



**Family and Early Childhood Literacy in New Brunswick:
A Provincial Snapshot (Spring 1999)**

Part VI – Summary Report¹

**Study conducted by the
Centre de recherche et de développement en éducation
Faculté des sciences de l'éducation
Université de Moncton
Moncton, N.-B.**

**in cooperation with
Literacy New Brunswick Inc.**

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¹This document is available in French.

PREFACE

This study, initiated by Literacy New Brunswick Inc. (LNBI), was made possible by financial support from the National Literacy Secretariat (Human Resources Development - Canada). LNBI worked closely with the *Centre de recherche et de développement en éducation* (CRDE, Research and Development Centre on Education) to develop the research design and to plan and carry out the different studies that make up this research project. The research report is made up of six documents or parts: Part I – Brief Review of the Literature; Part II – Sociodemographic profiles of New Brunswick and its seven Health Regions: Population, families with at least one child of 0 to 4 years of age, and children 0 to 4 years of age; Part III – Inventory of Family Literacy and Early Childhood Initiatives in New Brunswick; Part IV – Survey of Parents of Preschool Children; Part V – Focus Groups with Family Literacy Partners; and Part VI – Summary Report. The results of each of these parts are presented in six documents available in English and in French. LNBI and the CRDE also worked together to develop the data collection instruments (questionnaires and interview questions) and to collect the data.

As for the reports, the literature review was drafted by Diane Lord and finalized by Carole Essiembre. Réal Allard wrote the sociodemographic profiles and LNBI prepared the inventory of family literacy interventions and with the collaboration of the CRDE, the overview of the results. Carole Essiembre wrote the reports on the survey of parents and the focus groups with partners, as well as the summary report.

From the CRDE, we wish to thank the many people who worked on this research project at one stage or another: Diane Lord, CRDE research officer, for her work on the research design, data collection, focus groups, and literature review; Renée LePage, Janine Mazerolle, and Manon Cormier, for their help as CRDE research assistants; Lisa LeBlanc, for her work as CRDE secretary; Carole Essiembre, research officer, for revising the literature review, verifying

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OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS¹

Under contract with Literacy New Brunswick Inc. (LNBI) and in cooperation with the organization, the Centre de recherche et de développement en éducation [CRDE; Research and Development Centre on Education] at the Université de Moncton's Faculty of Education conducted a research project from December 1998 until June 1999 on family and early childhood literacy in New Brunswick. The study was made possible thanks to funding provided by the National Literacy Secretariat (HRD-Canada).

The purpose of the project was to provide LNBI with information and tools that would be useful in the strategic planning of family and early childhood literacy interventions in New Brunswick. The research project includes six parts: (1) a brief review of the literature on family literacy; (2) sociodemographic profiles of families with children of 0 to 4 years of age in New Brunswick and its seven health regions; (3) an inventory of 570 community interventions of family and early childhood literacy in New Brunswick; (4) a survey of 374 parents or guardians to determine family literacy activities in the home and in the community; (5) a portrait of the perceptions of New Brunswick's family and early childhood literacy partners regarding the current situation and the family and early childhood literacy needs in this province, through 12 focus groups in which a total of 120 partners participated; and (6) a summary report of the study. The following is an overview of the main results of the study and possible leads for action. However, let us first clarify our meaning of family literacy.

Definition of Family Literacy

There is no commonly accepted definition of family literacy. It is a recent concept of interest to researchers from various fields of study. There are other related concepts: intergenerational literacy; emergent literacy; and natural literacy. Many researchers agree on the importance and the key role played by families and parents in the development of language and literacy. It is recognized that the development of language is inherent to early childhood literacy. The following definition was used for this study:

Family literacy activities consist of all community and government family literacy initiatives designed to foster the emergence of reading and writing skills in preschool children (0 to 4 years old), both inside and outside the home. Initiatives may target children only, parents only, or both. However, they always include material related to reading and writing.

¹ This overview was prepared by Literacy New Brunswick Inc. in collaboration with the CRDE.

Main Results

The main results of the different parts of this research project are presented according to the following themes: family and literacy; family literacy activities in the home and in the community; development of family literacy initiatives; public awareness-raising; training, evaluation and research; and LNBI's role.

Families and Literacy

- Research indicates that the socio-economic variable alone does not explain all the differences in the development of language and literacy in children. A relatively close link has been established between child and parent literacy levels. Parental involvement or commitment play a key role in the development of literacy in children; it also seems that of all environments, the home has the greatest impact on academic performance. Furthermore, the parent as an intervener has a greater impact on his or her child's acquisition of reading and writing skills than the reading-model parent. Finally, it has been shown that the first years of life are crucial for the development of literacy.
- One theory holds that five factors influence the impact of the family on the child's literacy skill development: (1) the educational environment created within the home; (2) the creation of learning opportunities; (3) the educational level of the parent(s); (4) the parental aspirations for the child; and (5) direct instruction by the parent(s).
- In 1996, there were 44,560 children 0 to 4 years of age in 28,580 families in New Brunswick. Approximately 82% of families with children 0 to 4 years of age are families with two parents present, and 18% are single parent families.
- Approximately 23% of families have a total income of less than \$20,000 and of these, 61% are single-parent families headed by a woman.
- Approximately two-thirds (69%) of children 0 to 4 years of age have English as their mother tongue, 26% have French, and 3% have both English and French. One third (33.4%) of the children 0 to 4 years of age have at least one entitled parent, meaning a parent who has a right to French education for their children, under Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Of these children with only one entitled parent, i.e. Francophone, only 51% understand French, and what is more, only 37% speak it. Many of these families will choose to enrol their children in French schools, a right to which they are entitled.
- It would be helpful to conduct a subsequent study of the educational and literacy level of the New Brunswick parents of preschool age children, since other research concludes that the educational level of parents is an important factor in early childhood literacy development.

Family Literacy Activities in the Home and in the Community

- Most parents interviewed reported engaging in literacy activities in the home with their preschool children. Slightly more than two thirds of parents reported that their children are read to at least 6 times or more per week (67.9%).
- A large percentage of parents reported having reading material available in the home, such as children's books, books for adult readers, magazines and newspapers. The results don't specify the quality nor the quantity of the material. More than two third of the respondents said they possess materials related to non-textual forms of literacy (e.g. games; pencils, etc.).
- Although most parents have very favourable perceptions, desires, and intentions when it comes to family literacy, generally speaking, parents tend to rarely take part in literacy activities in the community. The most frequently cited obstacles affecting participation in community literacy activities are work commitments, feeling that they have the resources to "do it themselves" at home, lack of time, lack of transportation, and the presence of other children in the home.
- Furthermore, it is the perception of some literacy and early childhood partners that family literacy does not seem to be valued and made part of families's lifestyle, especially literacy activities with children of 0 to 5 years of age. Many family literacy activities often directly or indirectly target specific groups of clients and not families in general, although parents from all socio-economic backgrounds have family literacy needs including learning how to communicate and interact with their children.

Development of Family Literacy Initiatives

- According to the inventory of family literacy interventions in New Brunswick, the diversity and number of activities catalogued would appear to compensate for the fact that no single organization is mandated to promote and provide family literacy and early childhood services. Many literacy and early childhood organizations conduct family literacy activities, often working together in partnerships. Even though several family literacy and early childhood initiatives are ongoing, they are more often sporadic, one-time and short-term.
- Some partners reported that there are not enough human, material and financial resources available for family literacy activities. The cost of material resources in French is higher and obtaining these materials is sometimes difficult, especially in predominantly Anglophone regions. Many partners reported that people who live in rural areas have access to fewer services and that they sometimes have to travel considerable distances in order to obtain services. Moreover, according to the socio-demographic profile, the amount of resources required for family literacy varies

significantly among the province's seven Health Regions, as the proportion of children aged 0 to 4 varies between 26% to 4% from one region to another.

- The review of literature and feedback from partners suggest that the following new family literacy approaches and trends should be taken into account when developing family literacy initiatives: socio-contextual approach; natural literacy; verbal interaction between parent and child; the effect of decontextualized conversation on the development of language and literacy skills; and interactive reading to children.

Public Awareness-Raising

- Some early childhood literacy partners felt that there are not enough promotional or awareness-raising activities, especially those that stress the importance of family literacy starting at birth and during pregnancy. They suggest that the general public be made aware of the importance and impact of family literacy. They want to value the parent as their children's first and most important educator. Some partners suggested that fathers be more involved in family literacy activities.
- Some partners pointed out that, in the main, there are shortcomings in terms of access to information, availability of information, coordination of the dissemination of information on family literacy, and definition of roles and responsibilities. Partners suggest establishing family literacy coordination structures and partnership projects, and believe that the roles and responsibilities of the partners need to be more clearly defined.

Training, Evaluation and Research

- The partners identified training of family literacy practitioners, parents and teachers as a need in New Brunswick.
- The partners suggest that an evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of family literacy activities be established. The review of literature recommends the use of evaluation techniques that take into account cultural differences and family relationships.
- Advances made in family literacy have been more of a practical rather than a theoretical or conceptual nature. Much more research is necessary if we are to better understand the realities, needs and causes of "non-literacy".

LNBI's Role

- Overall, partners suggest that LNBI has a major role to play in terms of *raising awareness* (publicity and promotion of family literacy; lobbying; acting as a watchdog for family literacy organizations, etc.) and in terms of *co-ordinating* family literacy activities (mobilizing resources, supporting and informing partners, facilitating partnerships, and ensuring continuity of development, research, evaluation, and follow-up activities, etc.).

Possible Leads for Action

The reports from the six parts that make up this research project suggest that the following general areas may be considered for subsequent activity by LNBI and/or its partners in literacy and early childhood development: promotion and awareness-raising, coordination, intervention, and evaluation and research.

Promotion and Awareness-raising

- Promote family literacy, including the organization of awareness-raising campaigns that emphasize and value the parents' important role in family literacy.
- Value family literacy starting at birth and during pregnancy.
- Raise public awareness on the importance and impact of family literacy.

