

Mapping the Field of Family Literacy in Canada

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Acknowledgments

One of the ways that Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) fulfills its mandate is by providing a forum where people from provincial/territorial and national organizations can work together to identify, discuss and address issues of common focus. This project, *Mapping the Field of Family Literacy* reflects MCL's goal of building consensus, capacity and commitment on the topic of family literacy.

The original vision for this paper was to create a Family Literacy Action Plan. To help shape that vision, a working group, which included well-known family literacy experts from across the country, was struck. After several conversations and interviews with the working group contributing their knowledge and expertise towards the development of this work, an internal decision was made to realign the scope of this project. It was determined that a family literacy snapshot was required to inform the development of a family literacy action plan. With the change in scope of this report, the working group was informally disbanded. We would like to thank our working group members: Cheryl Brown, Lesley Brown, Debbie Griffith, Gabrielle Lopez and Suzanne Smythe and we look forward to working with them in the future as we move into the action planning phase of this work.

This paper provides snapshots of family literacy "activity" in each province and territory with the intent of providing a view of family literacy through a wide angle lens. In other words, to look widely, not deeply, at family literacy. Each snapshot was created from a series of interviews with provincial and territorial literacy coalition staff, key informants working in the field of family literacy, staff from some provincial and territorial governments and/or website and document reviews. The interviews identified two over-arching themes: How family literacy is funded and who provides family literacy programming.

Over the next year MCL will continue its work on family literacy from a national perspective.

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Movement for Canadian Literacy
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FAMILY LITERACY IN CANADA

Introduction: Why did MCL conduct an environmental scan of family literacy?

During the funding year 2005-2006, MCL and the Executive Directors of the provincial and territorial coalitions decided that MCL should conduct an environmental scan of the family literacy field. This work was built into MCL's work plan for 2007-08. The board felt the resulting "map" of family literacy would help MCL to clearly articulate its role in family literacy in Canada.

MCL and its members have a long-standing interest in this issue. MCL hosted the first national Canadian Family Literacy conference in 1994, bringing together Canadian and international pioneers in this area which was just beginning to be talked about under that name. Many of those people have continued to develop knowledge and programs in this evolving field.

As an alliance of the provincial and territorial literacy coalitions, MCL is a national forum, voice and support for the field. The coalitions play a similar role at the provincial/territorial level. Since 1994, the coalitions have steadily increased their involvement in family literacy: conducting research, sharing knowledge through conferences and professional development opportunities, and developing materials. Some have partnered with other family literacy initiatives, with family service organizations, or have developed multi-sectoral initiatives to support intergenerational literacy development.

MCL has also partnered in a multi-year project with the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs sitting as a member of the advisory committee for the "Weaving Literacy into Family and Community Life" project.

The scan is a necessary first step in working with a broad range of players to develop a national action plan for this issue. The scan attempts to scope out as much as possible:

- ⇒ Who is doing what in Family Literacy across the country?
- ⇒ What are the key issues, challenges, needs and gaps?
- ⇒ How might the broad community move this issue ahead?
- ⇒ What roles might MCL take on at the national level to move this issue ahead?

We examined this in the context of MCL's strategic planning process and of the community's long-term efforts to flesh out and advance a national action plan for literacy.

What do we mean by family literacy?

A variety of programs and services are given the label of “family literacy”. For the purpose of this scan we included the following:

- ☞ Parent involvement – parental involvement in a child’s literacy development is encouraged through joint caregiver-child sessions; this type of program focuses mainly on children 0 to 6.
- ☞ Intergenerational – both caregivers and children receive direct literacy instruction; again the age of the child in this type of program is 0 to 6.
- ☞ Focus on Primary Caregiver – adults are the primary participants and the focus is on ways in which to develop children’s literacy at home either directly or indirectly; if the child is not yet in the school system, childcare may be provided while caregiver participates in program
- ☞ Activities for the General Public – focus is on public awareness, informal participation (e.g., reading tents, ABC Canada’s Family Literacy Day activities)
- ☞ Resources – materials (often created by program staff) that support the idea of family literacy are made available (e.g., books for babies)

How is family literacy funded?

Each of the provincial/territorial “snapshots” looks at the how of funding within that province or territory. Historically, in Canada, funding for family literacy has ebbed and flowed at the discretion of governments (federal and provincial/territorial). In the early 1990s, the federal government and some provincial/territorial governments funded family literacy projects as long as the focus was on the adult. For example, in Ontario at that time, the provincial government provided cost-shared funding¹ for the Family Literacy Interest Group.

This flow of funding for family literacy lasted until the mid 1990s. After that, agencies that wanted to provide family literacy programming did so through their own fund-raising initiatives.

In 2000 the Early Childhood Development Agreement between the federal government and the provinces and territories provided funding for family literacy that focuses on the

¹ Cost-shared funding refers to project funding in which the amount of funding is split between a particular province/territory and the federal government. In the 1990s the funding would have come from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS).

development of early childhood literacy skills. For example in 2003-04, the provinces and territories received over \$500 million from the federal government. This money was earmarked for service delivery improvements in four areas:

- ⇒ healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy
- ⇒ parenting and family supports
- ⇒ early childhood development, learning and care
- ⇒ community supports.

In many provinces this led to the creation of what is commonly called “early years” centres. In some, but not all, jurisdictions the programs that focus on early years development have worked closely with adult literacy programs. In some cases, however, it is assumed that parents or caregivers have sufficient literacy skills to be the child’s first and foremost important teacher.

During the same time frame, some provincial and territorial governments began to once again provide funding for family literacy initiatives. For many provinces and territories this “wave” of funding lasted until mid 2004 or so. Some provincial and territorial governments have continued to fund family literacy.

Currently some provincial and territorial governments allow adult literacy program funding to be used for family literacy activities. In Manitoba, for example, criteria for funding eligibility not only linked family literacy to the needs of the caregiver but to the whole family. The funding criteria note that family literacy programs:

- ⇒ should be offered separately from other program provision
- ⇒ will address the literacy needs of adult caregivers as well as those of children
- ⇒ will identify program goals and outcomes in terms of the family as a whole and how it functions within the larger community.
- ⇒ will operate in conjunction with a successful existing literacy program or with another program that provides services to families.²

There is strong evidence that fund-raising plays a key role in the provision of family literacy programs and services that are provided by literacy programs. For example, many local community-based programs hold annual events such as silent auctions or raffles.

² *Criteria for Eligibility for Family Literacy Funding*. Adult Learning and Literacy, Ministry of Advanced Education and Literacy. Retrieved from www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ael/all/publications.html June 2007.

There are two notable annual national fund-raising initiatives: CanWest Global “Raise-a-Reader” campaign and the Peter Gzowski Invitational (or PGI, as it is commonly referred to).

The Canwest Global “Raise-a-Reader” campaign distributes funding in all provinces and territories to organizations that provide family literacy initiatives. Since 2002, the program has raised and distributed over ten million dollars.

Since its inception in the late 1980s, the Peter Gzowski Invitational (or PGI, as it is commonly referred to) is one of the most successful literacy fundraising events in Canada. Over the years it has generated more than \$10 million. A PGI is held in every province and territory.

Who provides family literacy programs?

In addition to the work done by agencies and organizations that have adult literacy as their main focus, other organizations provide programs and services that are called family literacy. This includes community service clubs (e.g., The Lions Club) and non-profit organizations. In most of these cases, however, the main focus of these programs and services is on the child. One example of this type of programming would be a “parents and tots” reading circle provided by volunteers from a service club at a community centre.

