



Integrated Family Literacy
Programming in Action:
Community Snapshots & Recommendations

Acknowledgements

The purpose of this project was to examine some models of family literacy programming that fully integrated adult and children's literacy development to help us better understand what essential elements are important to fully support intergenerational literacy practice.

To undertake this, we were graciously invited into family literacy programs in the Hamilton, Kingston and Toronto region to get a glimpse of these programs in action. We would like to acknowledge the important role those programs played in producing this report. Our sincere thanks to:

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- Early Bird, Hamilton
- Upgrading for Parents and Preschoolers, Kingston
- Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Toronto

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We hope this research and the recommended model for building a family literacy provincial framework provides the impetus and template for moving family literacy forward in Ontario.

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Executive Summary

Currently, there are few models of family literacy programming that fully integrate adult and children's literacy development. This project explores models of intergenerational family literacy programming that address the literacy needs of parents, grandparents and caregivers and provides them with the necessary guidance and knowledge to better support their children's literacy development, and in some cases upgrade their own literacy skills.

We are showcasing a handful of much-needed models of the best and most promising practices for family literacy programs in Ontario. In addition, the research allowed us to build on previous recommendations developed by our working group Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO) in the document *Family Literacy in Ontario: Putting it on the Map!*¹ The major recommendation coming from this position paper is to establish a Secretariat designated to promote and support family literacy in Ontario. To this end, the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) will be convening a cross-ministerial and cross-sectoral representative committee to explore options for establishing sustained family literacy programming in the province.

The Ontario Literacy Coalition builds this research on a strong foundation of decades of family literacy programming, extensive family literacy research, best practice statements and

strategic policy recommendations. Our current research examines five active family literacy programs and one previous family literacy program across three communities—Toronto, Kingston and Hamilton.

Our aim is to:

- Build on the important research and foundational work of the Ontario Literacy Coalition and the AFLO working group.
- Proudly showcase a handful of family literacy programs in Ontario that demonstrate good models of integrated adult and children's literacy development.
- Demonstrate the value of family literacy practice with its potential for strengthening literacy skills in both adults and children while providing long-term outcomes for the individual, the family and society at large.
- Foster additional collaboration and support for family literacy programs in Ontario.
- Increase understanding of the benefits of this type of programming to Ontario's objectives of increased productivity.
- Coordinate a cross-ministerial and cross-sectoral committee to support long-term planning and funding of family literacy programs in Ontario.

Part of our work also entails convening a wide array of stakeholders to garner support for a comprehensive strategy for family literacy in Ontario. The Ontario Literacy Coalition recently used its research and recommendations to convene a stakeholder meeting of key ministerial staff, integrated family literacy leaders and family literacy practitioners to support this agenda and discuss ways of moving forward. The results of this important meeting are conveyed later in this document, along with a framework for arranging this type of cross-sectoral umbrella initiative.

¹ Ontario Literacy Coalition, and Action for Family Literacy Ontario. *Family Literacy in Ontario: Putting it on the MAP!* Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2006.



Introduction

What is family literacy?

According to the Ontario Literacy Coalition and their working group Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO), family literacy programming is an innovative and effective strategy that focuses on developing a learning culture in the home and improving the literacy skills of both children and parents. Family literacy is not just about reading and writing. It is about developing stronger relationships between parents and their children, getting families involved in the education of their children, and building stronger families and healthier communities.

Depending on the specific program context, family literacy often incorporates the cultivation of positive parenting skills, health literacy, financial literacy and computer literacy. Many programs provide access to additional family/community supports and services. All of the

programs acknowledge that the parent/primary caregiver is the conduit to a child's success.

Family literacy literature indicates that the concept of family literacy is rooted in a substantial research base from several disciplines, including adult literacy, emergent literacy, child development and systems analysis. With various stakeholders in the family literacy conversation emerging from one or more of these disciplines, we are still in the beginning stages of conceiving a comprehensive strategy for family literacy in Ontario.

We hope this research facilitates a culture of support in Ontario for programs and services to not only strengthen literacy skills in the province but to nurture stronger, healthier families and communities. In addition, this report can be used as a resource for the creation of new family literacy programs and services.





Does Family Literacy Work?

We examined family literacy research, models and practices both within and outside of Ontario to develop a context and direction for our current research, and to garner additional inspiration for what is possible in areas where family literacy is strong and supported. Our discussions with various stakeholders repeatedly revealed that although family literacy is far from its infancy, it is still necessary to “make the case” for it. A recent American study from Kent State University addresses the questions: “Do family literacy programs really work? And if so, who benefits?”²

The results overwhelmingly indicated that they do and that they primarily benefit at least four groups: children, parents, families and society at large.