Coordination

- Clarify roles and responsibilities of partners.
- Ensure coordination of family literacy activities at the provincial level; create a dialogue and ensure exchange of information between partners.
- Ensure accessibility of material in homes; make available family literacy resources (human, material and financial) in order to develop ongoing programs, services and other family literacy interventions.

Intervention

- Use approaches that draw on new trends, "best practices" and current family literacy research.
- When planning programs or interventions, consider specific needs, available resources in families, family structure, the culture and mother tongue of family members.
- Take into account the unique realities of the Francophone community, with special sensitivity to issues of assimilation.
- Establish new and expanded partnerships.
- Encourage the provision of training for parents, family literacy practitioners and partners and school teachers.

Evaluation and Research

- Establish an evaluation protocol for family literacy activities that is ongoing.
- Conduct research to better understand the realities, the needs and the causes of "non-literacy".

INTRODUCTION

At the request of Literacy New Brunswick Inc. (LNBI) and in cooperation with the latter, the *Centre de recherche et de développement en éducation* [Research and Development Centre on Education (CRDE)] at the Université de Moncton's Faculty of Education conducted a research project on family and early childhood literacy in New Brunswick. The goal of the project is to provide LNBI with information and tools that will be useful in the strategic planning of its interventions to promote family and early childhood literacy in New Brunswick. It is also hoped that these results will be helpful to family literacy and early childhood partners.

To attain that goal, it was decided that the research project would focus on the following six objectives:

- Prepare a brief review of the literature on family literacy;
- Prepare a sociodemographic profile of New Brunswick families with children under 5 years of age;
- Draw up an inventory of community interventions of family and early childhood literacy in New Brunswick;
- Draw up an inventory of the family literacy activities of New Brunswick families with preschool children and determine their needs in this regard;
- Develop a portrait of the perceptions of New Brunswick's family and early childhood literacy partners regarding the current situation and the family and early childhood literacy needs in this province;
- Draft a summary of the main observations derived from the information and data gathered in connection with the first five objectives of the project.

A study was conducted for each of these objectives and the results are reported in six documents. This summary report relates to the 6th objective and is the 6th document. A French version of this report is available. The different sections of this document contain summaries of the study findings relating to each of these objectives: A) Summary of Part I – Brief Review of the Literature; B) Summary of Part II – Sociodemographic profiles of the population, of families with at least one child aged 0 to 4 years and children aged 0 to 4 years in New Brunswick and in its seven health regions; C) Summary of Part III – Inventory of Family and Early Childhood Literacy Community Interventions in New Brunswick; D) Summary of Part IV – Survey of Parents of Preschool Children; E) Summary of Part V – Focus Groups with Family Literacy Partners; and F) General Conclusion. On the basis of the highlights of these studies and the links between them, we have developed some suggestions and ideas for possible courses of action, which are presented in the section F General Conclusion.

A - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF PART I - BRIEF REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This summary of the report titled “Part I – Brief Review of the Literature” of *Family and Early Childhood Literacy in New Brunswick : A Provincial Snapshot (Spring 1999)* research project is a slightly modified version of the document titled “Family Literacy Trends in Canada and Elsewhere”. This document had been prepared by Diane Lord and presented in April 1999 to the participants of the focus groups. This review of the literature makes no pretence to be exhaustive. The primary objective rather was to report on a few of the main points raised in studies on family literacy, new approaches and trends, and needs. Box A1 presents the highlights of this brief review of the literature. For more complete information, readers are invited to refer to the complete report (see Part 1).

AI. Summary of Highlights Raised in Part I – Brief Review of the Literature (Part 1 of 2)

Definitions of Family Literacy

- There is no commonly accepted definition of family literacy. It is a recent concept of interest to researchers from various fields of study.
- Intergenerational Literacy, emergent literacy and natural literacy are concepts related to family literacy.
- Advances made in literacy have been more of a practical rather than a theoretical or conceptual nature.
- Despite the different definitions of family literacy, many researchers agree on the importance of and the key role played by families and parents in the development of literacy.

Families and Literacy

- The socio-economic variable alone does not explain all the differences in the development of language and literacy in children. A definitive link between learning to read at a young age and family socioeconomic status has yet to be proven through research.
- Several researchers have established a relatively close relationship between child and parent literacy levels.
- Researchers have determined that parental involvement and/or commitment plays a key role in the development of literacy in children.
- A study revealed that of all environments, the home has the greatest impact on academic performance.
- The parent as an intervener has a greater impact on his or her child's acquisition of reading and writing skills than the reading-model parent.
- There is a need to develop, in the family environment, the accessibility to material and the commitment of parents.
- Finally, according to a theoretical model, there are five categories of factors that are related to the influence of the home on literacy development: 1) the literacy environment of the home; 2) opportunities to learn; 3) parental level of education; 4) parental expectations for their children; and 5) parental teaching.

AI. Summary of Highlights Raised in Part I – Brief Review of the Literature (Part 2 of 2)

New Approaches and Trends in Family Literacy

- The sociocontextual approach acknowledges the social reality of families and emphasizes their strengths in order to maximize the effectiveness of family literacy programs.
- According to the principle of natural literacy, children play a key role in their own literacy development, because their literacy process is triggered naturally and spontaneously. Intervention is aimed at stimulating, fostering, and promoting spontaneous initiatives by children in activities that develop their literacy skills.
- Rich and positive verbal interaction between parent and child significantly affects language development in very young children and their introduction to reading and writing. “Decontextualized” conversation is defined as verbal interaction between adult and child involving subjects or topics not related to the immediate environment.
- As a family literacy activity, book reading must provide an interactive context for children.
- A typology classifies intergenerational and family literacy programs according to the degree of intervention (direct or indirect) and the target participant (adult or child). This typology yields four categories of interventions.

Family Literacy Needs

- Family literacy initiatives that are developed should take into account new approaches and the specific needs of target groups, be based on solid partnerships with the community, and reflect holistic practices based on cooperation between various organizations and on a multidisciplinary team.
- Training should meet interveners needs and take into account their new roles as dictated by emerging knowledge, trends, and approaches in the field of family literacy.
- Training programs should teach parents the various skills they need to help their children learn how to speak, read, and write.
- Research shows that family literacy activities should begin when children are young and continue to adulthood. The first years in a child’s life are crucial to literacy development.
- Some researchers recommend the use of new evaluation techniques that take into account cultural differences and the different kinds of relationships found in families.

A1. Definitions of family literacy and related concepts

A1.1 Family Literacy

There is no universally accepted definition of the concept of family literacy. Definitions are diversified and are the subject of numerous debates. The concept of family literacy is very recent. The expression "family literacy" was used in 1983 for the first time by Denny Taylor in his study on the social context of the home as an essential factor in the literacy of young children. Diverse fields of research are interested in family literacy: adult literacy, emergent literacy, cognitive science, early childhood development, and the theory of the family system.

There are several definitions of family literacy. Some are very general. Others specify that this concept is related to the development of reading and writing skills :

- “Family literacy refers to the many ways families develop and use literacy skills to accomplish day-to-day tasks and activities.” (Thomas and al., 1998, p. 3, Trans.)
- “Interactions in reading and writing that develop, at home, an environment conducive to learning.” (Family Literacy Action Group (FLAG) in Desjardins, 1996, p. 5, Trans.).

In spite of the different conceptions of family literacy, many researchers agree to recognize the importance of the family in the development of literacy.

A1.2 Intergenerational Literacy

Family literacy includes adults and children within the same family while intergenerational literacy includes adults and children in the community as a whole, regardless of their relationship.

A1.3 Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy derives from the principle that the literacy process of an individual begins before formal instruction. Emergent literacy also advocates that listening, speaking, and reading and writing skills develop simultaneously.

A1.4 Natural Literacy

Natural literacy reflects an intrinsic, natural dimension of the child's process of learning to read and write. However, the environment occupies a predominant position in this learning process. Adults significant to the child, who are part of this environment, therefore play an important role in the child's literacy process.

A2. Family and Literacy

A2.1 Intergenerational Cycle: Poverty and Illiteracy

In the past, numerous studies showed that children from lower level socio-economic backgrounds were generally less successful in school, particularly in reading and writing, than children in higher level socio-economic backgrounds. Today, other studies in this field are finding that the socio-economic variable alone does not explain all the differences in the development of language and emergent literacy in children. Certain studies show that low-income families who create a positive learning environment for the development of language skills and who actively participate in family literacy activities with their children do foster the development of literacy skills of their children. There is a relatively close relationship between the literacy level of children and that of their parents. This link reveals the intergenerational cycle of literacy.

A2.2 Family Environment and Literacy

The family environment plays a leading role in the development of reading and writing skills in children. A study of students aged 7 and 10 showed that the family environment had a greater

influence on their performance in school than any other environment (school, neighbourhood). It also showed that this influence was more important in relation to reading skills than mathematical skills.

Snow and al. (1991) developed a theoretical model of the influence of the family on learning how to read and write. They identified five categories of factors:

- 1- Educational environment in the home
- 2- Creation of other learning opportunities
- 3- Parents' level of education
- 4- Parents' aspirations for their children
- 5- Direct instruction by parents

Parents are role models, resource persons, and participants in the development of reading and writing skills of their children. Two studies show that within the family environment, it is the parents, not the material in that environment, that have the most influence on the children's reading and writing skills. There are differences in the degree of influence of the different roles parents can play in their children's literacy process. Two studies show that parents as participants have more influence on the development of their children's reading and writing skills than as reading models. There is a need to develop, in the family environment, the full potential of the two main components: accessibility to material and commitment of parents.

A3. New approaches and trends in family literacy

A3.1 Socio-contextual Approach

The socio-contextual approach recognizes the social reality of the family and emphasizes its strengths in order to maximize the effectiveness of family literacy programs. Neuman and Gallagher (1994) explain that:

- [...]a family's influence in children's literacy learning involves the development through shared activities of ways to handle day-to-day print events, such as shopping for groceries or paying bills, which work concurrently to enhance children's learning about written language (p. 383).