It is important to note that often, when non-adult literacy organizations direct programs or services towards adults, the focus is not necessarily on the improvement of the adults’ literacy skills. Rather, the focus is on their parenting skills. An assessment of skills is probably not done prior to the parents’ participation in the parenting skills workshop. If staff providing the parenting skills workshop note that an adult’s communications are not adequate it is possible that person is referred to a local literacy program. More research needs to be done in this area.

Most organizations that provide direct service to adult literacy learners do use a learner centred, goal-directed approach – especially when the adult learner has very low literacy skills. While there is no evidence that “standardized” curriculum for family literacy programming is used, many of the family literacy models or methods provide training on how to use the approach. See the program descriptions in the section on the types of programs available.

There is training available for practitioners. For example, The Centre for Family Literacy (based in Edmonton, Alberta) has developed a core curriculum³ for literacy practitioners and other service providers. This gives practitioners a set of foundational skills for working in the area of family literacy.

At the Community/Local Level

Across Canada, at the community or local level, many organizations can provide “family literacy” programming. This can include:

- ⇒ community centres
- ⇒ other non-profit organizations (e.g., The Boys and Girls Clubs)
- ⇒ service organizations (e.g., Lion’s Clubs)
- ⇒ religious organizations
- ⇒ immigrant service organizations
- ⇒ family resource centres
- ⇒ family & community social services
- ⇒ municipalities
- ⇒ regional/community health services
- ⇒ school boards.

The activities taken on by local organizations are sometimes linked to work being done at a provincial-territorial and/or national level. For example, Success by 6TM is an initiative that was started in the United States by the United Way of America. Many United Ways in Canada support this initiative. Programming is often provided through school boards.

At the Provincial-Territorial and/or National Level

At the national and provincial/territorial level other organizations, which may not necessarily have *adult literacy* as their main focus, often take on family literacy activities.

³ In 2001, the Centre for Family Literacy developed Foundational Training in Family Literacy, a one-week training program specifically targeting family literacy practitioners in Alberta. The training focuses on the whole family for developing literacy skills; both children and parents benefit with this approach. The training includes topics such as emergent literacy, working with families, best practices, administration and program evaluation. Training in specific program models such as Books for Babies and Rhymes That Bind may also be included. An online version of Foundational Training in Family Literacy is also available. (Information taken from www.familit.ca/training/foundation.html)

Here are some examples:

- ⇒ Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada)
- ⇒ Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network
- ⇒ Canadian Association of Municipalities
- ⇒ Immigrant Service organizations
- ⇒ YM-YWCA Canada.

What types of programs are available?

Below are some examples of types of family literacy programs currently available in many communities across Canada.⁴ These programs are provided by a variety of agencies and organizations – including organizations that have adult literacy as their primary focus.

Books for Babies

These programs have been implemented in many communities across Canada, usually operated by volunteers in conjunction with hospital or medical centre sponsorship. Either identified before or during delivery stay in hospital, mothers receive a visit to explain the importance of reading to children from birth. After their hospital stay, parents receive book bags containing books for reading to their infants, along with tips on how to read and talk to their young children.

Book Mates

Developed by Dr. Beverly Zakaluk of the University of Manitoba, this model offers a series of workshops for parents of preschoolers that emphasize the value of reading to preschool children, the use of functional literacy to draw children's attention to environmental print that conveys meaning throughout daily activities and the role of writing in early literacy development. Facilitator training is offered so that members of the community can conduct workshops.

Come Read With Me

Developed by the Saskatchewan Literacy Network in 1993, this prototype model provides both facilitator training and direct services to parents and their children. Programs are located in a variety of community and school settings. Program goals for

⁴ The information in this section was adapted from information found on the Action for Family Literacy Ontario's website at www.aflo.on.literacy.ca

parents and children include encouraging reading as a fun and valued activity for both parents and children, aiding parents to help their children develop pre-reading and reading skills, helping parents with low literacy skills read to their children, encouraging parents to pursue further adult education opportunities. Facilitator training is three days long and includes resource materials and certificate of participation on completion.

From Lullabies to Literacy

This program was designed by the Macaulay Child Development Centre in Toronto, and supported with a grant from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation. It has three components: discussion—where parents can relate their own experiences and learn strategies for supporting their children's early literacy; interactive play—where parents practise the strategies they have learned; "rhyme time"—where parents and children are introduced to a rhyme or song focusing on a particular letter sound.

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI)

Designed to help parents support their children's literacy development and school success, this program may be run by community centres, libraries, and school boards. Usually a trained parent from the same community visits a parent at home and works with that parent to enable her or him to participate in parent-child literacy activities. Parent assistants may work with 10 to 15 families, and each program has a coordinator for every 12 parent assistants. Literacy resources focus on language and reading with children.

Homespun

Developed in 1991 in Alberta, this program was adapted from Motherhead, the North Carolina literacy program for women in prison. Homespun offers in-class instruction for parents and caregivers on reading with children. Using a variety of children's literature, parents discuss children's reactions to books, personally respond to literature within their own homes, and address related parenting and educational issues.

Learning Together Workshops

The Adult Education Section of the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture developed these workshops. The purpose is to provide accessible family literacy resources and facilitator materials to communities. Workshop manuals, paired with easy-to-read parent booklets allow communities to plan and implement family literacy workshops that meet specific local needs.

Literacy and Parenting (LAPS)

Developed in Alberta by Elaine Cairns and Laureen Mackenzie, LAPS is a training program for family literacy practitioners. Once trained, a LAPS facilitator can provide weekly sessions in which participants improve their literacy skills, learn how to instill good literacy practices in their children and start to look at learning in a positive way.

Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

Developed by Celia Lottridge, this non-profit charitable organization has operated several on-going parent and child groups in the Toronto area since 1986. Since 1993 the program has developed training workshops and resources that enable other organizations to offer the program. Parents and their young children attend weekly sessions (usually in ten-week cycles) for about one and a half hours each week. Activities centre on oral literature - rhymes, songs, and stories, with parents and children all seated in a circle. Teaching is directed to parents with children participating, napping or wandering, as is appropriate to their age. There is informal discussion of how rhymes can be used in daily life. The program accommodates families who are non-English users. Resource materials (rhyme collections, songs, stories) and a program video are available in facilitator training.

Parents' Roles Interacting with Teacher Support (PRINTS)

Developed by Drs. William T. Fagan and Mary C. Cronin, this program is designed to empower parents to foster the literacy development of their young children. Parents are empowered to take on five literacy roles across five contexts of a child's life: talk, play, environmental print, books and book sharing, and scribbling/drawing/writing. PRINTS is structured, yet flexible, and parents become co-partners in its implementation. The program runs for 12 sessions of approximately two hours each and is also suitable for preschool and kindergarten teachers. Facilitator training includes three-day workshops with facilitator's handbook, training manual, and facilitator training video. Program materials include a parent video and parent handbook.

Reading and Parents Program (RAPP)

Developed by Kingston Literacy, the Reading and Parents Program was started in 1990 when the first RAPP packs were assembled. Each pack includes a book suitable for a child between 2 and a half and 5 years of age, tips for parents on how to use the pack to develop their children's language skills, a selection of poetry, activity sheets, a craft idea and materials necessary to make the craft. RAPP packs are used regularly by parent-child groups, and are an excellent resource for modelling how to read with a child.

Reading Circles

Reading Circles is one aspect of Frontier College's programming directed at children and youth. Designed to strengthen child and family reading, a Reading Circle is a club where adults and children come together to read for pleasure. In settings surrounded by books, group reading and literacy-related games, Reading Circles are community-based, volunteer staffed family literacy projects.