According to this study, the reach of family literacy programs is extensive. Their research also reveals that:

Children benefit from family literacy programs

- Children’s achievement in school improves. Student achievement results from increased parental involvement in education.

- Children attend school more regularly and are more likely to complete their educations. This has been a persistent finding for more than 30 years.
- Children’s general knowledge, including that measured by intelligence tests, improves
- Children are healthier. Aside from its general importance, good health is related to higher achievement in school.
- Children’s social skills, self-esteem and attitudes toward school improve. All these have the potential to support children throughout their lives.
- Parents and children for whom English is a second language learn English language development.

Parents benefit from family literacy programs

- Parents persist in family literacy programs longer than in other types of adult literacy programs. Those who persist have more opportunity to learn.
- As parents’ attitudes about education improve, the value they perceive in education increases.
- As parents’ knowledge about parenting

- options and child development increase they report more confidence in their abilities to foster positive developments in their children
- Parents social awareness and self-advocacy increases.
- Parents enhance their employment status or job satisfaction through skill upgrades gained from the programs.

Families benefit from family literacy programs

- Families learn to value education.
- Families become more involved in schools, which leads to greater achievement for children.
- Families become emotionally closer, which creates a more supportive home environment.
- Families read more and engage in more literate activities at home.
- Families build foundations for lifelong learning.

Society Benefits from family literacy programs

The Kent State University research referenced earlier or below (in the footnotes) also shows that parents persist in family literacy programs due to their commitment to the learning and development of their children. This persistence leads to literacy achievement, which can influence broader economic and social issues. Family literacy and literacy programs in general positively affect or have the potential to affect several major social problems:

- Nutrition and health problems.
- Low achievement and high school dropout rates.
- Teen parenting.
- Joblessness and welfare dependency.
- Social alienation.
- Home and community violence.

Types of family literacy programs

According to the Ontario Literacy Coalition and Kingston Literacy’s *Family Literacy Kit: A Comparison of Popular Program Models*,³ there are several types of family literacy programs, most of which can be categorized in one of the following five ways:

Intergenerational: Early childhood education supports the developing literacy skills in a child. At the same time, a program for parents focuses on family literacy, parenting skills and/or adult literacy and upgrading. Structured time, known as PACT (Parents and Children Together), provides parents opportunities to practice the skills and strategies they have learned.

Focus on parents: Parents participate in workshop training that helps them support the development of their children’s literacy skills at home. Some programs help parents develop reading strategies and encourage them to read to children at home. Other programs teach parents to engage in dramatic play, which develops children’s self-esteem and discipline.

Children and Parents Together: When parents and pre-school children participate in sessions together they enjoy language and literacy activities such as rhymes, songs and storytelling. The objective is to increase a parent’s awareness of and involvement in their child’s literacy development.

Distribution of Family Literacy Resources: Community volunteers and/or staff of literacy or family support organizations develop and distribute literacy “kits” to families. These kits can include children’s books, games, craft activities and materials, and information for parents on how to use the kit at home.

Activities for the General Public: These programs focus on building community awareness about the importance of family literacy. There is no direct training or instruction.

² Padak, Nancy, and Tim Rasinski. “Family Literacy Programs: Who Benefits?” Columbus, OH: Ohio Literacy Resource Center, Kent State University, April 2003. <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/WhoBenefits2003.pdf>

³ Ontario Literacy Coalition, and Kingston Literacy. *Family Literacy Kit: A Comparison of Popular Program Models*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2004.



Research Methods

Our research isn't simply an evaluation of the program models in Hamilton, Toronto and Kingston. Rather, it is a comprehensive look at some very different integrated family literacy programs in varying community and school contexts. Our research assesses their history, context, strengths, weaknesses and lessons learned in implementing their programs—often with limited resources. The lens with which we observed the programs in action is the OLC's 2005 report *Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices*⁴. The report acknowledges 14 Best Practice Statements for achieving effective, high-quality family literacy programming.

After an extensive review of relevant literature, we observed all programs in action (where applicable), interviewed program participants past and present, conducted program developer focus groups and surveyed key stakeholders in these family literacy programs. In addition, to gain an understanding of the future direction and vision for family literacy in Ontario, we interviewed key integrated family literacy leaders and advocates from both the school-based and the community-based family literacy programs.

Best Practice Statements

A comparison of the Ontario Literacy Coalition's 2005 report *Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices* with similar best practice guidelines reveals a grounding in global research and a unity in program delivery across provincial boundaries.

