{xcviii}

Appendix A: Case studies
Pilot programs of the Workplace Family Literacy Project

Lakeside Packers BOOKS Program: Innovation in Alberta's meat packing industry

Case Study #1
January 2010

Summary

In late 2009 Lakeside Packers, a meat packing plant just outside of Brooks, Alberta, conducted a pilot program that saw a small number of its employees participate in a BOOKS (Books Offer Our Kids Success) family literacy program. The participants were permanent residents or new immigrants, many of whom are not literate in their own language and all of whom have very limited English reading and writing skills. The group met once a week for 1.5 hours, before their shift started, with the program running for eight weeks.

The BOOKS program focuses on encouraging parents and other caregivers to read books regularly to their children and build on the experience of reading together through craft activities. In the Brooks pilot, discussion of the themes of the children's books led naturally into discussions of work-related interests and concerns, such as job aspirations, workplace safety, etc. The classes also opened up opportunities for participants to discuss their own learning, and to ask questions related to language and reading within the safe environment of a child-focused program. Outcomes included improved communication in the workplace and enhanced family enjoyment of learning.

At the conclusion of the pilot program, the company decided to continue the program, with over 50 employees on a wait list for the next opportunity to participate.

Overview

In September 2008 the Centre for Family Literacy extended an invitation, through a contact at the Brooks office of Alberta Employment and Immigration, asking the ESL Supervisor at Lakeside Packers to join the provincial steering committee for the Workplace Family Literacy Project. The supervisor agreed, and at the first committee meeting indicated that Lakeside would welcome the opportunity to work with the WFLP to host a pilot program. (Two pilots were planned for the Workplace Family Literacy Project, and conducting a third at Lakeside was a welcome opportunity to expand the research.) Having an operation as large as Lakeside Packers based in such a small community means recruitment and integration of employees is a challenge and a priority, and offering a family literacy program in the workplace was seen as yet another way to attract and retain employees.

Unlike the other pilot programs in the Workplace Family Literacy Program, the Lakeside BOOKS program was completely "in-house," as opposed to the recommended partnership between the local literacy program and the business/employer.

The pilot program started on October 9, 2009 and was completed on November 28, 2009.

Lakeside Packers is a diversified agribusiness involved in the feeding, slaughtering, and processing of cattle. The operation also includes retail fertilizer, farming a 5,000 acre irrigated land base for silage, and providing agricultural research and consulting. In 2009 Lakeside was acquired by XL Foods Inc., the largest Canadian-owned and operated beef processor in Canada. When operating at full capacity, Lakeside's workforce includes 2,700 full-time permanent positions.



Lakeside Packers is located 5 kilometres west of Brooks, Alberta, approximately two hours southeast of Calgary on the Trans-Canada Highway. Brooks has a population of over 13,000. Its economy is rooted in agriculture with XL Lakeside Farm Industries as the largest local economic force. In addition, oil and gas exploration and production, farming/ranching, and retail and service sectors help drive the area's economy.

Lakeside Packers offers on-site English as a Second Language training to its employees, many of whom are temporary foreign workers or new immigrants. Educational background varies widely for employees, including many who are not literate in their first or other languages.

Program goals

Program goals were two-fold: to improve workplace communication and to encourage families to learn. According to the program facilitator,

Most people knew how to write their names and some very simple words. They seemed to be quite happy and eager to get into writing. One guy even bought a very nice, fancy note pad. Some of them seemed to enjoy the idea of journaling very much, drawing in it and trying to write a few words even in their own languages. Two couldn't write in their languages at all, but this wasn't the point. It was just so pleasant to see how eager they were to start writing something/anything even though they couldn't/didn't know how to.

Intended participants

The BOOKS program was open to all employees at Lakeside, including both the "A" shift and "B" shift. Promotion was directed at full-time and part-time plant workers, but contract and associated employees (farm, security, and trucking) were also eligible. Management employees were not included in the recruitment campaign. Potential participants included employees who were parents but also other extended family members, whether or not the children in their lives lived with them.

The program was intended to benefit children indirectly, and they did not participate in the sessions at the plant.

The intention was to recruit twelve employees from the "A" shift and twelve employees from the "B" shift for two pilot programs, both offered between October and December 2009.

One of the recruitment strategies was to approach employees directly with an invitation to attend the program. Countries of origin for these employees included Liberia, Sudan, Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, and China.

Activities

A facilitator held classes once a week at the work site. Classes took place every Friday within the 8 weeks from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. The participants were encouraged to share picture books regularly with their children and do a craft and other activities.

In a typical session, the facilitator and participants discussed the main children's book, the facilitator modeled book-sharing strategies, and the group took turns reading the book or doing choral reading. Themes were discussed and related to work at the plant. Participants would make a craft related to the children's story, so that they would know how to use the activity as a "storystretcher" with their children.

One of the participants observed the punctuation signs and did not leave that topic until he found out what comma, question mark and a period meant. When it was mentioned that comma serves as "break," another participant said: "yes, like coffee break at work." I used this idea to elaborate on the capital letter in the beginning of the sentence, comma as lunch break and period - serves as the time when one finishes their shift. Everyone seemed to understand this concept well.

Resources

Three Lakeside Packers employees were originally involved in planning the pilot program: two from management (the ESL Supervisor and the executive secretary) and one of the ESL instructors. The two management individuals left Lakeside Packers before the pilot commenced, and the ESL instructor assumed responsibility for the BOOKS program. Another instructor at the plant acted as helper during the sessions.

The individual appointed to facilitate the program was provided with complimentary registration in the BOOKS training course and the Introduction to Family Literacy course at the summer literacy institute offered by the Centre for Family Literacy in August 2009. The facilitator also took the Community Engagement course while at the institute.

As a way of supporting the pilot program, the Centre for Family Literacy provided Lakeside Packers with six of the 8 boxed sets required to run the eight-week program. A BOOKS boxed set contains a set of the children's book (enough for each participant to borrow a copy) for the session, titles of books on related themes, templates for craft activities ("storystretchers"), and discussion topics.

The Workplace Family Literacy Project manager worked with Lakeside staff to develop a promotional poster for the BOOKS program, with the WFL Project covering the printing costs.