Storysacks

Neil Griffiths, a school principal, developed Storysacks in Britain. He brought the idea to Canada when he gave a series of workshops in New Brunswick in 1999. Storysacks Canada was founded shortly afterward. A story sack is a large cloth bag containing a good quality storybook, props, scenery and characters to bring the story to life, a non-fiction book linked to the story, reading tips and activity ideas for parents, word or number games based on the story, and an audio tape of the story.

Roles for MCL – Challenges and Opportunities

Across the country, the provision of family literacy programs and services that focus mainly on the literacy skills of the caregiver is uneven. The main reason cited for this is funding. Some provincial and territorial governments allow adult literacy funding to focus on family literacy as long as the main recipient of the program or service is the adult.

With the strong case now being made for early intervention, much of the focus of family literacy programming is on the child and on ensuring that the caregiver has strong parenting skills. In most provinces and territories this type of family literacy programming is often provided by early learning centres, school boards or by a consortium of community agencies. Organizations that provide adult literacy programs and services are not necessarily involved. When these organizations are involved potential gaps in family literacy provision within a community are few.

In some provinces and territories, however, early learning centres that provide workshops on parenting skills for caregivers may not make referrals to adult literacy programs. Some of these programs have been offered based on the assumption that all the adults participating have the literacy skills to be the child's first and foremost teacher.

On the other hand, adult literacy programs, which have an increasing focus on employment/further education skills, may not link an adult's parenting needs to programs and services offered by early learning centres or other organizations that provide family and children services.

At the provincial/territorial level, there was little evidence of literacy coalitions networking with provincial/territorial service groups that focus on family and children services. For example, staff from a literacy coalition may not connect with staff from the provincial Early Childhood Education organization. Again the reasons for this are closely linked to funding: most, if not all literacy coalitions, receive funding to focus on adult literacy. More research is needed to determine the extent of this gap and the potential benefit for establishing a relationship.

Data collection for this scan

During the Spring and Summer of 2007, 30 telephone interviews were held with staff from each of the provincial/territorial coalitions, staff from other organizations involved in the provision of family literacy programs and services, and with government contacts from some provinces and territories. Where appropriate (e.g., knowledge of MCL as a national organization), interviewees were asked what they saw as the role of MCL in family literacy.

Their responses fell into seven broad categories:

- ⇒ dissemination of information/clearinghouse/database (11 responses)
- ⇒ research (model development or reshaping) (7 responses)
- ⇒ awareness/advocacy (nationally)/ policy development (6 responses)
- ⇒ partnership building (5 responses)
- ⇒ forum for sharing (5 responses)
- ⇒ development of certificate program and/or training standards (4 responses)
- ⇒ best practices/models (4 responses)

It is possible to re-group these suggested roles into two key areas:

- ⇒ “knowledge-mobilization” – research, forum for sharing, venue for disseminating information
- ⇒ collaboration – awareness, advocacy, partnership building, policy development

Next Steps

At the board meeting (April 23/24) MCL board members were presented with the following recommendations. The recommendations will be prioritized by staff and specific activities will be included in our workplan for 2008-09.

BEST PRACTICES

Recommendation

Develop a statement of best practices that can be adopted by any organization or group.

Process:

Strike a working group to guide the work
Collect and review existing best practice statements (national and international)
Draft working document for review by working group
Disseminate discussion draft to organizations across Canada
Collect and collate feedback; revise discussion draft
Distribute set of best practices to provincial/territorial organizations; post on website

Outcome:

A standard set of best practices is available to the field.

CLEARINGHOUSE

Recommendation

Create quarterly reviews of new and existing family literacy resources (national and international).

Recommendation

Dedicate a section of each literacy.caExpress to the topic of family literacy.

Process:

Create a small group of volunteers willing to review resources
Select 5 to 10 resources for review (for each edition of the review)
Establish guidelines for review process
Collect and collate reviews
Distribute review electronically (MCL website, NALD and other venues)
Include other relevant information about family literacy

Outcome:

The field will have up to date information about relevant materials, resources and activities.

COLLABORATION

Recommendation:

Expand our knowledge base by consulting with people working in family literacy in other countries (e.g., Britain, Scotland, Ireland, the US) on specific topics.

Recommendation

That MCL develop a collaboration framework that will help all organizations work together to shape the family literacy agenda nationally and in each of the provinces and territories. The framework should include how MCL and its partners will work together to achieve a set of common goals in areas such as training, research, funding and key messages to the general public.

Recommendation

That over the next three years MCL works with its family literacy partners to raise awareness about family literacy within the literacy and essential skills communities, with government and the public at large.

Process:

Create an online discussion forum for invited partners/participants
Work collaboratively with partners to create an action plan for family literacy

Outcome:

The field of family literacy will be strengthened through networking, knowledge exchange and specific awareness activities.

Provincial Snapshots

The provincial snapshots were developed using a variety of data collection techniques. Initially, key informants were identified by each coalition. Key informants included coalition staff, government funders and other practitioners with an expertise in family literacy.

Each key informant was interviewed by telephone using a set of interview questions. Follow-up discussions were held by telephone and email. Additional information was extracted from coalition and government websites and from published documents.

Drafts of each snapshot were sent to key informants for comment and revision.

The Snapshots

Family Literacy in Alberta

Alberta is one of the few provinces with a parent-child strategy. Created by the Ministry Advanced Education and Technology, this strategy supports approaches to literacy that “integrate adult literacy instruction and early oral language development for children from birth to age six.” In Alberta two literacy organizations play important roles in adult and family literacy. These are Literacy Alberta and Centre for Family Literacy.

How is family literacy funded in Alberta?

The provincial government’s parent-child literacy strategy (PCLS) recognizes the disadvantages that being poor can have on the development of literacy skills in children. The goals of the PCLS are to:

- enhance the oral language, early literacy and social interaction skills of children from birth to age six so they are better able to achieve success at home, school, and in the community
- strengthen and build the basic literacy skills of parents
- support and foster the involvement of parents in their children’s learning
- develop and enhance community-based partnerships that support the development of language and literacy skills of families.⁵

A cross-ministerial approach (Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Learning, Solicitor General and Health Canada) ensures that the strategy is clearly linked to both early childhood development initiatives and adult learning initiatives.

The PCLS forms the backbone of Advanced Education and Technology’s Family Literacy Initiative Fund (FLIF). Using a call for proposals approach to funding, FLIF provides a maximum of \$40,000 per year. Projects can have a one, two or three year funding cycle. Project proposals must “directly involve parents or caregivers of pre-school aged children in proven and commonly accepted activities aimed at supporting the literacy development of their families.”

⁵ *The Parent-Child Strategy (PCLS) Backgrounder*. Retrieved from www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/other/literacy/PCLSBackgrounder.pdf July 2007

In the funding year 2004-05 (the last year for which data is currently available), FLIP funded 59 projects that served over 9,500 parents/ caregivers and over 10, 400 children.⁶

While FLIP is a major funder in Alberta, it is not the only source of funds. Canwest Global's Raise-a-Reader campaigns in Edmonton and Calgary are an additional source of funding. For example, the Calgary campaign has raised more than \$644,000 since 2002.⁷

Who delivers family literacy in Alberta?

In 2007 Advanced Education and Technology provided funding for family literacy to a wide variety of organizations: school boards, community-based literacy programs, family services organizations, family resource centres, religious organizations, libraries and aboriginal friendship centres.

Literacy Alberta (LA), as the provincial literacy coalition, provides training, professional development and networking opportunities for people (both paid staff and volunteers) working in the literacy field. It holds regional conferences, workshops and hosts an annual conference. It also plays a key role in the development of public policy on literacy. LA does not provide family literacy training for literacy workers, but it does provide some service delivery.