This approach can be integrated to family literacy interventions in the following matter. According to Potts (1994b) “Family literacy programs should operate as models of family strength, recognizing that all families have strengths they bring to the learning situation.” (p. 30).

A3.2 Natural Literacy

Children play a key role in the development of their reading and writing skills, because the literacy process is triggered naturally and spontaneously. This principle can be incorporated to family literacy initiatives through interventions designed to stimulate, promote, and encourage the child's spontaneous initiatives in activities that develop reading and writing skills, rather than interventions designed in the form of activities developed ahead of time and presented to the child. Children must be provided with an environment rich in materials that promote the acquisition of literacy skills and in which there are adults able to identify the children's literacy initiatives in order to maximize their benefits.

A3.3 Verbal Interaction: The Impact of Decontextualized Conversation

If verbal interaction between parent and child is rich and positive, it will have a tremendous influence on language development in very young children and their introduction to reading and writing skills. “Decontextualized” conversation is defined as verbal interaction between adult and child emphasizing subjects or topics, such as past or future events or fictitious stories, not related to the immediate environment. Children have to rely on their cognitive skills of distantiation and abstract thought, two skills closely related to language development and the understanding of the written word. A study of children aged 3 to 5 showed that

“decontextualized” conversation between the child and the mother seemed to have more influence on the child's literacy process than simply reading children's books.

A3.4 Reading to Children: An Interactive Activity

Research has shown time and time again the beneficial effects that reading books to children has on their language development and their reading and writing skills. Reading to children seems, at first glance, to be an activity in which only the parent plays an active role (the person reading), whereas the child adopts a more passive role (the person listening). However, this activity may be one in which the children themselves become active participants.

Family literacy interventions must make reading books to children “interactive”. This consist of, for example, letting children choose the book, hold the book and turn the pages, asking them questions, giving them the opportunity to ask questions or make a comment, letting them finish some parts of the story, asking them to tell a different ending than the one in the book, getting them to make connections between the story and their reality, etc. In addition to allowing children to be in contact with the material related to reading and writing, “interactive” reading of books becomes an intensive social activity during which parent and child share their experiences, emotions, and values.

A3.5 Nickse’s Typology

This typology, developed by Ruth Nickse, classifies intergenerational and family literacy programs according to two axis: the degree of participation (direct or indirect) and the type of target participant (adult or child). This typology yields four categories of programs:

Type 1: Direct adult/direct child. This category includes structured programs that offer to both adults and their children formal literacy training. It also includes interaction between the two groups.

Type 2: Indirect adult/indirect child. This category includes programs where literacy development is limited to support for and encouragement of reading as a pleasurable activity, a knowledge tool, and an opportunity for discussion. There is no, or little, direct teaching to parents and children.

Type 3: direct adult/indirect child. This category includes programs where adults receive literacy courses and training in ways of positively influencing the learning of reading and writing skills by their children.

Type 4: indirect adult/direct child. The development of reading and writing skills of children is the main component of this type of program. Adults are made aware of the means of influencing this development in their children.

A4. Family Literacy Needs

A4.1 Development of Family Literacy Programs

All family literacy programs that are developed must reflect new approaches and developments related to family literacy. They should also be developed based on the specific needs of the target groups. Finally, family literacy programs should be founded on solid partnerships with the community.

A4.2 Training for Family Literacy Intervenors

Two commonalities were noted in the review of the literature when it came to describing training needs for family literacy stakeholders: training that meets their needs and training that takes into account the stakeholders' new roles made necessary by new knowledge, trends, and approaches in family literacy.

Training needs were also noted for parents and teachers. Regarding parents, training programs should enable them to acquire the skills necessary to help their children learn how to speak, read and write. Regarding teachers, it seems that they receive very little training in family literacy.

A4.3 Language Development and Literacy in the Home

Research needs in terms of the factors that promote language development and the family literacy process fall under the familial context (home and parents), social context (community), and academic context (school and teachers). The age of the child is another important factor. The first years in a child's life are crucial to literacy development.

Let us recall that many studies of the familial context recognize that parents involvement is a crucial factor in a child's literacy development. Furthermore, as noted by Nickse (1990), many researchers have found that the educational level of parents has an effect on the achievements of their children. Finally, Durkin, in Freeman and Wasserman (1986), notes that research has been unable to establish a clear connection between a child's learning to read at an early age and a family's socio-economic status. He adds that other factors are more significant, such as parents involvement.

A4.4 Evaluation of Family Literacy Programs

Impacts of family literacy programs are found in children, in parents, in the interaction between parents and their children, in the community and in schools. Evaluation of short- and long-term effects of family literacy programs show that over the short term these programs improve the children's and parents' reading, writing, and language skills. Over the long term, children and parents learn how to maintain the behaviours and attitudes they have acquired. Researchers recommend the use of new evaluation methods that take into account cultural differences and different kinds of family relationships.

Finally, as evidenced in the preceding sections, much more research is necessary if we are to better understand family literacy, a very recent field experiencing a boom in terms of practice but which is lacking when it comes to theory and research. Everyone acknowledges the importance of family literacy in literacy development in children. The multitude and diversity of programs being developed in various communities testify to this. However, more has to be done if we are to better understand family literacy and broaden our theoretical knowledge of the literacy process with a view to developing programs that meet the true needs of families and have a definite impact.

**B – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF PART II–SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC
PROFILES OF NEW BRUNSWICK AND ITS SEVEN HEALTH REGIONS:
POPULATION, FAMILIES WITH AT LEAST ONE CHILD OF 0 TO 4 YEARS OF
AGE, AND CHILDREN 0 TO 4 YEARS OF AGE**

As part of the project on family and community literacy conducted for and in collaboration with Literacy New Brunswick Inc. (LNBI), the *Centre de recherche et de développement en éducation* (CRDE) of the *Faculté des sciences de l'éducation* of the *Université de Moncton* prepared sociodemographic profiles for the province of New Brunswick and each of its seven health regions. In the main, these eight profiles pertain to characteristics of New Brunswick families with at least one child of 0 to 4 years of age and to characteristics of these children of 0 to 4 years of age. The profiles present data on the number of families with children of 0 to 4 years of age, the structure of these families, the total income of the families, the number of children of 0 to 4 years of age, the mother tongue of the children of 0 to 4 years of age, the number of children of entitled parents, that is parents who have the right to French education for their children under Article 23 of the *Charter of Rights and Liberties* and the knowledge of

French of this group of children. Box B2 presents the highlights of these sociodemographic profiles. For more complete information, readers are invited to refer to the complete report (see Part II).

In the present summary, we present information drawn from the detailed profiles presented in the previous section. It is important to mention that the data presented were taken from the 1996 Statistics Canada Census or calculated using 1996 census data. Readers who wish to obtain more detailed information are invited to refer to the detailed profiles presented in the previous section.

B1. Number of families with children of 0 to 4 years of age

In 1996, a total of 28,580 New Brunswick families had at least one child of 0 to 4 years of age. Within each of the province's health regions, the number of families with at least one child of 0 to 4 years of age varies from 7,810 (Health region 2) to 1,175 (Health region 5). Regions 1, 2, and 3 respectively have 6,415, 7,810, and 7,270 families with at least one child of 0 to 4 years of age; region 4, 5, 6, and 7 follow far behind with, respectively, 1,350, 1,175, 2,760 and 1,800 families with children in this age category. Within each of the province's health regions, the percentage of families with one or more children of 0 to 4 years of age varies between 31% (Health region 2) and 20 % (Health region 6).

These figures clearly indicate that the quantity of resources need for family literacy interventions are quite different from one health region to another in the province.

B2. Summary of Highlights Raised in Part II – Sociodemographic profiles of New Brunswick and its seven Health Regions: Population, families with at least one child of 0 to 4 years of age, and children 0 to 4 years of age

Number of Families with Children 0 to 4 Years of Age and Number of Children 0 to 4 Years of Age

- In 1996, there were 44,560 children 0 to 4 years of age in 28,580 families in New Brunswick.
- The percentage of children 0 to 4 years of age in the seven health regions in New Brunswick ranges from 26% in Health Region 2 (7 810 families) to 4% in Health Region 5 (1 175 families), meaning that the amount of resources required for family literacy activities varies significantly from one health region to another.

Family Structure

- In New Brunswick, approximately 82% of families with children 0 to 4 years of age are headed by two parents, 17% are headed by one female parent, and 1% are headed by one male parent.

Total Household Income (After Transfers)

- Of the 28,580 New Brunswick families with at least 1 child 0 to 4 years of age, approximately 19% (5,345 families) have a total household income (after transfers) of less than \$15,000, and 68% of these families are single-parent families headed by women.
- Approximately 23% of families (6,695) have a total income of less than \$20,000. Of these, 61% are single-parent families headed by women.
- These families' low income is highly likely to affect the extent to which they can take part in literacy activities in the community and to compromise their ability to devote a considerable amount of time and energy to literacy in the home.

Children's Mother Tongue

- Of children 0 to 4 years of age, 69% have English as their mother tongue, 26% French, and 3% both English and French.
- The amount of resources required for family literacy in English and French varies significantly among the health regions, given the differing percentages of children 0 to 4 years of age in the health regions on the basis of mother tongue.

Knowledge of French among 0- to 4-Year-Old Children of Parents with Charter Rights

- There are 14,865 children 0 to 4 years of age in New Brunswick with at least 1 parent entitled to enrol his or her children in French schools, under Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. This figure represents 33.4% of children 0 to 4 years of age in the province.
- Of children 0 to 4 years of age with only one such parent, i.e. Francophone, only 51% understand French, and what is more, only 37% speak it.
- Given that one of the parents has Charter rights and because parents may well want their children to learn the language of both parents, these families may well want to enroll their children in French schools. However, the academic success in French of these children 0 to 4 years of age would be better guaranteed by literacy in French in the home, at the very least with the parent with Charter rights.

B2. Family structure

Both parents are present in approximately 82% of the families of children of 0 to 4 years of age, 17% of the families are single-parent (female parent) families and 1% are single-parent (male parent) families.