The project manager worked closely with the BOOKS facilitator at Lakeside, providing support and advice when requested.

Challenges and solutions

The program for the "B" shift, which ran for 1.5 hours before work, was attended regularly by 5 participants. The program for the "A" shift, which was scheduled for 1.5 hours after work, experienced significant challenges in recruiting and retaining participants. Although 15 employees indicated during recruitment that Friday after work was a convenient day to attend sessions, and that they would attend, this turned out not to be the case.

After the initial session the facilitator approached individual "A" shift employees who had indicated interest in the program with a reminder for the next session. The two women who attended the first session confirmed they were going to come back but actually attended the class once. These were mothers who said they needed to be with their children when they

were sick. The decision was made to cancel the "A" shift program and focus on the one pilot program for the "B" shift, and to investigate the possibility of offering a program in town where employees could attend with their children.

Outcomes, impacts, and benefits

Workplace communication improved as a result of the BOOKS program.

- The program led to greater awareness of the importance of literacy at work and outside work. Participants became aware that much of the information in the workplace is communicated through written language, and some could recognize signs containing basic information.
- Employees developed basic strategies to recognize signs, letters, and become aware of workplace written communication.
- Worker /supervisor relationships were strengthened and improved: employees afraid to disclose their lack of literacy skills were encouraged by their supervisor to attend the BOOKS program, while treating their lack of skills as confidential.
- The program provided an entry point for discussing important topics.

Families were encouraged to learn and enjoy learning through the provision of books, activities, new strategies, and a supportive, safe environment.

- Participants asked if they could continue to attend the workplace family literacy course in 2010.
- Some participants asked if their spouses could also participate in the course.
- Parent-child relationships were strengthened and improved: participants shared the information, books, and activities with their children, spouses and friends outside of work.
- Discussions of children's books often turned into discussions of reading and writing at work, learning English, and learning in general.

Additional outcomes:

- The BOOKS facilitator established a workplace family literacy committee at Lakeside with the objectives of providing support and direction to the pilot program, and seeing the program continue at the plant once the pilot was completed.
- Plans are underway to start the second BOOKS program at Lakeside Packers in February 2010, and as of the end of January forty workers (from "A" shift alone) are signed up. These are primarily Chinese women who recently became Permanent Residents. Plans are to offer programs for both shifts.
- Participants in the pilot BOOKS program have offered to act as referrals and help recruit co-workers for future programs.

6th Session, *How do Dinosaurs Clean Their Rooms?* ...Much discussion took place about the importance of clean lockers and workplaces. Some mentioned that mess is a hazard at worksite.

Conclusion

Taking into account the small class size and informal assessment, the results of the Lakeside Packers BOOKS program cannot be generalized, but did succeed in meeting its goals, and indicates the potential for family literacy programs in the workplace in the way of:

- increasing employees' awareness of literacy needs in the workplace
- increasing employees' willingness to ask for assistance with literacy-related needs

- providing an increased awareness of the importance of family literacy and increased literacy-related activities in the home, and
- increasing interest in family literacy programming on the part of employees and management as a “safe, non-threatening, pleasant environment in which to be introduced to literacy”

This session took place on the 28th of November on Saturday during the party in one of the homes of the participants that the helper facilitator and I attended. This session was another highlight because it took place together with 5 children. The children read the book taking turns as their parents guided them through the process. A wife of the participant who invited us cooked lots of delicious Ethiopian food. She sat beside her son and repeated the words as he was reading. She seemed to be delighted to do that. Her husband said that she cannot read nor write.

Lucerne Workplace Family Literacy Program: Learning at lunch in southeast Alberta

Case Study #2
January 2010

Summary

In 2009 the Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association approached Lucerne Foods about the possibility of partnering on a family literacy in the workplace project. Employees identified topics that they were interested in, and the literacy coordinator used those as the basis for a series of 30-minute lunchtime seminars delivered at the food processing plant. The project ran for eight weeks. Outcomes included workers becoming more aware of their literacy skills and the literacy development of their children, and enhanced worker attitudes toward the importance of family literacy activities.

Overview

One of the early components of the Workplace Family Literacy Project was to survey family literacy practitioners in Alberta to determine their views of the feasibility of offering programs in the workplace. The survey was also a mechanism to inform practitioners of two pilot programs that would be held as part of the project, and to invite expressions of interest. Considerations for selecting pilot sites included a history of offering family literacy, staff qualifications (both administrators and facilitators), partnerships with business, and experience with workplace programs. Based on their experience in these areas, Taber & District Community Adult Learning Association (TDCALA) was chosen to conduct one of two pilot programs.

Taber is a community of 7500 people in southern Alberta, located 53 kilometers east of Lethbridge on Highway 3. The main industries are food processing, oil and gas well services, and agriculture.



TDCALA identified three potential sites for the pilot program: a hospital and two food processing plants. After discussions with each of these employers, the decision was made to offer the pilot program at Lucerne Foods.

Lucerne Foods is a division of Canada Safeway Limited, with over 30 food manufacturing plants in Canada and the United States. The Taber plant produces juices, jelly and pudding powders, spices, and extracts. The number of employees at the plant varies from 25 to 100; at the time of the pilot program there were 55 employees.

Many of the employees at the plant speak English as a second language, which in the plant superintendent's view can hinder their prospects of advancement. "We, as a company, want to give our employees every chance to improve their skill sets. Literacy is critical to [all] employees' well being since they must learn to read complex directions in Standard Operating Procedures, MSDS sheets and Operator's Manuals if they are to perform more than manual labour... Exposure to any literacy programs can only help them." Lucerne has worked with Community Futures in Taber to offer essential skills training to employees.

The pilot program ran from October 14, 2009 to December 2, 2009.

Program goals

The goals of the Lucerne Workplace Family Literacy Program were to make workers more aware of their literacy skills and the literacy skills of their children, and to enhance workers' attitudes toward the importance of family literacy.

Initially, the first big challenge surrounding this strategy was to find an employer that was open to and would support the program. Initially, one was interested, but the time frame for the project did not fit into their schedule so that option was gone. One of the workplace managers was very supportive and enthusiastic, but didn't think her workplace would be conducive to the program because of the morale of the staff. For reasons beyond her or the staff's control, there was a large amount of anxiety at that workplace. That left two other options, and neither of their managers was very enthused about supporting the project. However, after a few meetings, one of the managers warmed up to the project and became a very avid supporter and advocate for the project.