LA also provides support to all literacy programs and other organizations that provide family literacy programming. It does this directly by distributing Family Literacy Day™ materials and indirectly by providing professional development and networking opportunities for people working in *any type* of literacy program.

The Centre for Family Literacy (CFL) is a strong advocate and leader in the family literacy field in Alberta and beyond. In Edmonton, CFL provides a wide range of adult and family literacy programs. Across the province it also provides training, resources and information. CFL defines family literacy as “the way parents, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community. Family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps children and adults ‘get things done’.”⁸ For CFL, family literacy programs offer a range of programming that build on the literacy development of the family as a whole – not just the children and not just the

⁶ *Parent Child Literacy Strategy Progress Report. September 2006.* Community Programs Branch, Alberta Advanced Education: page 2

⁷ <http://www.canada.com/national/features/raiseareader/calgary.html>

⁸ *Family Literacy: A Key Partner in Alberta's Second Century.* May 2007. Centre for Family Literacy: page 12.

parents, but the family as a unit. According to the *Parent Child Literacy Strategy Progress Report* (2006), the government of Alberta funds CFL to “provide consultative advice and assistance, training and other services to support family literacy in Alberta.”

In addition to the services provided by Literacy Alberta and the Centre for Family Literacy, the Further Education Society of Alberta (FESA) provides family literacy programming. Founded in Calgary it now provides curriculum and training for family literacy programming across Canada. It bases its services on Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS). LAPS provides literacy and parenting skills training to at-risk parents.

A variety of approaches to family literacy is used across the province, including:

- ⇒ parent involvement – parental involvement in child literacy is encouraged through joint caregiver-child sessions
- ⇒ intergenerational – both caregivers and children receive direct literacy instruction
- ⇒ focus on primary caregiver – adults are the primary participants and the focus is on ways in which to develop children’s literacy at home either directly or indirectly; childcare may be provided while caregiver participates in program; literacy and parenting skills (laps), for example
- ⇒ activities for the general public – focus is on public awareness, informal participation (e.g., reading tents)
- ⇒ resources – materials (often created by program staff) that support the idea of family literacy are made available (e.g., books for babies).

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Family Literacy in British Columbia

Literacy BC, the provincial literacy coalition, has had a long and active role in the field of family literacy. As the lead provincial organization for family literacy, they:

- ⇒ provide training and support to family literacy programs and practitioners
- ⇒ raise awareness of family literacy through events such as Family Literacy Week, Word on the Street and providing forums and workshops
- ⇒ provide access to resources through their Resource Centre
- ⇒ develop and distribute best practices and standards of practice for family literacy programs
- ⇒ provide program development consultation services
- ⇒ collect and distribute over 15,000 children’s books annually to family literacy programs.

For Literacy BC, family literacy is intergenerational: the family is seen as a “learning unit”. This means that learning opportunities are integrated into daily life and available for all family members. Literacy BC recognizes the importance of the parent or caregiver as a child’s first and most important teacher. They situate family literacy as a shared responsibility – making use of existing community resources and the strength of partnerships in providing service to families.

How is family literacy funded in British Columbia?

In BC, the Minister of Education is the Minister Responsible for Literacy, but Advanced Education retains the primary role in adult literacy with an annual distribution for \$2.4 million to community-based adult literacy programs. Funding for early learning and literacy, within a family literacy context, comes primarily from the Ministry of Education. Alone, and in conjunction with the Ministries of Health and Children and Family Development, the Ministry of Education provides funding for initiatives such as StrongStart Early Learning Centres, Early Learning Grants, LEAP (Literacy, Education, Activity and Play) BC and kindergarten readiness programs.

In BC, funding also comes from Canwest Global’s Raise-a-Reader campaign. The Raise-a-Reader campaign supports three primary beneficiaries: the Vancouver Public Library, the Canucks Family Education Centre (through the Kids Fund) and Literacy BC (which distributes funds to 60 family literacy programs in B.C.). Other beneficiaries include: Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), Aboriginal HIPPY and more than 100 other organizations across the province. Since 1997, the Raise-a-Readers campaign has raised more than \$4.5 million for family literacy initiatives in BC.

In January 2007, the BC government announced a \$27 million literacy plan called ReadNow BC. ReadNow BC is part of the government's desire to create sustainable legacies as a result of hosting the 2010 Olympic and Para-Olympic Winter Games (Legacy 2010).

Who delivers family literacy in British Columbia?

Literacy BC supports family literacy by building partnerships with government, boards of education, Literacy Now communities and the many champions of family literacy in the private sector. Literacy BC also plays a lead role in increasing public awareness and supporting training and professional development for practitioners. For example, every year it organizes Family Literacy Week in January. Recently, in partnership with the Centre for Family Literacy, it helped to create the Family Literacy Certificate program offered through Vancouver Community College.

Across BC, more than 500 family literacy programs are provided by a variety of organizations and service clubs. Non-profit organizations (such as the Boys and Girls Clubs), libraries, schools, family resources centres, immigrant services, family and social services and municipalities are only a few examples of the types of organizations involved.

Many different approaches to family literacy are used across the province. Some examples are: Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS), Books for Babies, Come Read with Me and Parent-Child Mother Goose.

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Family Literacy in Manitoba

Manitoba is fortunate in that an endowment fund was created in 2003. The purpose of the Literacy for Life Endowment Fund is to support family literacy initiatives across the province. The provincial coalition, Literacy Partners of Manitoba (LPM), played a key role in the development of the fund and the Executive Director of LPM sits on the fund's grants selection committee.

How is family literacy funded in Manitoba?

Since 2003, the Literacy for Life Endowment Fund has awarded over 80 grants totalling just under \$250,000. Across the province, the grants support a variety of family literacy initiatives.

Family literacy initiatives are also funded through the Canwest Global Raise-a-Reader campaign. Working in partnership with Canwest and the Winnipeg Free Press, LPM has helped to distribute over \$50,000. A grant application process is used to allocate funds to successful applicants.

In general, however, funding for family literacy comes from the Adult Learning and Literacy program of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Literacy. The Ministry identifies eligibility criteria for family literacy funding and notes that family literacy programs must “address the literacy needs of adult caregivers, as well as well as those of children.”

Since 2005, Manitoba's Adult Learning and Literacy Program has partnered with the literacy network in Saskatchewan to deliver Train the Trainers Foundational Training for literacy practitioners and others working in Manitoba family literacy programs or providing family literacy services. Training specifically for family literacy practitioners has not yet been mandated.⁹

Healthy Child Manitoba focuses on the “well-being of children, families and communities”. Funding is provided to community organizations that focus on a parent-child centred approach. Programs using this approach provide support and education to families with young children (infancy through to preschool). For Healthy Child Manitoba, family literacy activities “support the learning success of children through opportunities to improve family literacy and participate in quality early childhood

⁹ It is interesting to note that Manitoba is the only province that provides government-mandated practitioner training for people working in adult literacy programs. It is also the only province in which the government mandates that “instructors receive three hours of paid preparation time for every ten hours of instruction.”

experiences. (e.g., creative play and recreation programs, reading, writing and storytelling activities, parent-child drop-in programs and lending libraries.)

Who delivers family literacy in Manitoba?

Across the province community-based organizations with links to schools, family resource centres and social service agencies provide a variety of family literacy programming. Many of the programs offered have specific components that focus on increasing the literacy skills of the adult.

LPM plays an active role in providing support to organizations that deliver family literacy programming. This support takes the form of providing grants, distributing materials in support of ABC Canada's Family Literacy Day™ and providing access to resources through its library.