In the province's 7 health regions, the percentage of families where both parents are present ranges from 86% (Health region 3) to 75% (Health region 5). The percentage of single-parent (female parent) families ranges from 12% (Health region 3) to 24 % (Health region 5), while the percentage of single-parent (male parent) families varies very little: it is approximately 1% in most health regions and reaches a maximum of 3% (Health region 7).

The percentage of lone-parent families (female parent) with at least one 0 to 4 year-old child is much higher than the percentage of lone-parent families (male parent) with at least one 0 to 4 year-old child. When participation in family literacy activities is considered, it is quite obvious that the needs of lone-parent families can be quite different from those of families where the two parents are present. LNBI and its partners need to take these differing needs into consideration when they organize and implement family literacy activities. As will be shown below, the lone-parent family's income can make the situation even more complex.

B3. Family income (after transfers)

Of the 28,580 New Brunswick families with one or more children of 0 to 4 years of age, approximately 19% (5,345 families) have a total family income (after transfers) of less than 15,000\$. Within this total family income category, 68% of the families are female lone-parent families. Approximately 23% (6,395 families) of the families have a total family income of less than 20,000\$ and, of these, 61% are female lone-parent families.

In the province's seven health regions, the percentage of families with a total family income of less than \$15,000 ranges from 14% (Health regions 1 and 3) to 26% (Health region 7). Within this family income category, the percentage of lone-parent (female) families ranges from 54% (Health region 4) to 76% (Health region 2). The percentage of families with a total family income inferior to \$20,000 varies between 19% (Health regions 1 and 3) and 32% (Health region 5). Within this family income category, the percentage of lone-parent (female) families ranges from 50% (Health region 3) to 72% (Health region 5).

In New Brunswick, a significant number and percentage of families with children of 0 to 4 years of age have a total family income of less than \$15,000 or of less than \$20,000. In these income categories, the percentage of female lone-parent families is a great deal higher than the percentage of male lone-parent families. The low total family income of a large number and percentage of New Brunswick families therefore constitutes an additional variable which LNBI and its partners in literacy need to take into consideration when preparing family literacy activities and programmes. There is little doubt that the limited financial resources of these families will affect their capacity to participate in literacy activities in the community and could compromise their desire and ability to devote much energy to literacy activities within the home.

B4. Number of children of 0 to 4 years of age

At the time of the 1996 Canada Census, the total population of 0 to 4 year-olds in New Brunswick was 44,560. The percentage of the province's 0 to 4 year-old children in the seven health regions ranges from 26% (Health region 2) to 4% (Health region 5). Health regions 1, 2, and 3, with 23%, 26%, and 24%, respectively, account for nearly three quarters (73%) of the 0 to 4 year-olds in the province. Health regions 4, 5, 6 and 7, with 7%, 4%, 11% and 6%, respectively, account for slightly more than one quarter (28%) of the province's 0 to 4 year-olds.

These data reflect once again the fact that the quantity of resources needed for family literacy activities or initiatives will vary a great deal from one health region to another. LNBI and its partners in family literacy will no doubt want to ensure that all of the resources needed are present or will be present in each and every health region.

B5. Mother tongue of the children

The mother tongue of 69% of the 0 to 4 year-olds is English, French is the mother tongue of 26% of the children and both French and English are the mother tongues of 3% of the province's 0 to 4 year-olds.

In the province's seven health regions, the percentage of 0 to 4 year-olds whose mother tongue is English ranges from 97% (Health region 2) to 7% (Health region 4). The percentage of 0 to 4 year-olds whose mother tongue is French ranges from 88% (Health region 4) to 1% (Health region 2). Finally, the percentage of children whose mother tongues are English and French ranges from 1% (Health regions 2 and 3) to 7% (Health region 5).

These data reflect the fact that resources for family literacy are needed in English and in French, i.e. in both of the province's official languages, in each of the New Brunswick's health regions. However, the quantity of resources needed for family literacy activities and services in each language varies importantly from one health region to another. In addition to ensuring that the quantity of resources and services required for family literacy activities in English and in French are present in each health region, LNBI and its partners will want to ensure that the resources and services available in each language are of the best quality possible.

B6. Knowledge of French of the 0 to 4 years old children of entitled parents in New Brunswick

In 1996, 14,865 New Brunswick children 0 to 4 years of age had at least one entitled parent under Article 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Liberties*. This number represents

33.4% of the children of 0 to 4 years of age in the province. The percentage of children of 0 to 4 years of age of entitled parents in New Brunswick's seven health regions² varies from 6% (Health region 2) to 89% (Health region 5).

In New Brunswick, the percentage of 0 to 4 years old children of entitled parents who understand French represent 83% of the 0 to 4 years old children of entitled parents, while the percentage of these children who speak French represent 78% of the total. In the seven health regions, the percentage of 0 to 4 years old children (of entitled parents) who understand French varies between 99% in Madawaska County (approximation of Health region 4) and 36% in Charlotte, Saint John, and Kings counties combined (approximation of Health region 2). Also, the percentage of these children who speak French varies from 98% in Madawaska County (approximation of Health region 4) to 21% in Charlotte, Saint John, and Kings counties combined (approximation of Health region 2).

In the province as a whole, approximately 99% of the children of 0 to 4 years of age whose two parents are entitled parents understand French and approximately 98% speak French. Where the children of entitled lone-parents are concerned, 88% understand French and 85% speak French. However, where one parent is entitled in families where both parents are present, only 51% of the children understand French and a significantly smaller percentage, 37%, speak French. The same tendency is present in all of the health regions or their approximations (where we had to refer to county data).

² With respect to the numbers and percentages concerning the knowledge of French of the 0 to 4 years old children of entitled parents, only the figures for the province of New Brunswick as a whole and Health regions 1 and 6 are exact (see the notes beneath tables 4.1 and 4.6). The numbers and percentages concerning the knowledge of French of the 0 to 4 years old children of entitled parents in health regions 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 are approximations; consequently, they must be interpreted and used with caution. For a detailed explanation, please refer to the notes beneath tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 et 4.7.

These data show that an important proportion of New Brunswick families do not transmit the French language or transmit little of the French language to their 0 to 4 years of age child or children. This trend is particularly clear where only one parent in the couple is an entitled parent. Many of these couples may well not undertake family literacy activities in the language of the entitled parent, that is, in French. However, since they have the right to do so, and since many families may well want their child to master both official languages very well, many of these families may want to send their child to a school where French is the language of instruction (except for courses in English as a second language). The school success in French of these 0 to 4 year olds would be better assured if family literacy activities in the home with the entitled parent were in French. Couples and families where one of the two parents have the right to French language schooling for their children under Article 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* may well wish to pursue this option for their children's education. It is therefore important that LNBI and its partners be cognizant of the particular needs of these couples and families.

C – SUMMARY OF PART III – INVENTORY OF FAMILY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY INTERVENTIONS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Literacy New Brunswick Inc. (LNBI) in collaboration with the Centre de recherche et de développement en éducation (CRDE) prepared an *Inventory of Family and Early Childhood Literacy Interventions in New Brunswick*, as part of the research project *Family and Early Childhood Literacy in New Brunswick: a Provincial Snapshot (Spring 1999)*. Box C3 presents the highlights of this inventory of interventions. For more complete information, readers are invited to refer to the complete report (see Part III).

<p>C3. Summary of Highlights Raised in Part III – Inventory of Family Literacy and Early Childhood Initiatives in New Brunswick</p>
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- The diversity and number of activities catalogued would appear to compensate for the fact that no single organization in New Brunswick is mandated to promote and provide family literacy and early childhood services. The directory lists 390 regional family and early childhood interventions, distributed in the seven health regions.
- Provincial literacy organizations and regional organizations that provide early childhood programs and services conduct family literacy activities. Very often, these organizations work in partnerships, both in the regions and across the province.
- Further, when the inventory was being taken, regional family literacy networks were about to emerge. These more or less formal networks were not catalogued when the data were being collected for the inventory. These networks will inevitably be included in future versions of the inventory.
- Whereas several family literacy and early childhood initiatives are ongoing, most are one-time or short-term activities.

The objective of this inventory is to take stock of early childhood and family literacy community interventions in New Brunswick. This preliminary inventory gives an outline of the interventions that directly or indirectly supported the promotion of early childhood and family literacy in New Brunswick, in the spring of 1999. It briefly describes each interventions reported. Interventions reported in the inventory were selected according to the following working definition of family literacy:

Family literacy activities consist of all community and government family literacy initiatives designed to foster the emergence of reading and writing skills in preschool children (0 to 4 years old), both inside and outside the home. Initiatives may target children only (e.g. story hours), parents only (e.g. story-hour workshops), or both (e.g. Born to Read program). However, they always include material related to reading or writing.

C1 – Notice

This inventory is descriptive and does not pretend to be an exhaustive document. It is considered as an initial document, a snapshot of the state of the interventions, at a given point in time. Each agency was asked by the interviewer to report three interventions it had conducted

between Spring of 1998 and Spring of 1999. This preliminary inventory can be considered as a start up point for an eventual revised and more exhaustive version of the inventory.

C2 – Methodology

Data collection for the inventory of interventions was conducted between March and May 1999. Two grids were used: one gathered information regarding the organizations and the other gathered information on the interventions themselves. Regional family literacy field workers and in some cases, regional partners, collected the information by phone call or personal interviews. These workers received an orientation sessions on how to complete the grids. They collected data, within their respective regions, from agencies within a provincial network and from other agencies offering services to families and young children.

C3 – Structure and description of the inventory

The inventory of family literacy interventions briefly describes each intervention and indicates in which area (urban or rural), and in which language the service was being provided. It is organized to present data on a regional and sub-regional basis, primarily based on New Brunswick's Provincial Health Regions and according to four types of organizations: government, para-government, non-government and private sectors.

The inventory includes the main provincial service networks in early childhood development. In each sub-region, the interventions of the following agencies are described: Family Resources Centers (funded by Health Canada), Early Childhood Initiatives and Early Intervention program (New Brunswick Health and Community Services), Public libraries and the regional partners of the *Born to Read – Le goût de lire* program. Three hundreds and ninety (390) regional family and early childhood interventions were listed: 88 in region 1, 66 in region 2, 89 in region 3, 28 in region 4, 31 in region 5, 49 in region 6, and 39 in region 7.