Intended participants

The Lucerne Workplace Family Literacy Program was open to all employees at Lucerne Foods. Potential participants included employees who were parents but also other extended family members, whether or not the children in their lives lived with them.

The program was intended to benefit children indirectly, and they did not participate in the sessions at the plant.

The intention was to recruit a minimum of six participants in order to run the pilot program.

Activities

A facilitator from TDCALA presented a series of 30-minute lunchtime seminars every Wednesday for eight weeks at the work site. Topics were based on an interest inventory conducted with the workers in the first session. There was ongoing dialogue between the facilitator and the participants regarding the topics the participants would like presented.

In total, eight women and four men attended the program, and the average attendance was seven. Three of the participants were ESL and rest of the participants were first language English speakers.

Resources

As a way of supporting the pilot program, the Centre for Family Literacy provided an honorarium to TDCALA, which was used to cover the facilitator's wages, refreshments for the program, and other program-related costs. The Centre also donated a small collection of children's books to TDCALA to support programming.

As mentioned above, TDCALA was chosen to run this pilot because of the association's "track record" of offering adult literacy and family literacy in their community. When the pilot program agreement was signed, TDCALA was also in the process of setting up an essential skills program in Taber. All of this experience was an important resource to bring to the WFLP pilot.

TDCALA provided one staff person to perform the coordinating and facilitating functions for the pilot project.

The Workplace Family Literacy Project manager worked with the TDCALA facilitator to develop a promotional poster and handbills for the Lucerne pilot, with the WFL Project covering the printing costs.

The project manager worked closely with the TDCALA facilitator, providing support and advice when requested.

Challenges and solutions

There were three significant challenges in establishing and delivering the Taber pilot program. The first was finding a business partner willing to host the program, the second was developing a custom curriculum tailored to the program participants, and the third was having a very limited amount of time each week in which to deliver the program.

TDCALA approached three businesses about the pilot program, and in the end offered the pilot at the one business where the supervisor was willing and the schedule allowed for it. (The literacy organization was originally going to work with another food processing plant, but in the end the employer decided that undertaking such a project would be more feasible the following year.) Lucerne Foods proved to be a good partner to work with, however, moving from accommodating TDCALA's need for a business partner to enthusiastically endorsing the project and being willing to recommend it to other employers. Key to this shift was the fact that the plant supervisor participated in the program, attending all but one of the sessions. (It is important to note that having a person from management in the group did not seem to be a cause for concern for the other participants.)

The pilot program facilitator recognized the need to tailor the program to the needs and interests of Lucerne employees, and used the first session to conduct an interest inventory. In addition to a list of topics she provided, she also asked participants to identify learning-related topics they were interested in. The series of lunchtime seminars was based on the topics identified; there was also ongoing dialogue between the facilitator and participants regarding what they would like to learn about, and changes to the list of topics midway through the program. This provided a challenge to the facilitator in terms of the amount of time spent researching topics and developing the seminars, but it was also one of the greatest strengths of the project.

It added to participants' enjoyment and willingness to be involved because I showed them that I really was willing to design the program to fit their needs.

The third challenge was to offer the program in the limited time available, both in terms of the workplace schedule but also in terms of workers' busy lives. When the facilitator suggested offering the program before or after work, the response was that many workers carpooled and this would not be feasible. While the pilot project was successful in introducing the concept of family literacy and shifting attitudes, the facilitator suggests more work needs to be done to convince employers to offer incentives to their workers to participate on their own time (before or after work), or else offer employees paid time to attend.

Outcomes, impacts, and benefits

Workers became more aware of their literacy skills and the literacy skills of their children.

- Participants found the study skills and reading strategies helpful for their own use.
- Topics suggested for another workplace project included parenting; communication with people from another country; how to help adults learn without being intimidated or ashamed; helping children read; more literacy courses; technical writing; and life skills.
- Workers adapted activities and adjusted expectations for behaviour based on what they learned about the differences in how boys and girls learn.

The program enhanced workers' attitudes toward the importance of family literacy.

- 88% of participants said they want to participate in another similar workplace program.
- Participants report spending more time with their children doing literacy activities, became more intentional about doing family literacy activities, and saw increased importance for these activities.
- Participants report increased confidence in being able to help their children improve their literacy skills.
- Participants report trying new methods with helping the children in their lives develop literacy skills and in dealing with children's behaviours.

Additional outcomes:

- The plant superintendent would recommend the project to anyone who asked. She also mentioned that she would be interested in any other workplace program that TDCALA might be offering.
- TDCALA is exploring offering this program at another food processing plant in Taber beginning in March 2010.

Conclusion

Taking into account the small sample size and informal assessment, the Lucerne Workplace Family Literacy Program succeeded in meeting its goals, and indicates the potential for family literacy programs in the workplace in the way of:

- increasing employees' awareness of their own literacy skills and those of the children in their lives
- enhancing employees' and employers' attitudes toward the importance of family literacy.

Good Intentions: the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Centre for Family Literacy pilot project

Case Study #3
January 2010

Summary

As the result of representation by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers on the steering committee for the Workplace Family Literacy Project, an offer was made by the union to host one of two planned pilot projects at a local union training centre. Despite significant effort by all parties, the pilot never moved beyond the promotion stage and the planned BOOKS (Books Offer Our Kids Success) program was not delivered. The initiative did result in recommendations on how literacy organizations and unions might work together, and there are other examples of union support of family literacy that suggest this type of initiative is worth pursuing.

Overview

In February 2009 the Centre for Family Literacy extended an invitation to the Public Affairs Officer of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 424, asking him to join the provincial steering committee for the Workplace Family Literacy Project. Having the voice of labour represented on the steering committee was seen as important in terms of having input from a range of stakeholders—business, labour, and literacy organizations—but research had also indicated the important role unions have played in establishing literacy and family literacy programs in the workplace.