In Manitoba, an organization called Bookmates provides training and programs for organizations that work with families, including schools and family resource centres. Programs are also directed towards caregivers. Programs include single workshops to 10-week family literacy programs. For example, "Parent-Child Mother Goose" is provided to caregivers and their children (preschool to Kindergarten); the "Family Literacy Awareness for Parents" is a one-session workshop that uses a variety of activities to "help parents see the importance of reading and writing in their home."¹⁰

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¹⁰ *Criteria for Eligibility for Family Literacy Funding.* Adult Learning and Literacy, Ministry of Advanced Education and Literacy.

Family Literacy in New Brunswick

The New Brunswick Coalition for Literacy notes in its report *Live Horse, 'til the Grass Grows, A study of Family Literacy in New Brunswick* that intergenerational family literacy programming is not widely provided in the province. Some community groups have provided intergenerational family literacy programs in the past, notably from 2001 – 2003 in Saint John and 2001 – 2004 in Fredericton. However, there is currently very little family literacy infrastructure in New Brunswick to support large family literacy projects. This means that most family literacy activities involve promotion. At this time, the bulk of the provincially funded programming provided through the Early Childhood Initiatives and the Community Raising Children Initiatives focuses primarily on ensuring that children grow up literate.

How is family literacy funded in New Brunswick?

In New Brunswick, adult literacy is funded through the provincial government Community Adult Learning Branch. Regional literacy coordinators assist regional literacy committees in making decisions about the type of program or service delivery that is needed in the region. These programs focus on adults who are assessed with literacy skills below Grade 9 and adults who are working towards a GED. While the focus for these adults may not be specifically on family literacy, there is an assumption that skills learned in one setting can be transferred to other settings – including the family.

Other provincial departments (Community and Individual Development, Department of Social Development, for example) provide funding for services that may be labeled family literacy. The focus, however, is primarily on the child.

The Department of Social Development (along with corporate donations, individual donations and fundraising efforts) also fund the Born to Read/le gout de lire program. This program ensures that all newborn babies in New Brunswick receive a bag of books with a message to parents on the importance of reading to their children from birth, promoting early language development and encouraging parents to read to their children.

Since the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick began hosting the Peter Gwozski Invitational Golf Tournament in 2002, a portion of the funds raised each year has been used to fund family literacy projects (promotion activities and program activities).

The Provincial Government funds a program called “Talk With Me program”, which involves speech pathologists partnering with community based groups to take “The Hanon” program into communities. This program focuses on early language development and involves parents and children.

Family Literacy promotion and programming are also funded through service clubs, private corporations, individuals and community foundation grants.

Who delivers family literacy in New Brunswick?

Family Literacy Programs are delivered mostly by community-based, non-profit organizations and groups. Some organizations, like Early Intervention Programs and Family Resource Centres (funded by the Provincial and Federal governments respectively), embed family literacy activities into their established programming and/or provide family literacy as part of their programming.

The New Brunswick Family Literacy Directory (first published by the Coalition in 2002 and revised in 2003) provides information on 23 organizations providing a wide variety of family literacy programming and services.

The Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick has participated in family literacy in many ways:

- ⇒ planning and participating in the provincial celebrations for National Family Literacy Day through membership on the Provincial Family Literacy Day Committee/Comite provincial de la journee de l’alphabetisation
- ⇒ maintaining a network of family literacy organizations and providing information and materials (for example: The Travelling Trunk; updated website resources for parents)
- ⇒ publishing Side by Side, a Family Literacy document to encourage and inform parents and caregivers about reading to young children
- ⇒ publishing the New Brunswick Family Literacy Directory
- ⇒ providing Foundational Family Literacy Training to New Brunswick practitioners
- ⇒ partnering to create Conversations with Parents, a publication with training for practitioners who work with parents and families regarding early and family literacy
- ⇒ engaging in Family Literacy Research

- ⇒ organizing the Family Literacy Forum 2007 and the upcoming Family Literacy Forum in 2008 that brings together stakeholders to engage in creating a strategic direction for family literacy in New Brunswick.

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Family Literacy in Newfoundland & Labrador

In 2000, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador released “*Words to Live By: A Strategic Literacy Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador.*” This document outlined the government’s vision for a society in which literacy is “valued and understood as contributing to personal, social and economic development.” Literacy, the document notes is a “good example of the link between social and economic development.”

The Strategic Literacy Plan outlines the province’s approach to funding early literacy, K-12 education and adult literacy. The plan identifies the need for an integrated approach to literacy development, linking not only the work of various governmental departments together, but also ensuring that programs and processes are responsive to needs identified by individual communities.

How is family literacy funded in Newfoundland and Labrador?

The Department of Education for Newfoundland and Labrador funds community-based literacy programs for adults. These programs take place in a variety of community settings. For the funding year 2007-08, programs that use volunteer tutors received a maximum grant of \$38,500. Programs that use paid instructors received \$41,000. Eligibility criteria apply to each type of program. For example: between September and June both types of programs must offer 40 weeks of instruction; programs using volunteer tutors must have a minimum of 25 students enrolled; programs using paid instructors must have a 12:1 student/instructor ratio; both types of programs must use an assessment tool that is authorized by the Department of Education.

While the Department of Education has no specific policy statement on family literacy it does acknowledge that “young children’s exposure to a literacy-rich environment and their experiences with oral language form the foundation for literacy development.”

Most family literacy programming is funded through the government’s Early Childhood Learning Grants. Eligibility requirements for these grants state that programs:

- ⇒ [are] for children between the ages of 0 – 6, their parents, or both.
- ⇒ [have a] primary focus [that] is literacy and/or numeracy development.
- ⇒ reflect what research has identified as being "best practices" in early childhood learning programs.
- ⇒ [are] for children which match the child’s level of development.

- ⇒ [are] for parents which are designed to enable them to support their children's literacy and/or numeracy development.

Books for Babies, Parent-Child Mother Goose and PRINTS are three examples of programs that have been funded in recent years.

The province also has its own program called KinderStart. This program is offered to families in the year prior to a child starting into the school system. Parents and children attend five to ten sessions in the school. Initially parents and children are together. Later they attend separate sessions.

Who delivers family literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador?

In addition to the programs mentioned above, organizations across the province, such as Boys and Girls clubs, family resource centres and Community Centres, offer a wide variety of programs that are labeled "family literacy." For example, community centres typically offer one-to-one tutoring programs for children in all grades, Healthy Baby Clubs (tips on parenting sessions) and the Early Learning Program (for parents and teens). Community centres also offer programs for adult literacy learners.

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Family Literacy in the Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories Literacy Council (NWTLC) is a territory-wide organization whose mandate is to promote and support literacy development in all the official languages of the NWT. NWTLC is the lead organization for family literacy development and program coordination. In this role it:

- ⇒ trains and supports family literacy programs and practitioners
- ⇒ develops resources to support family literacy programming
- ⇒ builds community partnerships to integrate family literacy programming into existing community-based family and early childhood services
- ⇒ supports a network for practitioners, volunteers and agencies involved in family literacy.

How is family literacy funded in the Northwest Territories?

In May 2001, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) published its strategy to address the needs of young children in the NWT. The strategy, *Framework for Action: Early Childhood Development*, outlined four key areas of focus:

- ⇒ Health and Wellness Awareness and Risk Prevention
- ⇒ Parenting and Family Support
- ⇒ Child Development—Care and Learning
- ⇒ Community Supports and Capacity Building.

A new literacy strategy is being developed. Part of the new strategy will formalize programs for children.