LNBI has compiled a contact list of names of several hundred resources persons in organizations, agencies and service providers that support the promotion and delivery of family and early childhood literacy in New Brunswick, at the regional and provincial levels. This list can be obtained from Literacy New Brunswick Inc. upon request.

D - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF PART IV – SURVEY OF PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

This survey of a geographically representative sample of New Brunswick parents of preschool children is the fourth part of the research project entitled *Family and Early Childhood Literacy in New Brunswick: A Provincial Snapshot (Spring 1999)*. The purpose of the survey was to take stock of New Brunswick families and the family literacy activities in which they participate in the home and the community. Box D4 presents the highlights of the survey of parents. For more complete information, readers are invited to refer to the complete report (see Part IV).

A questionnaire was administered in face-to-face interviews with a geographically representative sample of parents of preschool children in New Brunswick. In all, 374 people took part in the survey. We were able to identify the linguistic group to which 346 of them belonged: 229 Anglophones and 117 Francophones. The reader will recall that “Anglophone” refers to parents who have in their homes preschool children whose first language learned is English and with whom the language of communication most often used in the home is English. The term “Francophone” refers to parents who have in their homes preschool children whose first language learned is French and with whom the language of communication most often used in the home is French.

<p>D4. Summary of Highlights Raised in Part IV - Survey of Parents of Preschool Children (Part 1 of 2)</p>

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

- The sample of 374 New Brunswick parents of preschool children who took part in the study is geographically, but not necessarily demographically, representative.
- Respondents were mostly women (88.6%) and 29 years of age (65.9% of parents ranged from 25 to 34 years of age). In 99.2% of cases, the respondent was either the mother or father. Slightly more than half lived in urban areas (52.6%), and almost 23% lived in households whose average income was less than \$20,000. Most of them had completed Grade 12 (86.4%), and of the 233 who reported having another degree or diploma, 37.8% said they had a university degree, and 44.2% reported having a college diploma.
- Most parents reported that their households included either one child (41.4%) or two children (40.5%) 15 years of age or younger. Further, 64.9% of parents reported that their households included one preschool child, and 30.6% reported having two preschool children. Of Francophone parents, 76.8% had only one preschool child, whereas this was true for 58.3% of Anglophones. Moreover, in 56.4% of cases, the average age of the oldest preschool child was one year or less in Francophones families, compared to 31.0% for Anglophones.

Family Literacy Activities in the Home

- Overall, in terms of material available in the home, a large percentage of parents reported having such reading material as children's books (98.4%), books for adult readers (95.2%), magazines for adult readers (84.2%), and newspapers (80.9%).
- More than two thirds of parents reported having reading-related material in the home (for example, crayons (colour crayons, movies, tape recorder, paper, colouring books, etc.) , with the percentages ranging from 69.6% to 96.1%. However, in the case of "blocks" and "video games", the percentages dropped to 57.7% and 51.8% respectively.
- Most parents reported engaging in literacy activities in the home with their preschool children. Most of the parents who took part in the survey (91.7%) reported reading to their preschool children, and 84.9% said that other persons read to their children. Significantly slightly more parents who live in urban areas (94.1%) report that they read to their preschool children, compared to those who live in rural areas (88.2%).
- Slightly more than two thirds of parents reported that their children are read to at least 6 times or more per week (67.9%).

D4. Summary of Highlights Raised in Part IV - Survey of Parents of Preschool Children (Part 2 of 2)

Family Literacy Activities in the Community

- Although most parents have very favourable perceptions, desires, and intentions when it comes to family literacy, they tend on the whole to rarely take part in literacy activities in their communities. No statistically significant difference was noted between parents who live in urban and those who live rural areas.

Parents' Perceptions and Aspirations in Terms of Family Literacy

- Parents tend to agree with the following statements about their perceptions and aspirations regarding family literacy: they would like to find out more about what helps their children learn how to read and write; they want to better prepare their children to learn how to read and write; and they are satisfied with what they are doing to prepare their children to learn how to read and write.

Intention to Take Part in Family Literacy Activities

- On the whole, when asked about their intention to take part in family literacy activities, all parents said that they probably would. They would probably register their children in preparatory reading and writing activities, attend such activities with their children, and take part in workshops designed to teach parents how to prepare their children to learn how to read and write.

The findings were presented in five sections: demographic characteristics; family literacy activities in the home; family literacy activities in the community; parents' perceptions and aspirations in terms of family literacy; and intention to take part in family literacy activities. We will address in the same order the chief conclusions arising from the findings.

D1. Demographic Characteristics

Parents were asked a number of questions so that we could profile their chief demographic characteristics, those of other adults in the home, and those of the children living with them. In

all, the respondents are especially females (88.6%), aged 29 (65.9% of the parents range in age from 25 to 34). In 99.2% of cases, the respondent is the mother or father. Slightly more than half live in urban areas (52.6%), and almost 23% live in households with an average income of less than \$20,000. Most of them have completed Grade 12 (86.4%), and among the 233 who reported having obtained another degree/diploma, 37.8% said they have a university degree, and 44.2% a college diploma.

Most parents who participated in the study report living in a home where there are two adults aged 16 or more (79.3%). In most cases, the second adult is a male (84.1%) and is the father of the preschool children (in more than 93% of cases). More than two thirds of the time, the 2nd adult ranges in age from 25 to 34 (67.6%), and in most cases has completed Grade 12 (80.3%). In homes with more than two adults, they are usually grandparents.

Lastly, most parents report having in the home either one child (41.4%) or two children (40.5%) aged 15 and under. Further, 64.9% of parents report having in the home one preschool child, 30.6% report having two preschool children and 4.6% report having three children. In the main, the profile of preschool children who live in the parents' home is as follows. The children are distributed almost equally by gender (49.2% are girls and 50.8% are boys). Half are one year old or less (50.7%). However, this profile changes according to linguistic group. Significant differences are noted between Anglophones and Francophones in terms of the number of preschool children in the home and their ages. We found that 76.8% of Francophone parents who participated in the study have only one preschool child in the home, with the tally dropping to 58.3% for Anglophones. Further, in 56.4% of cases, the oldest preschool child in Francophone homes is one year old or less, compared to 31.0% in Anglophone homes. In sum, Francophone parents who participated in the study have fewer and younger preschool children in their homes, whereas Anglophones have more and older preschool children at home.

In roughly 68% of cases, preschool children learned English first and use this language most often to communicate at home. In some 29% of cases, they first learned French and use this language most often to communicate at home. Slightly more than half are looked after by someone other than their mothers or fathers (55.0%), either by a babysitter at home (32.2%) or a babysitter outside the home (37.1%). More than half are minded 41 weeks or more per year (52.7%) from 25 to 45 hours per week.

D2. Family Literacy Activities in the Home

Family literacy activities in the parents' homes were measured by the availability of various reading-type materials in the home and by the kinds of literacy activities in which parents and other persons living in the home take part. As for the type of materials available in the home, a large proportion of parents who participated in the study report in the main that they have reading materials in the home such as books for children (98.4%), books for adults (95.2%), magazines for adults (84.2%), and newspapers (80.9%). We do not know about the quality of that material. Statistically significant differences in terms of percentages for linguistic groups were noted for two types of materials: more Francophone parents than Anglophones report having comic books at home (64.9% and 35.7% respectively) and inversely, more Anglophones than Francophones report having children's magazines in the home (51.9% and 37.5% respectively). Among Anglophones, the percentage of those who report having various materials in English only range from a minimum of 80.3% (children's books) to a maximum of 99.5% (newspapers). Among Francophones, the percentage of those who report having various materials in French only range from a minimum of 42.9% for magazines for adults to a maximum of 74.9% for comic books. No significant difference was noted for reading materials, regardless of whether parents live in rural or urban areas.

When asked about the availability of reading-related materials in the home (for example, pencils, paper, blocks, games, movies), more than two thirds of parents report having some

(percentages range from 69.6% to 96.1%), except for “blocks” and “video games”, with percentages falling to 57.7% and 51.8% respectively. Out of the 11 categories of reading-related materials, significant differences between the linguistic groups were noted in three categories. In the three cases, the percentages are slightly higher among Anglophones than Francophones. There is no significant difference according to the areas lived in.

The findings for family literacy activities in the home were described in terms of the family literacy activities of adults and older children, family literacy activities done as a family, and family literacy activities for preschool children. In the case of the family literacy activities of adults and older children, almost all parents report in the main that they read at home (98.7%), with 38.0% devoting 30 minutes to 2 hours to it per week and 41.0% spending 2 to 8 hours on it. Further, the parents report that, in 86.6% of cases, there is someone else who reads at home. The other person who reads the most at home also spends 30 minutes to 2 hours per week doing so (33.1%) or 2 to 8 hours per week (40.9%), which is the same as the number of hours per week that the parents spend reading. No statistically significant difference was noted for linguistic group or area lived in where these variables are concerned.

As for literacy activities done as a family, most parents who participated in the survey, i.e. 91.7%, read to their preschool children, and 84.9% report that other persons do so. These percentages are significantly higher among Anglophones than Francophones (96.5% compared to 81.9% for the first question and 92.1% compared to 72.2% for the second question). Further, significantly slightly more parents who live in urban areas (94.1%) report that they read to their preschool children, compared to those who live in rural areas (88.2%). Slightly more than two thirds of parents report that their children are read to at least 6 times or more per week (67.9%). This percentage is significantly higher among Anglophones (77.0%) than Francophones (53.8%). Further, 92.4% of parents report that there are persons in the family who tell stories to their preschool children, and 59.0% say that there is someone in the family

who sings to them. No significant difference was noted for these last two questions in terms of linguistic group or area lived in.