The IBEW representative did join the committee, and after receiving information on the project indicated that I.B.E.W. would be interested in hosting one of the pilot programs. The IBEW is a partner in the Electrical Industry Training Centre, and our committee member felt that the new facility would be an excellent location for a family literacy program. From the WFL Project standpoint, it was an ideal opportunity given the involvement of labour in other examples of family literacy in the workplace, and the importance of unions in the history of workplace literacy programs.

The WFL Project manager met with representatives from IBEW and the E.I.T.C. to discuss the pilot, and arranged a meeting in July 2009 with a BOOKS (Books Offer Our Kids Success) co-ordinator from the Centre for Family Literacy, who was available to deliver the program and experienced in labour issues. Promotional materials were collaboratively developed, including a poster with tear-off contact information, and given to IBEW for internal distribution and distribution to other trade unions (lunch room at the training centre, union halls, the recovery centre and the benefits office).

The BOOKS coordinator made a brief presentation at an IBEW unit meeting in September 2009 to present the concept of the proposed program, with information and key messages tailored to father involvement, based on gender representation in the union. A brief handout describing the program and encouraging members to call for more information was distributed at the meeting.

Despite these efforts to promote the program, and offers to conduct demonstration sessions or present information in other formats, there were no further opportunities to interact with

union members, and the decision was made in November not to pursue the pilot.

On the face of it unions would seem to be an ideal partner in a workplace literacy project... [M]any unions have workplace literacy programs in place; they have long seen the importance of workers being able to read and understand work-related materials for reasons of health and safety in the workplace. Having the critical thinking skills and ability to write clearly gives workers the tools to address issues, take action and effect change in the workplace. The labour approach has been to look at workers as whole persons and to offer a variety of learning opportunities, not just material that is strictly related to the job or to the worker only as worker.

Intended participants

The program was intended to be open to not only IBEW members, but also members of the other trade unions in Edmonton.

Resources

The IBEW was to conduct a promotional campaign using their website, job line, newsletter, and a telephone blitz, and liaison with other trade unions and associations; and provide classroom space for the program and refreshments. The Centre for Family Literacy was to provide a BOOKS coordinator and BOOKS program materials. The WFL Project collaboratively developed promotional materials and paid for printing costs, and intended to provide support to the pilot program.

In addition to the BOOKS coordinator, the adult coordinator from the Centre's Learning Together program collaborated on key messages, the unit meeting presentation, and promotional materials.



The BOOKS coordinator also brought in a long-standing union member from Edmonton who consulted on the most effective way to approach and recruit members of male-dominated trades.

Challenges

Our presentation was rushed—we were given a few minutes in a union meeting and while I think our presentation was good and the workers listened intently... there was no time for questions and more discussion. Plus we never did get a chance to do a demo session.

From the point of view of the union representative in the WFLP-IBEW partnership, one of the key challenges to the pilot program was related to championing the program. He had hoped that two or three influential people would become involved and others would follow. Due to a number of urgent issues arising in the union while the pilot program was getting underway, the resources were not available to our representative to delegate leadership of the project and the initiative rested with the one individual who was challenged to see the project through. "If this requires a time commitment over and above existing responsibilities, it is not

likely to happen unless it is built into the job.”

Also from the IBEW perspective, the primary challenge in attracting participants was the unanticipated bad timing of the project starting at the same time as several “hot-button issues” for the union members. In particular, at the unit meeting at which the BOOKS coordinator made her presentation, members were upset about a labour agreement the union had negotiated. In retrospect, he advises against initiating a project like this is a bargaining year.

The IBEW representative also pointed out that the concept of family literacy was foreign and low on members’ “to do” list of priorities; it remained difficult for some to understand why people were talking to them about their children’s literacy. He also identified racism as one contributing factor to a low response to the proposed program: “When people hear ‘literacy’, they think ‘ESL’. We have had a huge onslaught of immigrants coming into the electrical workers’ trade and the attitude is, ‘why are we helping them?’”

He also noted that after working ten-hour shifts, with an hour’s travel, it’s hard to get people to come back out in the evening. Similarly, Saturdays are the one day workers have for themselves and they are not keen to come back to the training centre for a program. None of these concerns were conveyed to the WFLP manager or the BOOKS coordinator, unfortunately, but rather came out in the WFLP project evaluation.

From the Centre’s perspective, more face-to-face time and contact in general was needed with members of the union to explain the concept, introduce ideas from the simple to the complex, and make the connections between family literacy, their role as fathers, and why the pilot program was planned with the union. When there is an opportunity to present information, it’s important for people to have an opportunity to ask questions and take part in a hands-on activity.

The family literacy practitioners and union member both agreed that it’s important to have more than one person from the union involved in planning and implementing the program.

Lack of communication between the project manager and the IBEW representative posed significant challenges from the outset, although the IBEW representative continued as an active and enthusiastic member of the project steering committee until October 2009.

Findings from the attempted pilot indicate that lead time well before the beginning of a project with a union might make it easier for partners to block off time and ensure participation. From another perspective, researching and identifying a union with an existing educational committee would be an easier setting in which to pilot this kind of initiative. In addition, starting with a union with more female members might be an easier way of introducing this type of literacy program into the labour community.

Conclusion

Although the pilot program with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers did not take place, the promotional materials that were developed are of value and will help to inform future projects. In addition, the work done by Centre for Family Literacy staff on adapting the BOOKS program for this context (especially on the role of fathers in children’s learning) will be useful in other initiatives. Reflections on the experience in general will add to what is already known about partnerships and working with community. Above all, the lessons learned about

how much time and direct contact is required in advance of offering a program, in order to raise awareness of the relevance and importance of family literacy to trade union members, will prove valuable the next time such an initiative is proposed.

Appendix B: Examples of family literacy in the workplace

As a member of the Canadian Labour Congress put it, “As to family literacy components in workplace education and training, they are rather thin on the ground I fear.”^{xix} Program models such as we are proposing in the Workplace Family Literacy Project are indeed few and far between. But there are interesting and encouraging examples, and the fact that programs such as these are not widespread is exactly why the Centre for Family Literacy undertook this project.

What is not lacking are clear and compelling arguments that show how interwoven all of these threads are—learning as an adult, as a worker, as a parent, as a child—and how one supports and enhances the other. From academic research on functional context learning and literacy transfer to calls from labour and business councils to invest in family literacy, recognition has existed for over two decades of the wisdom of integrating family-based programming into workplace and basic skills initiatives.