As the NWTLC had already been playing a lead role in the development and delivering of family literacy programs and supports, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment partnered with it to:

- ⇒ develop and deliver regional family literacy training institutes to people from all communities
- ⇒ distribute funding and provide support to community family literacy projects
- ⇒ provide community outreach to family literacy providers
- ⇒ develop and support the distribution of Family Learning Kits (literacy backpacks).

This new source of funding (from HRSDC) provided a more solid funding base for family literacy programming.

Who delivers family literacy in Northwest Territories?

As mentioned above, NWTLC is the lead organization for family literacy development and program coordination. Family literacy in the NWT is strongly linked to the community. NWTLC has worked with communities to build capacity around family literacy by providing training for community people who would then develop and deliver family literacy programming for that community. In addition to providing services and supports for many types of family literacy programming, the NWT provides services in several different languages.

The NWT Literacy Council developed the Family Tutoring Program. It is based on the belief that parents want to support their children in school, and that they have an important role to play in their children's literacy development. The program works with parents, teacher assistants, and tutors to strengthen the English literacy skills of the whole family.

Program participants learn reading and writing strategies to support children's reading and writing development. The Family Tutoring program works with adults who tutor children at the emerging and early reader stages. Usually these children are in grades 1 to 4. Program strategies can also be adapted for older children and youth who struggle with reading and writing.

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Family Literacy in Nova Scotia

In recent years family literacy programming in Nova Scotia has been provided by a variety of organizations and sectors. Local need and the resources available in a community have helped to determine the type of program or service that is available. Many of the programs focus on the child and early childhood interventions.

How is family literacy funded in Nova Scotia?

The Department of Education, Adult Education Division¹¹ has provided funding for a number of pilot projects over the past three years. Developed in partnership with community literacy organizations, the projects focused on parents gaining literacy skills so they can help their children learn outside of school. This funding is now used for a grant based program that continues to fund similar types of family literacy services.

In the last several years the provincial government has made a significant investment in adult focused programming. Family literacy programs must also address adult literacy skills. While funding is provided on a year-by-year basis, some programs have been in place for many years.

The Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund provides grants to projects in NS that support the development of family learning. The Fund was created by the Halifax Youth Foundation in cooperation with HRSDC and the NS Department of Education. The Department of Education coordinates the proposal review process and liaises with organizations that provide family literacy programs. Strong partnerships with one or more agencies/organizations in the community are encouraged. Potential partners could be schools, health and social services agencies, adult literacy programs, learning councils, children's services authorities, libraries, service clubs and businesses.¹²

The federal government also provides some funding for family literacy initiatives. For example, in the spring of 2007, HRSD Canada provided funding for a pilot project called "Family Activities for Kitchen Tables."

Over the last 3 years, the Canwest Global Raise-a-Reader campaign has contributed thousands of dollars to family literacy programs. Both the Cape Breton Post in Sydney and The Chronicle Herald in Halifax participate.

¹¹ As of April 1/08 the Adult Education Division is part of the Department of Labour and Workforce Development.

¹² Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund Information/Application Guide 2007-2008, page 4.

Who delivers family literacy in Nova Scotia?

Family literacy programs and/or services have been provided by:

- ⇒ various government and community departments have provided access to programs or funding to create programs or services. Education, health, libraries, justice and community/social services, as examples.
- ⇒ communities with a specific culture or heritage background have also provided programs and services. The Acadian community, the African-Nova Scotian community and the Mi'kmaq community, for example.
- ⇒ service organizations (Rotary Clubs, for example), churches and family resource centres have also provided some type of family literacy programming.

In 2002, the Family Literacy Advisory Group for Nova Scotia (FLAG-NS) was formed. Initially FLAG-NS was hosted by the Colchester-East Hants Public Library and funded by the National Literacy Secretariat and the NS Department of Education. Currently, FLAG-NS represents an inter-sectoral group through regional representation on a provincial advisory team. The Department of Education chairs the consortium and a representative from the Department is also a member. While the Department does not provide any project-based funding for this group it does cover costs for meetings.

Since 2002, FLAG-NS has:

- ⇒ created “Best Practice” guidelines
- ⇒ provided *Foundation Training in Family Literacy* (from the Centre for Family Literacy in Alberta)
- ⇒ developed a family literacy database of programs and services
- ⇒ provided opportunities (face-to-face and online) for practitioners to share resources, information, research and knowledge
- ⇒ approved a strategic plan for family literacy.

The Halifax Youth Foundation, in partnership with Issaic Killiam Walton Hospital and the Department of Education, provides a program called “Read to me!” Like Books for Babies, mothers receive a visit to explain the importance of reading to children from birth. After their hospital stay, parents receive book bags containing books for reading to their infants, along with tips on how to read and talk to their young children. This program is in addition to the Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund mentioned above.

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Family Literacy in Nunavut

Literacy levels in Nunavut are among the lowest in Canada. Approximately 50% of those surveyed as part of the 2004 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey scored at the lowest level in the survey for document, prose and numeracy. Many adults in Nunavut do not have a high school diploma and many have less than a Grade 9 education.

The Nunavut Literacy Council (NLC) acknowledges the role that family literacy can play in helping to break the cycle of low literacy. Many children in Nunavut live in families with low literacy skills. By improving the literacy levels of both parents and children, family literacy programs can reduce stress on the family. Family literacy programs, according to a NLC Fact Sheet, “are especially effective at engaging adults who would normally be reluctant to participate in literacy programs for themselves.”

The Nunavut Literacy Council uses a community development approach to family literacy. They help people in communities develop the skills they need to deliver their own programs.

How is Family Literacy funded in Nunavut?

From a social and economic perspective, the Government of Nunavut has recognized the need for the people of Nunavut to have the skills and access to training that will allow them to benefit from economic opportunities. In its recently released “Adult Learning Strategy” the government (and others) acknowledge that the “challenge will be to provide the training, education and skills that individuals will need to engage in their communities, obtain employment in positions that have typically been filled by non-residents, and become active participants in the self-determination goals outlined in the NLCA [Nunavut Land Claims Agreement]”.

To achieve the goals of the strategy, the government is committed to providing stable long-term funding for literacy (as well as for adult education, training and employment programs). The strategy also makes a commitment to ensuring that programs are in place for family literacy by:

- ⇒ developing programs and services that inform, educate, and support parents in their efforts to assist their children’s learning and literacy development
- ⇒ developing and delivering intergenerational programs that promote literacy and language acquisition in children from 0 to 6
- ⇒ providing school and community-based preventative literacy programs and services for school-aged children

- ⇒ developing learning materials that are practical and relevant to a learner's real life issues. Priority should be given to the development of materials in Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun
- ⇒ supporting the development and delivery of non-formal, context-based programs (family literacy programs, culturally based programs).¹³

Who delivers family literacy in Nunavut?

Family literacy work in Canada's North is fueled by collaborations between the NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils, family resource programs, as well as health and social services organizations, community colleges, libraries and cultural groups. At the centre of this literacy work is a concern for community development and for the preservation of Aboriginal cultures and languages.

In using a community development approach to family literacy the NLC helps people in communities develop the skills they need to deliver their own programs. For example, communities decide what kind of program they would like, the language they would like the program to be in and what approach they want to use. The NLC then offers support in the form of just-in-time training, on-going advice and resources.

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¹³ Adult Learning Strategy. Government of Nunavut: page 24.

Family Literacy in Ontario

Toronto, Ontario had one of the first family literacy programs in Canada. Developed by Mary Gordon in the 1980s, at the Toronto Public School board, the *Parenting and Family Literacy Centre* programs continue to teach parents and caregivers why and how to read to their young children.