Lastly, to round off the profile of literacy activities done as a family, we asked parents about how often they use eight reading methods with their preschool children. In the main, the parents almost always sit next to their children while reading (mean score of 4.74) and, most of the time, they stop reading to point out pictures or words (mean score of 4.29), reread the same stories (3.99), and hold the book and turn the pages (3.84). They use the other methods occasionally (mean scores range from 2.83 for reading without stopping to 3.56 for encouraging the child to say words out loud).

Anglophones have significantly higher scores than Francophones for two out of the eight methods: sitting next to the child while reading (4.85 compared to 4.57) and rereading the same stories to their children (4.08 compared to 3.84). No significant difference was noted in connection with the area lived in. A multivariate analysis revealed a significant relationship between parents who have very young children and a small number of preschool children in the home and the following four methods: 1) the parents choose the book to be read more often, 2) they hold the book and turn the pages more often, 3) they stop reading and ask what happens next less often, and 4) they encourage the child less often to say words out loud when he or she is already familiar with the book.

The parents report in the main that their preschool children often do four of eight literacy activities: watching educational programs (mean score of 4.05); pointing out pictures or words (3.92); entertaining themselves with print materials (3.88); and drawing and scribbling (3.79). Preschool children do the other activities occasionally for the most part. The mean scores of Anglophones are significantly higher than those of Francophones for seven out of the eight activities. Similarly, parents who live in urban areas have significantly higher mean scores than those who live in rural areas for four of the eight activities measured. A multivariate analysis

revealed that parents who have young children and a small number of preschool children in the home score lower on the eight activities.

D3. Family Literacy Activities in the Community

Five questions were asked to measure family literacy activities in the community. In the main, parents take part rather rarely in literacy activities in the community. Anglophones have significantly slightly higher mean scores than Francophones for three out of the five questions: use of library services by preschool children (2.20 for Anglophones and 1.70 for Francophones); participation of preschool children in family literacy activities outside the home except in daycare (1.99 for Anglophones and 1.48 for Francophones); and arrangements made to accompany children to such activities (1.94 for Anglophones and 1.63 for Francophones). No statistically significant difference was noted in terms of area lived in. A multivariate analysis revealed a significant relationship between Anglophone parents who have older preschool children and more preschool children in the home and a higher participation rate in four of the five literacy activities in the community.

D4. Perceptions and Aspirations in terms of Family Literacy

Three statements measured parents' perceptions and aspirations in terms of family literacy. In short, they all rather agree: they would like to find out more about what helps their children to learn how to read and write (4.32); they want to better prepare their children to learn how to read and write (4.03); and they are satisfied with what they are doing to prepare their children to learn how to read and write (4.27). There is no significant difference in terms of linguistic group, but there is one in connection with the area lived in. Parents who live in urban areas have slightly higher mean scores (4.14) than those who live in rural areas (3.91) when asked about whether they would like to learn about how to better prepare their children to learn how to read and write. A multivariate analysis revealed that interviewees who had completed a higher grade in school and who have more adults aged 16 or over in the home score lower on the three

statements, with the same holding true for parents who have older preschool children and who have more preschool children in the home.

D5. Parents' Intention to take part in Family Literacy Activities

Lastly, three questions were asked in order to measure the parents' intention to take part in family literacy activities. In the main, all said that they would probably take part in family literacy activities: registering their children in activities designed to prepare them to learn how to read and write (4.36); attending such activities with their children (4.36); and attending a workshop for parents aimed at teaching them how to prepare their children to learn how to read and write (4.05). No significant difference was noted in terms of linguistic group or area lived in, and the same was true on the multivariate analysis.

This profile of the literacy activities of New Brunswick families with preschool children provides an overview of the kinds of activities in which the latter take part, both at home and in the community. Although most parents have very favourable perceptions, aspirations, and intentions with regard to family literacy, they in the main rarely take part in literacy activities in the community. Most of them take part more in literacy activities in the home with their preschool children. Significant differences are noted between the responses of Anglophones and Francophones for a good number of variables. In virtually all cases, the percentages or mean scores are higher among Anglophones. Many of the differences between the linguistic groups are probably due to the number of preschool children in the home and their age. In fact, many of the significant differences between the linguistic groups disappear in multivariate analyses that take into account not only the language but also the age of the preschool children and the number of preschool children in the home. It is rather these last two variables that account for the differences observed. Fewer significant differences are noted between parents who live in rural or urban areas, with the differences in all cases more in favour of those living in urban areas.

E – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF PART V – FOCUS GROUPS WITH FAMILY LITERACY PARTNERS

The following is a summary of the findings of the qualitative analysis of the 12 focus groups of partners involved in family literacy across New Brunswick. The partners are organizations working in the area of family literacy in the different regions of the province. The focus groups were conducted as part of the research project entitled *Family and Early Childhood Literacy in New Brunswick: A Provincial Snapshot (Spring 1999)*. Box E5 presents the highlights of the focus groups with family literacy partners. For more complete information, readers are invited to refer to the complete report (see Part V).

The objectives of the focus groups were as follows:

- 1) To give family literacy partners an opportunity to discuss among themselves the current status of family literacy in their regions.
- 2) To highlight the emergence and stability of partnerships between organizations concerned with the development of family literacy.
- 3) To take stock of the partners' perceptions, opinions, and comments about the role LNBI could play in order to foster family literacy in New Brunswick.

The following topics were discussed in the focus groups:

- current status of family literacy;
- possible initiatives in terms of interventions, research and evaluation, and training;
- priorities regarding the development of family literacy initiatives; and
- LNBI's role in developing family literacy in New Brunswick.

E5. Summary of Highlights Raised in Part V – Focus Groups with Family Literacy Partners (Part 1 of 2)

Current Status of Family Literacy in New Brunswick

- Some partners pointed out that, in the main, there are shortcomings in terms of access to information, availability of information, coordination of the dissemination of information on family literacy and definition of roles and responsibilities of family literacy partners.
- According to some partners, family literacy does not seem to be a *priority* for or to be valued by many parents, and it is not part of their lifestyle, especially in the case of literacy for children 0 to 5 years of age. Parents from all socioeconomic backgrounds have family literacy needs including learning how to communicate and interact with their children. They do not realize all the benefits of family literacy.
- Some partners indicated that there are shortcomings in connection with the *roles* and responsibilities of persons concerned with family literacy. For example, many parents do not see themselves as being primarily responsible for their children's education; some parents feel that they do not have the skills they need to teach their children how to read and write, many people see professionals as experts rather than facilitators who support parents with a view to empowering them; and the involvement of schools in family literacy is not what it could be.
- Many partners reported that people who live in rural areas have access to fewer *services* and that they sometimes have to travel considerable distances in order to obtain services. Access to transportation is a problem for many parents.
- Where *resources* are concerned, some partners reported that there are not enough human, material, and financial resources. The cost of material resources in French is higher, and obtaining them is sometimes difficult, especially in predominantly Anglophone regions. Access to transportation is a problem for many parents.
- Some partners felt that there are not enough *promotional* or *awareness-raising activities*, especially those that stress the importance of family literacy starting at birth and during pregnancy.
- Some partners indicated that there are few *training* activities for parents as a whole and that family literacy is not part of the university curricula for many professionals who will be working with families.

E5. Summary of Highlights Raised in Part V – Focus Groups with Family Literacy Partners (Part 2 of 2)

Potential Family Literacy Initiatives

- The partners indicated that *family literacy initiatives* should take into account the importance of communication and bonding, meet regional and family needs, be incorporated into activities of daily living and existing programs, be preventive and strive for not only short- but also long-term benefits, and aim for regional and family empowerment.
- Some partners said that it is necessary to *raise awareness* of family literacy among the population as a whole, change public perceptions, stress the importance and impact of literacy, value parents as the ones primarily responsible for their children's education, get boys and fathers involved in the literacy process and hire more male workers.
- Some partners maintain that *partnerships* should be established between the various organizations involved in family literacy, that a structure should be set up to *coordinate* activities and to support organizations and parents; and that more *funding* is needed.
- The partners suggested various *initiatives that could be implemented*: family activities in libraries; incorporation of literacy into high school curricula; workshops offered by schools for parents to help them prepare their children for school entry; inclusion of family literacy in prenatal classes; distribution of pamphlets on family literacy to all parents, etc.
- Some partners suggested that mechanisms *evaluating* the impact of family literacy programs be established.
- Some partners suggested that more extensive research be done to learn more about the situations and the literacy needs in the different regions and the true causes of illiteracy.
- Where *training* is concerned, some partners recommended that early childhood interveners and professionals be given family literacy training and that all parents receive such training.

LNBI's Role in the Development of Family Literacy in New Brunswick

- Some partners felt that LNBI has a major role to play in terms of *coordinating* family literacy activities, e.g. by mobilizing resources, supporting and informing partners, facilitating the establishment of partnerships, and ensuring the continuity of development, research, evaluation, and follow-up activities.
- Some partners indicated that LNBI has a significant role to play in terms of *raising awareness* of family literacy, e.g. by conducting activities designed to publicize and promote family literacy; conducting a campaign to raise awareness of and promote family literacy; lobbying; and acting as a watchdog for family literacy organizations.

The focus groups provided us with information about the perceptions and opinions of persons active in the development of family literacy in New Brunswick. The focus groups lasted for approximately two hours. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed into electronic files. We imported the files into Atlas/ti, a qualitative analysis software package. The comments of the partners who took part in the focus groups were coded and divided into different topics and subtopics. Following is a summary of the qualitative analysis of the partners' comments. This summary is based on the boxes containing the highlights of the partners' comments in connection with the topics and subtopics addressed in the focus groups (see *Findings*).

Our summary is patterned after the three major objectives that guided the focus groups: 1) the partners' perceptions of the current status of family literacy in their respective regions; 2) the partners' perceptions of the initiatives they would like to see in their regions in terms of interventions, research and evaluation, and training; and 3) the partners' perceptions of LNBI's role in the development of family literacy.

E1. Partners' Perceptions of the Current Status of Family Literacy in their Region

We will begin by summarizing the partners' comments about their perceptions of the current status of family literacy. Their remarks are divided into five categories: public awareness of family literacy; the role played by parents, professionals, schools, and government in family literacy; available resources; activities taking place in the regions; and training for professionals and parents.