Intensive family literacy programs

Learning Together, Off Line Basic Skills Unit, Ford Motor Co.

As a response to the need for new skills development, unions and management collaborated to set up a learning centre at the Ford Motor Company plant just outside of London, England in the mid-1990s. The centre was a drop-in workshop with flexible hours, offering finite and ongoing programming. Employees could work on equivalency maths and English, as well as courses for particular workplace functions.

Among the courses offered at the learning centre was a family literacy program called Learning Together, an intensive model that includes three components. Each program ran for ten weeks, and each session was “stand alone” as shift patterns meant families couldn’t always attend. In this type of program, parents meet to work on their own literacy skills, as well as to learn ways to support their children’s literacy development. While their parents meet separately, children take part in an enriched early childhood education program. Joint sessions are also included, giving parents an opportunity to practice what they’ve learned and to share ways in which they use literacy at home. The families met together on Saturday mornings for two hours, with an hour for the separate sessions and an hour for the joint sessions. The families also took part in visits to other parts of the Ford plant. According to the program manager, assessments showed progress and great improvements in confidence, and was an important hook to get employees into learning centre programs.^c

London Transport Museum and London Underground Ltd.

The Museum’s work on basic skills began through its links with teachers and the provision of summer literacy schools. This led to structured activities incorporating basic skills for families. London Underground, meanwhile, had established a Basic Skills Unit and had the infrastructure for making provision for employees and their families. The two recognized the benefits of partnership in addressing the government’s priorities of widening participation, improving basic skills, and reaching new audiences.

Their pilot program included weekend classes for families at the Museum, with six half days for literacy (Saturday) or six half days for numeracy (Sunday). There were parallel activities for parents and children, as well as joint sessions. Families find out about the program through LUL’s

existing programs, as well as through ads in its company magazines and information printed regularly on employee payslips.^{ci}

Learning centres

There are many examples where workplace learning centres are opened to family members as well as employees.

Durabelt Inc.

Durabelt is a small company located in Montague, PEI, which manufactures customized conveyor belts for vegetable harvesting. Competing on the basis of its quality products, the organization took a proactive approach in 1997 towards raising the literacy level of its workforce. In partnership with Workplace Education-PEI, a needs assessment was conducted and a model program called "Duraschool" established. Instruction focused on math and communications for manufacturing, and the program was also made available to employees' family members with the aim to "promote a culture of learning beyond its own workforce."^{cii}

Classes were held on site in the evenings for sixteen weeks. In addition to being conducive to the transfer of learning from the classroom to the shop floor, employees reported becoming better able to help their children with their homework and having higher academic expectations for them.^{ciii}

AltaSteel

AltaSteel Learning Centre at the AltaSteel (Stelco) factory in Edmonton, Alberta was the continuation of inroads made with the Job Effectiveness Training (J.E.T.) program. Workplace essential skills training was offered to AltaSteel employees and their family members and focused on reading, math, and computer skills.

The Job Effectiveness Training (J.E.T.) program was launched in 1996 to enhance its employees' literacy and employability skills, including their mathematical, computer, problem-solving, teamwork, and English-language reading, writing, and speaking skills. Its aim was to enhance its employees' foundation skills to make them more flexible in the face of changes in the workplace. Wrought by the introduction of new technology and more successful than other in-house training, this program assisted employees in meeting their own personal needs and the needs of family members not addressed by the community at large. Having the learning centre open to participation by members of employees' families was reported to reinforce employee learning.^{civ, cv}

United Food and Commercial Workers Canada Training Centres

Local 247 of the United Food and Commercial Workers represents 10,000 members in B.C. Training activities began with supports for members laid off when meat plants shut down. These activities grew to include other groups of workers facing similar needs. The Training Centre now has six locations in various communities. Most of its programs are supported by federal funding and are directed to people with multiple barriers in the labour market. The Training Centre's programs for UFCW members include literacy, English skills, and GED. While parents take English classes, their children are provided with a computer skills program.^{cvi}

Focus on Parent or Primary Caregiver

City of Kamloops

Four interest groups were involved in this project: City of Kamloops, CUPE 900, Laubach Literacy of Canada, and Thompson Rivers University (TRU). TRU teamed with Laubach to develop and deliver a family literacy workshop series for interested City of Kamloops employees. The City sought to increase employee interest in developing their workplace literacy skills. The workshop series was designed to impact the employee's home literacy practices, with some on-site practice with participant and child. It was based on Laubach's Family Literacy Program (suitable for caregivers of children 0-12), which focuses on creating a learning culture in the home. Participants met on 8 occasions, 2 hours each time, at a neutral downtown office building. The sessions typically began with a discussion of a particular reading/literacy strategy with some paired practice. Between sessions, participants were asked to try the strategies/activities at home and report back to the group. Children and other members of the families were encouraged to attend two of the 8 sessions.^{cvi}

Winthrop University, Rock Hill, South Carolina

A Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina program promotes lifelong literacy skills for its custodial, gardening, and refuse collection department employees and, in turn, helps these adult learners support their children's education. (Some employees have less than a grade six education.) Employees attend two-hour sessions each week for 12 weeks.

This program is intended to help employees improve their on-the-job literacy skills through activities involving their families and homes. Three approaches characterize the program: using children's literature, work-related literature, and personal literature. Participants receive job training activities at work and then as part of the instruction, relate these activities to their homes and their families. For example, by learning and responding to literacy strategies used when reading children's books, the program intends for the participants to use these strategies when reading for personal pleasure or work.