Over the years a number of organizations that focus primarily on adult literacy, have developed family literacy and/or youth programming. For example, Project READ Literacy Network and Kingston Literacy have been very active in the field of family literacy; the Wellington County Learning Centre has had a youth literacy program (for youth still in school) since 1991.

Another nationally well-known family literacy concept that started in Ontario is the *Parent-Child Mother Goose* program. Since 1986 this program has operated as a non-profit, charitable organization. By the late 1990s *Parent-Child Mother Goose* programs were available in many provinces.

How is Family Literacy funded in Ontario?

Funding for family literacy in which the adult is the primary recipient of programming has ebbed and flowed over the years. In the early to mid 1990s project-based funding was available from both the provincial¹⁴ and federal governments. By the mid 1990s this funding had dried up. Programs that focused on improving the literacy skills of children were no longer funded by government departments whose focus was on improving the literacy skills of adults. Family literacy programs that continued did so through their own fund-raising efforts.

By 2000 the pendulum had swung back. For example, funding from the National Literacy Secretariat allowed the Ontario Literacy Coalition to work with practitioners to create Action of Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO). AFLO was launched in 2003 under the leadership and guidance of the OLC, with an initial 3-year funding grant from the National Literacy Secretariat. Between 2000 and 2006 AFLO worked on a number of family literacy initiatives. Although funding has once again “dried up”, volunteers (literacy practitioners) are attempting to keep AFLO active.

¹⁴ In Ontario, the Ministry of Education focuses on the K to 12 and continuing education aspects of learning. Adult literacy programs, which are delivered by a variety of sectors (including school boards), are funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Child and Youth Services, can also provide funding for family literacy when the focus is on the child or youth.

Family literacy programs are provided province-wide by Early Years Centres. Funding for Early Years Centres, from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, began in the early 2000s. According to the Early Years website:

An Ontario Early Years Centre is a place for children up to the age of six and their parents and caregivers to take part in programs and activities together. Parents and caregivers can also get information about their children's development and about services to support that development.

Programs and services provided by Early Years Centres are free to all parents and caregivers of young children. Typical programs and services include early learning and literacy programs for parents and children and programs to help parents and caregivers in all aspects of early child development.

Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, which are based in local school boards, continue to be funded by the Ministry of Education. In June 2007, the provincial government announced it was investing \$6 million in 86 centres across Ontario (54 existing centres in Toronto and 32 new centres throughout the province).

In Ontario, the Raise-a-Reader campaign is active in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa and Windsor. In each of these cities, funds raised go to a variety of organizations. For example, in 2006 funds from the Toronto campaign went to organizations such as the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Frontier College and World Literacy of Canada; in Ottawa Alternative Learning Styles and Outlooks (ALSO), the Ottawa Public Library's Shuttle Bus/Navette biblio and the Ottawa Senators Foundation were recipients; in Hamilton, recipients included the Niagara West Employment and Learning Resource Centre, the Hamilton Native Learning Centre and The Hamilton Spectator Newspaper in Education program; in Windsor donations went to Computers for Kids, the Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor and Essex County and the Windsor Public Library's Book Buddy Program.

Who delivers family literacy in Ontario?

When looking at how family literacy is funded in Ontario a picture of who delivers family literacy begins to emerge: school-boards that have Parenting and Family Literacy Centres and Early Years Centres. Many community-based literacy agencies, whose primary focus is on adult literacy, do provide some type of family literacy programming. When funding is not available from the government, this type of programming is often supported by fund-raising.

References

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Family Literacy in Prince Edward Island

In the mid- to late-nineties, the PEI Literacy Alliance(PELA), like many provincial/territorial literacy organizations was quite involved with family literacy initiatives. By 1998 PEILA had worked with a variety of key stakeholders to create a strategic plan for family literacy on the Island.

Currently PEILA is directly involved in very few family literacy programs and services. Family Literacy Day™ is one type of event in which it is still active. Most family literacy programming is directed at children.

How is family literacy funded in Prince Edward Island?

The Department of Education, Literacy Initiatives Secretariat is responsible for all literacy projects. This includes the Literacy/Adult Basic Education Initiative, Family Literacy and the management of Workplace Education PEI Literacy Initiative. The Department also develops policy and standards for adult literacy, the certification process for adult educators and for the Provincial Literacy Initiatives Committee.¹⁵

Two newspapers (The Guardian and the Journal-Pioneer) participate in the Raise-a-Reader campaign. The funds from this initiative are used by PEILA to support summer tutoring programs and to support a variety of family literacy activities across the province.

Who delivers family literacy in Prince Edward Island?

For a number of years, PEILA has been the community sponsor for an annual tutoring program for school-aged children. In 2007, for example, the coalition hired 25 young people to tutor 760 children. The program is funded through Service Canada, the Department of Education, the Raise-a-Reader campaign and with support from service clubs and a number of school boards.

The Early Childhood Development Association of Prince Edward Island (ECDA) is a provincial, non-profit organization committed to promoting and supporting the quality of early learning and child care programs and services for the Island's children and families. In addition to providing information about programs and services available for parents, the Association also provided professional development opportunities for early childhood educators.

¹⁵ This information was taken from www.gov.pe.ca/educ/index.php3?number=78501.

The Children's Secretariat is a broad, inter-sectoral group that includes representatives from the community and from seven provincial government departments. The focus is on key areas of action for healthy child development. As well, representatives of key groups who are involved with children sit as members on the Children's Secretariat. As a "network of networks", the Children's Secretariat links with other organizations and groups that are working on behalf of young children and their families.

A number of family literacy activities have been undertaken by the University of Prince Edward Island's "Enhancing Family Literacy in Rural Atlantic Canada" initiative. *Families Learning Together* is a research project that started in 2001. It provides a model for community-based family literacy programming. The program consists of 10 theme based and culturally relevant modules. As the final report from the initiative notes, "feedback from the families involved in the needs assessment provided the basis for a program focused on reflecting the strengths that the families already possessed. Consideration was taken to include the families' self-identified needs in the literacy program, and to draw on their cultural histories in identifying ways in which they could effectively teach their children."¹⁶

While not strictly a family literacy initiative, PEI Volunteers for Literacy places volunteers in local schools. A part-time coordinator recruits and screens volunteers, and works with a contact teacher at each school to place the volunteer. Volunteers go into the schools once a week to give students one-to-one help with reading, writing or other school subjects.

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PEI Literacy Alliance's website at: www.pei.literacy.ca

¹⁶ Vianne Timmons, et al. *Families Learning Together, A Family Literacy Initiative at Cardigan Consolidate School, A Final Report*. University of Prince Edward Island, 2007.

Family Literacy in Québec

In Québec, the provincial government defines literacy upgrading for adults as formal and informal. School boards provide formal programs, while informal programs are provided by community-based organizations. Informal programs are for adults who are not ready to go back to school or who don't have an education-based goal (getting a high-school equivalency diploma, commonly referred to as the GED, for example).

How is family literacy funded in Québec?

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport funds literacy services that are provided by educational institutions or community groups. Since 2000, the provincial government has had a program in place called "Assistance Program for Emergent Literacy in Disadvantaged Communities." The primary focus of the program is to help adults become aware of the important role they play in the development of their children's literacy skills – prior to school.

Another initiative of the provincial government is the "School, Family and Community Program." This program brings together various community partners. It is situated in school regions with socioeconomic indicators that show the region to be disadvantaged. This program's focus is on caregivers with children ages 2 to 12.¹⁷

Who delivers family literacy in Québec?

In Québec, community-based programs provide most of the family literacy programming for Anglophone families. In these programs, the focus is specifically on the caregiver.