E1.1 Public Awareness of Family Literacy

When asked about their perceptions of the current state of public awareness of family literacy, the partners responded in the main that there are problems with access to information, availability of information, and coordination of the dissemination of information about family literacy. It seems that family literacy is not a priority or a value for many parents and that it is not part of their daily routine, especially literacy from age 0 to 5. Parents from all socio-economic

backgrounds have family literacy needs, including learning how to communicate and interact with their children. Some children from exogamic families have special literacy needs, for example, in the area of speech development and support in learning the minority language. Impediments in terms of available resources (lack of time, cost, transportation, distance, childcare) and personal issues (lack of self-confidence, fear, feeling intimidated) prevent parents from taking part in family literacy activities. Many people are unaware of the significant benefits of family literacy, especially from age 0 to 5.

E1.2 Role of parents, professionals, schools and government

When asked about their perceptions of the role played by parents, professionals, schools, and government, some partners indicated that many parents do not see themselves as being primarily responsible for their children's education. They ascribe that role to the schools. Further, some parents feel that they do not have the skills they need to teach their children how to read and write. Some of the partners said that many people still see professionals as experts rather than facilitators who support parents with a view to empowering them. Some of the partners felt that the involvement of schools in family literacy is still in its infancy and is not what it could be. Some partners also said that family literacy does not seem to be a priority for government.

E1.3 Existing Resources

When asked about their perceptions of family literacy resources currently available, many partners responded that persons living in rural areas have access to fewer services and sometimes have to travel great distances to get services. Access to transportation is a problem for many parents. There are not enough human resources allocated to family literacy. The cost of French-language materials is higher, and it is sometimes difficult to obtain them, especially in predominantly English-speaking areas. Many partners deplored the lack of financial resources allocated to family literacy.

E1.4 Family Literacy Activities in the Regions

The partners noted that family literacy activities are taking place in the regions, but they felt that there should be more. The partners said there are not enough promotion and awareness-raising activities, especially those that stress family literacy starting at birth and even during pregnancy. Many parents are not aware of everything that family literacy entails. The literacy activities cited most often are those that take place at libraries and Family Resource Centres and those sponsored by the agencies involved in the Early Childhood Initiatives and the Born to Read/Le goût de lire project.

E1.5 Family Literacy Training of Parents and Professionals

Lastly, some partners noted numerous shortcomings in the current state of family literacy training for parents and professionals. They indicated that there are few training activities designed for all parents. They deplored the fact that family literacy is not part of the university education of many professionals who work with families.

E2. Potential Family Literacy Initiatives

The partners' comments on the second major topic, i.e., their perceptions about initiatives that should take place in their regions in connection with the development of interventions, research and evaluation, and training, are grouped together and summarized as follows: general remarks; development of literacy through awareness-raising; partnership building (coordination and resources); development of interventions; research and evaluation; and training.

E2.1 General Remarks

The partners made some general remarks about potential family literacy initiatives, which can serve as guiding principles for the development of activities. Family literacy initiatives should take into account the importance of communication and bonding; meet regional and family

needs; be incorporated into activities of daily living and, where possible, into existing programs; be preventive and strive for long-term results as well as short-term ones; and encourage regional and family empowerment.

E2.2 Developing Literacy through Awareness-raising

The partners suggested ways of raising public awareness of family literacy. Some partners indicated that society as a whole has to be made aware of the importance of family literacy. Many partners indicated that public perceptions have to change, and the importance and impact of literacy have to be stressed. The partners also agreed that parents need to be informed and even educated about family literacy. Many partners maintained that parents must be valued as the people primarily responsible for their children's education. The partners stressed the importance of getting boys and fathers involved in the literacy process. It was suggested that having more male workers would encourage fathers to take part in literacy activities. According to the partners, we must prove to government that family literacy is a pressing need so that it will allocate the necessary resources. Many partners called for a provincial public awareness campaign.

E2.3 Partnership Building

Some partners also suggested possible initiatives in terms of partnership building, coordination, and family literacy resources. A few said that it is necessary to establish partnerships between the various organizations involved in family literacy with a view to sharing information and resources and working together to achieve common goals. Some partners suggested that a structure be implemented to coordinate activities and support organizations and parents. The partners recommended that more funding be allocated to family literacy, with a view to obtaining the human and material resources required to meet objectives.

E2.4 Development of Family Literacy Activities

Following are some of the partners' main suggestions concerning the development of family literacy activities: that libraries offer activities for parents and their children; that they have story time on Saturdays and invite families to visit; that the fundamentals of family literacy be covered in high school curricula; that schools offer workshops for parents to help the latter prepare their children for school entry; that school libraries offer a book lending service for families; that initiatives aimed at both parents and children be implemented; that family literacy activities be included in prenatal classes; that the objective of all family literacy activities be parental autonomy and empowerment; that a directory of all the various family literacy activities be developed and updated regularly; that a pamphlet on family literacy be prepared and given to all parents; and that various media (audio and visual) be used to deliver literacy activities.

E2.5 Research and Evaluation

The partners made suggestions concerning family literacy research and evaluation. Some recommended that mechanisms be established to evaluate the impact of family literacy programs. A few partners also suggested that more extensive research be done to learn more about the situations and the literacy needs in the different regions and the true causes of illiteracy. Other partners recommended that research of a more qualitative and regional nature be done. Some partners said that research has to be useful and that its findings have to be made available to the persons concerned.

E2.6 Training

Lastly, the partners suggested the following initiatives in terms of family literacy training. Some partners recommended that early childhood workers and professionals be given training in family literacy. Some suggested that all parents receive training in family literacy, e.g., during

prenatal classes. A few suggested calling on resource persons who could instruct parents in the art of reading books, e.g., during story time at the library.

E3. LNBI's Role in the Development of Family Literacy

The partners' comments on the third major topic, i.e., their perceptions of the role(s) to be played by LNBI in the development of family literacy, are presented as follows: LNBI's role in coordinating family literacy activities and LNBI's role in raising public awareness of family literacy.

E3.1 Coordination

Some partners felt that LNBI has a significant role to play in coordinating family literacy activities. They would like to see LNBI do the following: coordinate family literacy activities in the province; mobilize and coordinate the resources needed to deliver family literacy services in the province; support family literacy partners; serve as a clearinghouse for the exchange of ideas and distribution of information to partners; foster partnership building; and ensure the continuity of development, research, evaluation, and follow-up activities.

E3.2 Raising Public Awareness

Some partners said that LNBI has a major role to play in raising public awareness of family literacy. They would like to see LNBI make information about family literacy available and accessible; promote and advertise family literacy; conduct a family literacy awareness-raising and promotional campaign; serve as a lobby group, particularly in dealings with government; act as a watchdog for family literacy organizations; and have a long-term vision and stability. Comments given by family literacy partners indicated a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each.

To sum up, the partners noted a number of shortcomings in the current status of family literacy in their respective regions, including lack of awareness of family literacy among the general public, confusion about the roles and responsibilities of each group, lack of resources, lack of awareness-raising and promotional activities, and lack of training on the part of workers, professionals, and parents. The partners also recommended various ways of meeting the needs perceived in their respective regions, and they even suggested a few guidelines for developing such initiatives. The latter include the development of specific activities and/or programs, partnership building, coordination of activities, mobilization of resources, training, and research and evaluation. Lastly, the partners are of the opinion that LNBI must become involved especially in coordinating and raising awareness of family literacy in New Brunswick.

F - GENERAL CONCLUSION

In the following, we will attempt to illustrate the main findings and discussion points contained in the five parts of the study on family literacy and early childhood in New Brunswick: review of the literature; sociodemographic profiles; inventory of interventions; survey of parents; and focus groups with partners. This research project and the different studies that make it up do not pretend to be able to report all aspects of family literacy in New Brunswick. We have tried to measure some elements at a certain moment.

Our general conclusion is divided into six themes: 1) families and literacy; 2) family literacy activities in the home and in the community; 3) development of family literacy initiatives; 4) public awareness-raising; 5) training for parents and for professionals who work with families and children; and 6) LNBI's role. The highlights of this general conclusion are summarized in box F6.

F6. Summary of Highlights Raised in the General Conclusion (part 1 of 2)

Families and Literacy

- Where *socioeconomic status* is concerned, it is important to take into account financial resources available in families and family structures (e.g. single-parent and two-parent families) when preparing and delivering literacy activities aimed at breaking intergenerational cycles responsible for illiteracy in children.
- Parents participation in the development of literacy skills in their children is essential. In terms of the *importance of the home environment*, how can we make parents more aware of their role as being primarily responsible for their children's education and how can we make them realize the impact they can have on the development of their children's literacy?

Family Literacy Activities in the Home and the Community

- The majority of parents take part in literacy activities especially in their *home* with their preschool children. Do they have the resources they need to conduct these activities properly in the home?
- Generally speaking, parents tend to take part in few literacy activities in the *community*. Are existing family literacy activities in the community sufficient and do they meet families' needs? How can the obstacles that prevent parents from taking part in activities in their communities be overcome?
- Many family literacy activities often target *specific clients* and not families in general. How can we develop initiatives that reach all parents?

Development of Family Literacy Initiatives

- Many suggestions were made by partners to ensure that *new approaches and trends* are taken into account when developing family literacy initiatives. How can we ensure that these new principles are incorporated into family literacy initiatives that are developed? Which strategies should be implemented in order to promote community and family empowerment?
- Access to *material* and availability of material are important in family literacy. How can we make sure that material is available for all Francophone and Anglophone families and how can we ensure the quality of this material? How can we make sure that the material is used properly?

- The importance of the *involvement* of parents and children in literacy activities was mentioned several times. How can we make sure that community literacy activities involve both parents and children and that such activities make them active participants? How can we get parents and children involved in organizing such activities?
- It is suggested that in the literature review and by partners that an *evaluation* process to measure the effectiveness of family literacy activities be established. Is there such a process in place? Is it effective? How is it used?