Philosophy

A quality family literacy program has a clearly written mission statement that is built on carefully considered values and beliefs. This philosophy is communicated to everyone involved with the program and is reviewed regularly.

Needs assessment and planning

A quality family literacy program lays a solid foundation for itself by conducting ongoing community needs assessments for family literacy. It also identifies target groups and explores potential partnerships and the availability of resources.

Policies and procedures

A quality family literacy program has policies and procedures to ensure everyone involved in the program is supported in meaningful ways, and that a safe and welcoming learning environment is established.

Program models

A quality family literacy program is established on a well-researched model that emphasizes the strengths of families, affirms the influence of partners on their children's learning and empowers all generations to learn.

Program content

A quality family literacy program supports the learning of all family members by using a wide variety of instructional methods, strategies and materials. While a program model may be followed, modifications are continually made to meet the needs, interests and capabilities of program participants.

Resources, materials and facilities

A quality family literacy program uses a variety of learner-centered, age-appropriate and authentic learning materials, and provides accessible facilities where families feel safe and comfortable while learning.

Staff development

A quality family literacy program has a well-trained staff who can meet the diverse learning needs of participating family members. The staff understand the theory and research underlying family literacy, bring practical skills to program delivery and keep up-to-date through professional development

Volunteers

A quality family literacy program may recruit, train and support volunteers to contribute in meaningful ways.

Promotion and recruitment

A quality family literacy program uses a variety of methods and outreach materials to effectively promote the program in the community, and to recruit families who have the most to gain from the program.

Access, participation and retention

A quality family literacy program offers the program in a central and safe location with all the relevant resources and supports. Sensitive staff create a learning environment where participants of all ages attend for as long as it takes to reach their goals.

Supporting families' diversities and differences

A quality family literacy program celebrates and supports the range of diversity in its community by providing a variety of relevant resources and modifying program content as appropriate. Knowledgeable staff communicate effectively with families of all backgrounds and abilities, practicing anti-bias strategies and using language that is clear and inclusive.

Funding and sustainability

A quality family literacy program takes steps to become sustainable by exploring various long-term funding sources at local, provincial and national levels. The program also recognizes great value in short-term funding opportunities and community collaborations.

Community involvement and partnerships

A quality family literacy program views itself as a vital part of a community, one able to meet the learning needs of families most effectively when working closely within a network of family support agencies with similar values and goals.

Assessment and evaluation

A quality family literacy program uses a participatory method to assess and document progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of different aspects of the program in helping participants meet their learning goals.

⁴ Ontario Literacy Coalition, Action for Family Literacy Ontario, and Kimberly Sutherland. *Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices*. Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2005.



Research Findings

Program Descriptions

Multicultural Early Learning Development, Hamilton

The Multicultural Early Learning Development (MELD) program in Hamilton was started in 2003 with the support of funding from the Early Years Challenge Fund. The program is housed in the Hamilton Public Library, with local schools serving as host sites. Library staff visit schools and introduce workbook and dual language materials to families with children enrolled in kindergarten classes. Library staff share stories, model fingerplays, present puppet shows and register families for free library cards. It has since expanded its mandate by distributing dual-language workbooks and associated materials and presenting its programs at the local mall or public library.

The program's success beyond its initial three-year funding lies in its grounding in the public library and the myriad of collaborations the team built to sustain and support the programming. Partners include: Early Years Challenge Fund Grant (Ministry of Children and Youth Services), Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, Hamilton-

Wentworth District School Board, Hamilton Community Foundation, Settlement and Integration Services Organization, Community Action Program for Children, Centre de Sante, and Community Access to Child Health. These organizations worked with the MELD team every step of the way, providing resources, guidance and funding.

A visit to the MELD program at a small school in Hamilton revealed excited children and engaged parents, grandparents and caregivers. The MELD staff explained why a particular book or song was important as they went along. The staff specifically informed the adults that the resources are available for their use free of charge in the library. Adults were also given a kit of resources to take home with them, including the dual-language workbook. In the three years of the program more than 500 library cards were distributed to families.

Adult Literacy Integration:

- The program acts as an introduction to important community programs and services critical to newcomer families. Because MELD is in partnership with the public library,

newcomer families are exposed to the myriad of social service programs available through the library.

- The program helps address the isolation and loneliness often experienced by newcomer families, which can act as a barrier to integration into Canadian society and the workforce.
- The program provides a space to model accepted and positive parenting norms and expectations.
- Families gain exposure to important English-language development resources, such as the dual-language workbooks for their children.

earlyBird, Hamilton

This exciting program started in the spring of 2008. The earlyBird program received funding from the Hamilton Community Foundation under the Tackling Poverty Initiative. In the Earlybird's "focus on parents" model, instructors use the earlyBird family literacy program as a guide for the first portion of the program. They also use a parent discussion component as a way to focus solely on building adult literacy skills. The earlyBird program meets weekly at a downtown recreation centre and provides childminding in partnership with the Niwasa Early Learning Centre.