Literacy Volunteers of Québec is a coalition of community-based agencies. A variety of family literacy programs and services are offered by these agencies. This includes things such as:

- ⇒ giving gift certificates to the elementary schools to be used in a draw for students who participate in a reading week for family literacy
- ⇒ exposing parents of pre-schoolers to high interest beginner's books and teaching parents how to model reading
- ⇒ providing workshops to teach parents about the importance of reading in the home and providing practical tips for reading with and to children.

¹⁷ Ibid., page 31.

School boards also provide some types of family literacy programming. In general, the programs and services provided by a school board's Adult Education Services enable adults to gain learning skills that help them "carry out their family and social roles"¹⁸ and may be provided in either French or English. Through these programs, adult learners may also access other learning services.

The Québec English Literacy Alliance (QELA) as a "partnership of English literacy providers, is dedicated to networking, training and information-sharing activities, advocating for the advancement of literacy in the province..."¹⁹ It provides members with training and networking opportunities. While it does not provide direct service to adults, it does, like many of its provincial and territorial counterparts, distribute promotional materials from ABC Canada Foundation in support of Family Literacy Day™. The QELA website includes links to family literacy resources.

The Centre for Literacy of Québec, in partnership with a number of other organizations, provides a program called HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters). This is a "home-based, preschool education program that builds on the bond between parents and children. Supported by easy-to-use activity packets, bi-weekly home visits and group meetings, HIPPY parents learn how to prepare their children for success in school and beyond."²⁰

References

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¹⁸ Literacy Training in Québec, Provincial Report. Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec. Presented at the Provincial/Territorial Literacy Consultation, 2003:page 4.

¹⁹ www.qela.qc.ca/about_us.htm

²⁰ www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/projects/hippy.htm

Family Literacy in Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Literacy Network (SLN) has been involved with family literacy for many years and it supports a wide range of family literacy programs. It does this through training and through promotional activities that increase awareness of programs and educate the public about the issue of family literacy.

How is family literacy funded in Saskatchewan?

In 2005, the province of Saskatchewan established the Saskatchewan Literacy Commission. The work of the Commission is overseen by an advisory board made up of individuals involved in literacy programming. The Commission has been set up to develop and coordinate a new provincial literacy strategy: SaskSmart – Literacy for Life Initiative. The Commission deals with policy and programming across government ministries and sectors (0-6 years, K to 12 and adult literacy – including family literacy, workplace literacy and English as a Second Language).

The Commission is continuing the Family Literacy Initiative Program (FLIP), which was first implemented in 1998. FLIP will provide funding to established regional family literacy networks and it will also provide project-based funding. Project funding will support the development of new regional networks and short-term local projects.

The Saskatchewan Literacy Commission has developed a set of guiding principles that are based on family literacy standards developed by SLN. The principles recognize the importance of providing “programs and services that respond to the learning needs of participant, families and the communities in which they take place. Family literacy service providers give participants opportunities to be involved in all stages including input into program content, format and evaluation.”²¹

The Commission uses an intergenerational definition of family literacy. It sees literacy development as one that “encompasses the ways in which parents, children and extended family members develop and use literacy at home and in their community during the routines of daily living,”²²

In Saskatchewan, both the Regina Leader-Post and the Saskatoon Star Phoenix provide funding for family literacy initiatives through the Raise-a-Reader campaign. The Literacy Network is one of the beneficiaries of this campaign.

²¹ *The Family Literacy Initiative Program Funding Guidelines*. Saskatchewan Literacy Commission, 2007. Retrieved from www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/sasksmart/fund/family.htm July 2007.

²² Ibid.

Who delivers family literacy in Saskatchewan?

A number of different models are in use. These include approaches such as “Come Read with Me”, “Literacy and Parenting Skills”, “Aboriginal Literacy and Parenting Skills” (ALAPS), “Parents Role Interacting with Teacher Support” (PRINTS) and “StorySacks”. The Network provides training to community members and community organizations on how to use one or more of these models.

In 2007 the SLN began offering an “Introduction to Family Literacy” Certificate workshop. The objectives for the workshop are to:

- ⇒ demonstrate the principles of family literacy programming in action
- ⇒ introduce participants to Family Literacy and guiding principles
- ⇒ introduce participants to components within Family Literacy programs
- ⇒ introduce participants to the connection between Family Literacy and Community Development
- ⇒ provide direction for starting Family Literacy activities and programs
- ⇒ provide information on further training
- ⇒ provide an overview of Family Literacy within the province.

“Come Read with Me” was developed in 1993 by the SLN and revised in 2007. Both training for facilitators and direct services to parents and their children are offered. Programs are located in a variety of community and school settings. Program goals for parents and children include:

- ⇒ helping parents appreciate and understand their role as their child’s first and most important teacher.
- ⇒ encouraging reading as a fun and valuable activity for both parents and children
- ⇒ using children’s books to strengthen bonds and relationships
- ⇒ assisting parents at all levels of literacy, in helping their children develop pre-reading and reading skills
- ⇒ using children’s books to explore relevant themes and topics that relate to individual and family situations
- ⇒ creating support networks within the program that may lead to greater community involvement
- ⇒ encouraging life-long learning.

Facilitator training for the program is two days long and includes resource materials and certificate of participation on completion. Training includes: research to substantiate the goals, children's books, session planning administration and evaluation. Participants must complete "Introduction to Family Literacy" to be eligible for "Come Read With Me" training.

SLN has worked with the Saskatchewan Community Schools Association to develop and provide family literacy training to community school personnel (staff, parents and community members).

References

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Family Literacy in the Yukon

The Yukon Literacy Coalition (YLC) receives project-based funding for family literacy from a number of funders, including the territorial government (Advanced Education, Economic Development) and federal government.

The Yukon is one of the few Canadian jurisdictions with a clearly stated literacy strategy. The 2001 “Yukon Literacy Strategy” is built upon its previously developed “Training Strategy” (1986, 1992). The Strategy respects the needs of all Yukon people and the importance of providing opportunities for learning. It also recognizes the important role that volunteers and partnerships play in the community.

The main goal of the Strategy is to “provide maximum opportunity for all Yukon people to acquire the necessary literacy skills to be successful in their community, work and personal life.”²³

The Strategy states (in part) that literacy:

- ⇒ is a right
- ⇒ starts at conception; families are the foundation for learning
- ⇒ is a life-long process
- ⇒ is everyone’s responsibility.²⁴

The Strategy, which is currently under review, recognizes the importance of situating programs in communities, based on needs identified by the community. The role of coordinating and facilitating the Strategy, however, rests with the government. To do this the Yukon Government created the Literacy Action Committee.

How is family literacy funded in the Yukon?

In recent years project-based funding for family literacy programs and services has been available from the Ministry of Education (Advanced Education Department) and Economic Development. Funding is allocated to programs and services through the Literacy Action Committee. There are typically two calls for proposals each year.

²³ 2001 Yukon Literacy Strategy. Government of the Yukon.

²⁴ Ibid.

Who delivers family literacy in the Yukon?

The Yukon Literacy Coalition provides a number of family literacy programs and services. In 2007, for example, Yukon Literacy Coalition received funding for Family Reading Tents from the ministries of Ministry of Education, Tourism and Culture and Economic Development.

The Coalition also organizes events to celebrate things such as Family Literacy Day. In recent years, the Coalition has also hosted literacy workshops/seminars; a literacy “theatre” event for pre-school age children and it provides information through its newsletter. The Coalition works closely with rural communities to develop and support a wide variety of community specific family literacy initiatives.

In the Yukon, daycare centres, early childhood education centres and first nation groups also provide a variety of programs that are considered to be family literacy.

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