F6. Summary of Highlights Raised in the General Conclusion (part 2 of 2)

Public Awareness-raising

- Some partners suggested that the general public be made aware of the importance and impact of family literacy, through, for example, a province-wide awareness campaign. How can we make sure that the information reaches parents and that they assimilate the information and incorporate it into their daily lives?
- The partners suggested that *fathers* be involved more in family literacy activities. Which obstacles prevent them from taking part in family literacy activities?
- It is necessary to establish *partnerships* and secure more human, material, and financial resources to meet family literacy needs. Are the partnerships that have been established to organize and deliver literacy activities sufficient and effective? How can we make sure that the necessary resources are made available?

Training for Parents and Professionals

- Training needs were identified among family literacy workers, parents, and teachers. How can training be provided for parents? How can family literacy and early childhood education be incorporated into university programs and professional development activities?

LNBI's Role

- LNBI's suggested roles are grouped together as follows: awareness-raising and coordination. Are these roles part of LNBI's mandate, or are they the responsibility of other organizations? Of the recommendations made, which ones would LNBI like to incorporate into its action plan and follow through on, either alone or in cooperation with other partners?

F1. Families and Literacy

There are two recurring themes when it comes to families and literacy: a) the impact of socioeconomic status on literacy (especially factors relating to education and household income); and b) the importance of the home environment in the family literacy process.

Neither the researchers cited in the review of the literature nor the partners who took part in the focus groups could agree on the impact of socioeconomic status on family literacy. Rather, they underscored the intergenerational cycle of literacy (relationship between the parents' level of education or their level of literacy and that of their children) and poverty (household income). It should also be noted that the findings of the survey of parents did not enable us to conclude that, in the main, there are significant differences in the parents' responses, depending on their level of education and average household income.

The sociodemographic profiles of New Brunswick families with at least 1 child 0 to 4 years of age yielded some interesting data in terms of household income (but not in terms of level of education). Of the 28,580 New Brunswick families with at least 1 child 0 to 4 years of age, roughly 19% (5,345 families) have a total household income (after transfers) of less than \$15,000, and 68% of the latter are single-parent families headed by women. Further, 23% of families (6,695 families) have a total household income of less than \$20,000. Of the latter, 61% are single-parent families headed by women. A fairly significant number of families thus have very low household incomes. Of these, many are single-parent families headed by women.

It is important to take into account the financial resources available in families and family structures (e.g. single- and two-parent families) when preparing and delivering literacy activities aimed at breaking the intergenerational cycle responsible for illiteracy in children. Many of these families have significant fundamental needs that must be addressed, which they may often feel are more important than literacy. It is thus necessary to

take into account the cost of services, accessibility of materials, means of transportation, child-care services, etc.

Many of the researchers cited in the review of the literature pointed to the key role played by the home environment in the development of literacy in children. Many advocate access to reading-related material and the involvement of parents in and/or their commitment to their children's literacy. Parents have a greater impact when they function as interveners rather than reading models. In the focus groups with literacy partners, many of them also stressed the importance of the role of parents and their involvement in family literacy activities. Parents are the ones primarily responsible for their children's education. Further, some partners feel that parents are not always aware of everything involved in literacy and its impact on the development of their children's reading and writing skills. In the survey of parents, the latter reported engaging in family literacy activities in the home with their children. Further, although parents on the whole are favourably disposed to taking part in family literacy activities, they indicated that they tend to rarely take part in family literacy activities in the community.

How can we make parents more aware of their role as those primarily responsible for their children's education? How can we make parents realize the impact they can have in the development of their children's literacy? How can we get them to become more involved in literacy activities in their communities? Some partners made suggestions in that regard: awareness-raising campaigns; inclusion of literacy training in prenatal classes; information pamphlets that could be given to all parents; information that could be provided to parents by health professionals; involvement of schools in early childhood education, etc. How can we reach parents in connection with literacy activities they do in the home?

F2. Family Literacy Activities in the Home and the Community

As mentioned previously, although most parents have very favourable perceptions, aspirations, and intentions when it comes to family literacy, they tend on the whole to rarely take part in literacy activities in their communities. Some parents spoke of obstacles preventing them from taking part in literacy activities in the community (lack of time, lack of transportation, distance to be travelled, lack of child-care services, etc.). Most of them take part in literacy activities especially in their home with their preschool children.

*Are they doing all the activities they should be? Are they doing them well?
Do they have all the resources they need to conduct literacy activities properly in the home? How can obstacles preventing parents from taking part in activities in their communities be overcome?*

According to the partners, family literacy activities are taking place in communities, but it is sometimes difficult to get people to take part. These activities often target specific groups and not families in general. Proof of this can be seen in the organizations and initiatives cited in the inventory of programs: there are only a few activities aimed at families as a whole.

Literacy is a need for everyone. How can we develop initiatives that reach all parents?

The study of sociodemographic profiles revealed a higher concentration of families with children 0 to 4 years of age and a higher number of children in this age group in health regions 1, 2, and 3.

Do the number of family literacy programs and activities and the human, material, and financial resources available for literacy in these regions reflect these facts? Are they proportional?

F3. Development of Family Literacy Initiatives

Some of the researchers cited in the review of the literature recommended that new approaches be taken into account when developing family literacy initiatives in the future. Further, the partners made suggestions in terms of the principles that should guide the development of initiatives. In the review of the literature, researchers also discussed the sociocontextual approach, which acknowledges the strengths already present in families and integrates family literacy into family activities. The partners identified elements related to this approach and suggested that these new principles be incorporated into existing programs, that existing resources be maximized, and that literacy activities that meet the needs of communities and families be developed.

How can we make sure that these new principles are integrated into family literacy initiatives that are developed? Which strategies have to be implemented in order to promote community and family empowerment? How can we value parents' resources and/or strengths, and how can we help them build their self-confidence?

The importance of verbal interaction and communication was cited in both the review of the literature and by the partners.

Is it taken into account in family literacy activities? How can we make parents realize just how important it is?

When it comes to reading-related material, the literature confirms that access to material and availability of material are important in terms of family literacy. Reading is more effective when it is interactive. The inventory of initiatives includes the Born to Read program, which helps make reading material available for children. The parents who took part in the survey indicated that they have reading material in their homes, but we were unable to determine the amount or

quality of such material. According to the partners, it is sometimes difficult to obtain material, especially in certain regions.

How can we make sure that material is available for all Francophone and Anglophone families and how can we ensure the quality of this material?

How can we make sure that the material is used properly?

The researchers cited in the review of the literature and the partners spoke of the importance of the involvement of parents and children in literacy activities. Parents and children have to become active participants.

How can we make sure that community literacy activities involve both parents and children and that they make them active participants? How can we get parents and children involved in organizing such activities?

The partners suggested that an evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of family literacy activities be established.

Is there such a process in place? Is it effective? How is it used?

The partners suggested basic principles they feel should be followed when developing literacy activities, initiatives, and programs. They also suggested a list of possible initiatives.

How can these principles be put into practice? Should some of the initiatives suggested take priority over others?

F4. Public Awareness-raising

Some researchers cited in the review of the literature underlined the importance of raising public awareness of family literacy. On the whole, even though parents report that they are rather satisfied with what they are doing in terms of literacy, the parents who took part in the survey wanted to find out more about it and wanted to better prepare their children to learn how to read and write. Some partners reported that, in the main, not all parents are aware of

everything involved in family literacy. There are shortcomings in terms of access to and availability and coordination of information about family literacy. Some partners suggested raising public awareness of the importance and impact of family literacy, for example, through a province-wide awareness campaign.

How can we raise awareness among the general public? How can we make sure that the information reaches parents? How can we ensure that the latter assimilate the information and incorporate it into their daily lives?

The partners also suggested that fathers become more involved in family literacy activities. It is also necessary to establish partnerships and secure more human, material, and financial resources to meet family literacy needs.

How can we get fathers involved? What are the obstacles preventing them from taking part in family literacy activities? Are there male role models? Are there enough male workers? Are the partnerships that have been established to organize and deliver literacy activities sufficient and effective? How can we make sure that partnerships are established and that they are effective? Is family literacy a priority for our communities and governments? How can we make sure that the necessary resources are made available?

F5. Training for Parents and Professionals

The review of the literature revealed training needs among family literacy workers, parents, and teachers. Some partners denounced the lack of training opportunities for parents and the lack of training on family literacy in university programs for professionals who will be working with families.

Should we provide family literacy training to all new parents (e.g. in prenatal classes)? What is the most effective way of teaching parents?

How can we involve parents and how can we get them to take part in educational activities? How can we incorporate family literacy and early childhood education into university programs for professionals who will be working with children and families? Should professional associations be involved in the organization of professional development workshops on family literacy?

F6. LNBI's Role

The partners recommended that LNBI play two main roles in the development of family literacy in New Brunswick: awareness-raising and coordination. In terms of awareness-raising, some partners said that they would like to see LNBI make information on family literacy available; conduct activities publicizing and promoting family literacy; stage a campaign to promote awareness of family literacy; act as a lobby group, targeting government in particular; serve as a watchdog for family literacy groups; promote the stability, continuity, and permanency of literacy initiatives; and take a long-term approach to family literacy. In terms of coordination, some partners would like to see LNBI coordinate family literacy activities in the province; mobilize and coordinate all the resources required to deliver family literacy activities in the province; support the various family literacy partners; serve as a focal point or clearinghouse for the exchange of ideas and the provision of information to partners; facilitate the establishment of partnerships; and ensure the continuity of research, development, evaluation, and follow-up activities.

Are these expectations realistic? Are these roles part of LNBI's mandate, or are they the responsibility of other organizations? Are the partners familiar with LNBI's mandate? Of these recommendations, which ones would LNBI like to incorporate into its action plan and follow through on, either alone or in cooperation with other partners?

In conclusion, the five studies that were done as part of this research project yielded a considerable number of suggestions and ideas. In some instances, conducting qualitative studies would be a good way to better understand and further investigate some of our findings and some of the issues raised, for example, with parents. Nevertheless, LNBI and its partners now have at their disposal a wealth of information on the regions of New Brunswick, and we hope that this information will guide them in their future initiatives.