The "Using Children's Literature" module of the program involves participants in reading activities that include prediction, characterization, sequencing, inferencing, and imagery. During class, the participants record their reactions to the readings in a log book; at home, they read and discuss the books with family members. The "Using Work-Related Literature" module involves participants in reading about hazardous materials and safety on the job and in the home. The "Using Personal Literature" module involves participants in writing and sharing stories about their life experiences with others in class and, later, with their children at home. The three modules of this program connect home, school, and workplace literacy applications.^{cvi, cix}

Linking Home and School Through Workplace (LHSTW)

Linking Home and School Through Workplace (LHSTW), developed by the Work in America Institute, began its first on-site pilot program in 1990 and by 1991 had thirty-one sites in 25 states across the U.S. Unions played a key role and sites included the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, Sheet Metal Workers, and the UAW/Ford and UAW/GM Training Centers. LHSTW targeted employees with children pre-school through junior high. The organization's goals were:

- to assist employees in teaching their children basic skills
- to strengthen parent and child relationships
- to introduce employees to workplace education and to offer basic skills courses
- to educate the next generation of employees

- to institutionalize the concept of education in the workplace

Units such as Family Science, Critical Television Watching, Family Reading, and Parents Question and Answer Tips helped promote inter-generational learning and parenting skills while fostering education and communication. At the workplace parents were taught activities they could bring home and share with their children.)^{cx, cxii}

Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS)

The Further Education Society of Alberta is, at the time of writing this publication, conducting a project investigating the feasibility of integrating the LAPS program into workplace and essential skills programs. The following is the executive summary of their project:

Towards a Literate Canada: Linking Family Literacy & Essential Skills to the Workplace is an innovative and exciting initiative to examine the integration of family literacy into the workplace. The goal of the project will be to adapt our award winning family literacy program, LAPS, (Literacy and Parenting Skills) to partner with community businesses to increase the literacy and essential skills of their workers. This will assist them to participate in family and community more fully and will encourage them to continue on a path of lifelong learning. Also, workers will become more efficient and productive in the workplace if their challenges are addressed in an effective manner. In addition to LAPS, its Aboriginal version, A-LAPS (Aboriginal Literacy and Parenting Skills) will also be utilized in so that the educational sessions will be culturally relevant for Aboriginal workers.

The project will have two phases. Phase One will research approaches and strategies for integrating family literacy into the workplace utilizing a process of literature review, interviews and focus groups with employees and employers in the workplace, as well as expert advice from workplace literacy practitioners. A research report will be prepared with recommendations and strategies for bringing family literacy to the workplace. Phase Two will analyze what essential skills are currently in the LAPS/A-LAPS program; create new LAPS/A-LAPS activities around essential skills and pilot the newly developed LAPS/A-LAPS sessions in workplace settings. Interested employers participating in the pilots include the Calgary Board of Education, Walmart and a First Nations Casino. The LAPS in the workplace sessions will be published and available to family literacy practitioners, community groups and interested employers across the country in 2011.^{cxii}

Lunchtime seminars

Reading Matters

Reading Matters is part of the National Literacy Trust's (a British non-profit, independent charity) "Family Reading Campaign."

Reading Matters delivers lunchtime seminars, on the importance of reading to children, to parents and carers in the workplace. The seminars aim to help parents create a stimulating, fun reading environment in the home and give parents the tools to instill in their children a genuine lifelong love of books.

The Reading Matters seminars are written and delivered by primary school teachers and address all the common questions, concerns, and difficulties experienced by parents trying to support their children's reading at home.

The seminars are short and concise, and aimed at the needs of busy working parents. They target different age groups: under 4s (Pre-reading), 4-6s (Learning to Read) and 7-11s (Beyond the Basics). They include advice on sharing books with young children, practical games, understanding how children learn to read, tips on supporting children in learning to read, recommended booklists, developing reference skills, and strategies for children who can read but don't want to, or for older children who are struggling.

Clients are wide-ranging and include investment banks, law firms, accountancy firms, car manufacturers, and hospitals. Most organizations provide the funding as it gives them an opportunity to show genuine concern, interest and empathy with working parents who strive to maintain a healthy work-life balance.^{cxiii}

Ready to Learn

These on-site lunchtime seminars appear to be very similar to the "Reading Matters" program described above, but are offered by a private, for-profit company.

Seminars are offered on:

- Ready to Read 0-4 year olds
- Ready to Read 4-6 year olds
- Ready to Read 7-11 year olds
- Ready to Count 5-11 year olds
- Ready to Write 5-11 year olds
- Ready to Help with Homework 5-11 year old
- Ready for Nursery
- Ready for Reception
- Ready for the 7+ and 11+

The company also offers to tailor seminars to any education-related subject to suit the needs of the client company.^{cxiv}

Family literacy activities and events

Unionlearn (United Kingdom)

During "Learning at Work Day," events included such things as a "Helping Your Child with Numbers" presentation organized by the Britannia Staff Union in Leek, Staffordshire.^{cxv}

"Great to have it at lunchtime at work, otherwise I would never have done this."

Campaign for Learning (United Kingdom)

“Sustainable Workplaces” was the theme of 2008 National Learning at Work Day on May 22. Campaign for Learning strives to show employers the business benefits of staff development. There was a “work/life balance” strand to the 2008 campaign, and an example offered for activities in the workplace was a family story writing competition.^{cxvi}

Library outreach and book lending

The Big Read/Reaching Parents Programme

As part of the National Year of Reading in the United Kingdom, over 200 Asda supermarkets and more than 4,600 libraries worked together to take library resources out of their usual environment and onto the high street and into the workplace. In two weeks of in-store activity at all Asda stores, the Reaching Parents Programme reached more than six million shoppers and store employees.

An Asda representative from each store teamed up with a children’s librarian to run the event in their own communities. In many stores this partnership continued after the two-week campaign and storytelling sessions have become part of regular programming.^{cxvii}

More Families Reading

The More Families Reading initiative in Barking and Dagenham, London aimed to encourage more family library use by taking the service out of the library and into community venues such as schools, workplaces, and leisure facilities. Staff in this U.K. initiative hoped to make library use more relevant and accessible, especially to those who are not regular library patrons, and to encourage parents to read for their own enjoyment as well as to support their children’s reading.

Taster collections of books were established in workplaces to encourage more fathers to read with their children. One of the most successful was in the cafeteria of the Ford Engine Plant, where almost one hundred workers joined the library and more than 200 books were issued during the year.^{cxviii}

Quick Reads

In the Quick Reads initiative, publishers, authors, book retailers, and unions work together in the U.K. to deliver the message that reading can be fun and rewarding. In one example, the Metroline bus company promoted Quick Reads in all of their garages, promoting the joys of reading to all of their 3,700 employees and their families.^{cxix}

Books for Families

This program was a pilot project run by the Centre for Family Literacy in Edmonton, Alberta in collaboration with All Weather Windows. The project aimed at promoting literacy in the homes of the All Weather Windows employees. The program ran for 6 weeks (2 times per month) between the A shift and B shift at the site. The program initially operated out of the training room, but two weeks into the program it was relocated to the lunchroom for more exposure. In total there were 31 English as a Second Language participants who borrowed books.

One of the recommendations to emerge from the pilot was to include tips on a bookmark about the fundamentals of literacy in the home as it is difficult for project facilitators to talk with all of the parents. The company has the resources to write documents in many different languages, therefore having those tips on a bookmark in the native languages of the

employees would help them better understand the goals of the program.^{cxx}

Resources for the general public

Unionlearn (United Kingdom)

Offers support for Campaign for Learning's "Family Learning Week" and for the BBC's "RaW" (Reading and Writing) campaign.^{cxxi}

National Literacy Trust (United Kingdom)

In 2004 the National Literacy Trust issued a call to raise literacy standards in the workplace and in the community. Among the recommendations for promoting reading in the workplace:

- **Workplace library:** set up a library within the workplace and encourage borrowing. The library could be of books brought in by staff or donated by the company. A local librarian may be able to help set one up. Ford in Dagenham set up a workplace library with the help of a visiting local librarian who brought boxes of books onto the shop floor. Employees were encouraged to borrow books for themselves and their children.
- **Children's library exchange:** Create a children's library within the workplace. Encourage staff to bring in books their children have grown out of so they can be borrowed by parents (grandparents, uncles, or aunts) of other children.
- **Buy a book as present to staff who have a new child.**
- **Celebrate World Book Day, Bedtime Reading Week and National Poetry Day:** make the most of national reading events to celebrate reading at work.^{cxxii}

America Reads

As part of the "America Reads" Challenge to help all children read well and independently by the end of the third grade, the U.S. Department of Education published "Simple Things You Can Do" for employers as well as universities, media, librarians, community organizations, and others.^{cxxiii}

Appendix C: Definitions

Literacy^{cxiv} is defined as the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community—to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.

Literacy skills are measured in three broad domains:

- prose literacy: the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, poems and fiction
- document literacy: the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and charts
- quantitative literacy: the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a chequebook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form or determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement

Workplace basic skills and the related terms workforce literacy, workplace literacy, employability skills, and (below) essential skills are defined in a number of ways by a number of different agencies and organizations. The Conference Board of Canada defines workplace basic skills as including:

- understanding and ability to use prose (such as reports, letters, and equipment manuals)
- communicating effectively
- understanding and ability to use documents (such as safety instructions, assembly directions, maps)
- understanding and ability to use numbers by themselves or charts and tables
- thinking critically and acting logically to solve problems and make decisions
- using computers, technology, tools and information systems effectively
- ability to build and work in teams
- positive attitude toward change
- willingness and ability to learn for life^{cxv}

Essential skills^{cxvi} are defined as the fundamental skills that make it possible to learn all others. They are enabling skills that help people participate fully in the workplace and in the community. They are:

- reading text
- document use
- numeracy
- writing
- oral communication
- working with others
- thinking skills
- computer use
- continuous learning

Family literacy^{cxvii} refers to “the ways parents, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community.”

Family literacy programs include “the broad spectrum of initiatives which recognize the influence of the family on the literacy development of family members and try to support families in literacy activity and in accessing literacy resources.”^{cxviii} Programs may involve parents only, or parents and children together.

Appendix D: Statements of good practice for family literacy in the workplace

A great deal of work has gone into developing “good practice” and “best practice” statements for family literacy programs, workplace literacy and workplace education programs, essential skills programs, and adult literacy programs. In considering workplace training that includes a family literacy component, what generally constitutes “good practice” in the aforementioned initiatives still applies.

This document, however, is intended to specifically address family literacy programs offered in the workplace. The statements are derived from the good practice work mentioned above, as well as from additional research. (See “Sources and references” at the end of this document.)

Good practice in family literacy programs in the workplace is defined by the following characteristics:

1. Intergenerational

A quality family literacy program in the workplace works with parents and children, directly or indirectly, to establish an intergenerational cycle of literacy achievement. It supports employees in helping their children improve their skills and helps these adults further develop their own literacy.

2. Collaborative

A quality family literacy program in the workplace is planned and delivered as a partnership. The family literacy provider, workplace training provider, management, employees, and, where applicable, union representatives participate on a joint committee that supports and oversees the program. Stakeholders understand the connections between family literacy, employability, and employee and company goals.

Committee members are involved in the program in meaningful ways, and have a responsibility to be informed and supportive. While decision making is inclusive, ultimate authority and responsibility for the program are clearly defined and communicated.

3. Integrated

A quality family literacy program in the workplace is part of an overall, long-term workplace development plan and is linked to other training in the workplace and not offered in isolation. It is one element of a company-wide approach that fosters a culture of learning in the workplace and the community.

Program developers consider how to effectively situate the program as a stepping stone to additional family and adult learning opportunities. Program staff are knowledgeable about learning opportunities in the workplace and in the community, and can provide information to participants on further education and training.

4. Well-promoted

A quality family literacy program in the workplace initiates an awareness campaign to attract potential participants and to gain support for the program from senior management, employee representatives, and the union. This support is highly visible to employees and informs

all aspects of recruitment, public relations, and advocacy. The program continues an active, regular promotional campaign to maintain interest in and support for the initiative.

5. Accessible

A quality family literacy program in the workplace encourages and facilitates employee participation. The program is voluntary, open to all employees, and scheduled at convenient times and places.

Support is given to overcome barriers to participation. The program is held in an accessible, comfortable, and welcoming location. There is no financial burden on participants; paid versus unpaid time to attend the program is negotiated between stakeholders before the program begins.

6. Strengths-based

A quality family literacy program in the workplace builds on literacy behaviors, strengths, and knowledge already present in employees and their families, and introduces additional strategies to help further enrich literacy activities at home and at work. It avoids language and actions that imply people are deficient or lacking.

The program works with stakeholders to promote a positive attitude toward staff development, with no stigma attached to program participation.

The program is offered in an atmosphere of equality, respect, and empowerment, where everyone is treated the same regardless of workplace status and skill level.

7. Culturally appropriate

A quality family literacy program in the workplace is sensitive to and respects diversity in the gender, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds of participants. It uses resources that are appropriate for specific participant groups, and fosters cross-cultural curiosity and understanding.

8. Adequately funded

A quality family literacy program in the workplace has the necessary funding and resources for staffing, materials, evaluation, and other elements in order to effectively deliver services.

9. Methodologically sound

The program is flexible and adaptable to the particular workplace and the needs, interests, and goals of the participant group, taking into account the diverse learning styles of adults.

Staff ensure that content and delivery support and promote the development of transferable skills and lifelong learning. The program supports intergenerational learning and family literacy, allowing employees to integrate what they learn with their day-to-day lives at work, at home, and in the community.

The program recognizes that adults have background knowledge and experience that contributes to their learning, and that adults increase their literacy skills when they learn in a meaningful context. The program follows sound adult education principles, being learner-centred and addressing the needs of employees as whole persons.

10. Staffed by qualified personnel

A quality family literacy program in the workplace has qualified and trained staff appropriate to specific roles and responsibilities within a particular delivery model. They are familiar with the workplace in which the program is offered and have the ability to work successfully with a wide range of stakeholder groups.

11. Careful with assessment

A quality family literacy program in the workplace uses a variety of flexible assessment procedures that develop self-confidence and support employee goals. If individual assessment is used, it is voluntary and not the only indicator of knowledge, skills, and progress. Individual assessment results are strictly confidential so as to encourage reluctant employees and minimize concerns about job security.

Assessment methods are appropriate to the type of family literacy model being delivered, in terms of the program's duration, intensity, and objectives.

12. Properly planned and evaluated

A quality family literacy program in the workplace includes an on-going, appropriate, and manageable planning and evaluation process that produces information useful for program development and accountability. It carries out these activities in a participatory manner, with all partners involved in identifying needs and establishing key success factors that are relevant to them. Evaluation documents both expected and unexpected outcomes.

Stakeholders have reasonable expectations of the program and accept that literacy and essential skills take time to acquire, and that time and resources need to be invested over a considerable period to see skill gains. Program evaluation looks at changes in not only skills, but attitudes and behaviors as well.

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Appendix E: Examples of family literacy models in Alberta

It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of the different types of family literacy programs operating in Alberta, but rather those models that are best known and most widely used.

Books for Babies

Books for Babies is a program that encourages parents of infants between birth and 12 months to share books with their babies. It supports all families in developing early literacy and language experiences and promotes healthy family relationships. The program is delivered either through one-on-one contacts or in a group setting. Each family is provided with a sturdy book bag, books and easy-to-read information. Ways to enjoy books together are modeled and shared.

Books Offer Our Kids Success (BOOKS) and Homespun

In Books Offer Our Kids Success (BOOKS) programs, a facilitator works with a group of parents for eight weeks, modeling book-sharing strategies. Ideas and themes are discussed and extended by craft and drama activities. Parents also engage in informal writing, often writing a story for their children during the program. Parents borrow books to share at home with their preschool children.

Building Blocks

Building Blocks is an in-home visitation program which uses paid Builders (in-home literacy practitioners) to support parents in their role as their child's first and most influential teacher. The program provides one-on-one literacy support to families. Builders provide parents with literacy strategies around everyday activities so they are better able to support their child's literacy development through increased oral language use, increased use of print and increased confidence in their own abilities as teachers. Builders develop and enhance parent understanding, knowledge and skills about how to support early language and literacy development. Builders are able to create literacy and skill building opportunities through in-home visits. These supports are delivered to families on a strength-based and individualized basis.

Help Your Child to Read and Write

Help Your Child to Read and Write is a program for parents with children of elementary school age. The program helps parents build their children's confidence and supports reading and writing in the home. Parents meet with a workshop and look at their children's strengths and abilities. They use good quality children's books to practice strategies for making meaning from print, and review writing skills, comprehension strategies and study skills.

Learning Together

Learning Together assists parents to improve their own reading and writing skills while learning how to help their preschool children become successful learners. The program has three components - sessions with the parents, sessions with the children and sessions with the parents and children together.

Parents learn about how their children become readers and writers, and learn ways to help their children in the early stages of reading and writing. At the same time, parents improve their own reading and writing skills.

Children receive an enriched early childhood program that will help them acquire the necessary skills for being successful readers and writers.

Parents practice with their children what they have learned about supporting their children's language and literacy development.

Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS)

Literacy and Parenting Skills Program (LAPS) works with low-literate parents to improve their parenting and literacy skills while also providing them with good literacy strategies to model to their children. LAPS is built around such topics as: Anger Management; Positive Discipline; How to Build Self-Esteem in Your Children; Passing on Your Traditions and Values. LAPS programs have been developed for mainstream, francophone, Aboriginal and ESL low-literate parents.

Magic Carpet Ride

Magic Carpet Ride is a family literacy program for parents and their preschool-aged children. Families learn together in sessions that include stories, songs, and various hands-on learning activities. Parents share their parenting experiences and gain important peer support. Specific topics such as discipline, nutrition and child development are discussed in informative workshops with professionals from partnering agencies. In the original program, Magic Carpet Ride is facilitated by community volunteers, who are mentored and supported by paid staff.

Rhymes that Bind / Parent-Child Mother Goose

Rhymes That Bind programs promote oral language development in babies and toddlers. They also provide a positive, supportive environment for parents. Programs involve circle time with parents and infants up to three years old, during which rhymes and songs are shared. In most programs, two facilitators lead the program for 10 weekly sessions, for one hour per week.

Storysacks

Storysacks is a tool for supporting literacy skills in a range of settings. A Storysack is a large cloth bag, made by parents or other volunteers in the community, and contains a good quality picture book and supporting materials to stimulate reading activities. These include soft toys of the main characters, props and scenery relating to the story, a non-fiction book linked to the fiction theme, an audio-tape and a language game based on the book. The program can be adapted to any culture.



“Learning will happen more effectively if the materials and content come from a range of activities and interests of the worker, whether from work, home, the union or the community.”

Tamara Levine, *Learning in Solidarity*^{cxxix}

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