The program emerged in response to a needs assessment that determined which Hamilton neighborhoods are high in poverty and could benefit from family literacy programming. It began in the Bennetto neighborhood and then moved to a newly developed resource center in another neighbourhood. Even after a large campaign was initiated to attract families, traffic was slow. The program then moved to a recreation centre in another low-income downtown neighborhood. With time and flexibility, the program found a good location. Presently, the partnerships and attendance are beginning to bloom. Considering the obstacles in developing this type of program, it is important to remember that community development is a time intensive endeavor.

Adult Literacy Integration:

- The program uses a parent discussion component as a way to focus on and build important adult literacy skills.
- The program offers a childminding program to encourage program retention.

Upgrading for Parents with Preschoolers, Kingston

In Kingston, we looked at past sessions of the Upgrading for Parents with Preschoolers (UPP) program, as well as a current, six-week version of the program that ran in the early part of 2008.

Kingston Literacy runs the UPP program when they have the funding to do so. The main funder of the program to date is the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Parents visit the UPP site with their children. The most recent program session was in the public library where LINC programming and Ontario Works upgrade programming takes place. Lunch is provided for all participants and instructors. Each two-hour class is based on a theme—for example, healthy living, the family, literacy at home, budgeting, etc. Classes include a mixture of activities based on the Essential Skills. There is also a computer component to the class. Children's activities, based on the same themes, run concurrently with a qualified Early Childhood Educator. Structured time, known as PACT (Parents and Children Together) provides parents the opportunity to practice the skills and strategies they have learned. When we visited, the parents were at first shy in practicing their newly learned strategies and skills with the children, but were soon thoroughly and proudly engaged.

Adult Literacy Integration:

- The program uses a parent discussion component as a way to focus on and build important adult literacy skills.
- The program offers a childminding program to encourage program retention.
- The program acts as an entry-point for important community programs and services critical to families.

- The program integrates official Essential Skills training into the adult learning.
- The program informally partners with Ontario Works to offer important computer literacy programming.

Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Toronto

In 1981, an amazing woman named Mary Gordon recognized the need for programs that supported families in developing literacy and parenting skills at home. She worked with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to open the first Parenting and Family Literacy Centre. The TDSB programs have been funded since 1981 by the school board under the umbrella of Continuing Education. Last year the Ministry of Education downloaded funding for parenting and family literacy centers to the TDSB and eight other school boards. This year each of those boards received additional funds to open more centres and three more school boards were included, for a total of twelve. There are now 123 centres in the province with 69 of these located in the TDSB.

Both the Rose Avenue School and Essex School centres are extremely well attended and diverse. The centres are open during school hours on a drop-in basis. Unlike many programs dominated by female caregivers and mothers, these centres often find fathers and grandfathers participating. These programs exemplify the true power of the “children and parents together” model described earlier in this report. Although at first the centres seem crowded and chaotic, there is a method to the madness.

Over time, parents take ownership of the space and mentor each other. Several newcomer program participants revealed that these centres are the only space where they feel comfortable in the community. They very much value practicing English and making friends with other families. The centres act as a space to challenge the isolation and loneliness that sometimes accompanies being a newcomer.

Adult Literacy Integration:

- The program acts as an entry-point for important community programs and provides services critical to newcomer and Canadian-born families.

- The program addresses the isolation and loneliness often experienced by newcomer families, which can act as a barrier to integration into Canadian society and the workforce.
- The program provides a space to model accepted and positive Canadian parenting norms and expectations.
- The families gain exposure to and use of important English-language development resources, such as books and games, through book mobile services.

Program Strengths

The programs described above all exhibit the following strengths:

- The staff and program models exhibit a large measure of flexibility.
- The programs are extremely inclusive, offering community to people from diverse cultures and backgrounds.
- They act as an entry-point for additional family/community supports and services.
- They build on already established community entities or programs.
- They are steeped in best practice research with strong philosophies behind them.
- They incorporate components of Essential Skills, computer literacy, financial literacy and health literacy.

Program Weaknesses

Our research reveals that all of the programs we examined do an amazing job, often with few resources. However, some programs embody more weaknesses than others. The programs that lack consistent, on-going funding are most impacted by:

- **Evaluation:** Programs lack the time and resources to plan and implement a solid evaluation strategy. They also lack consistency in programming to help determine benchmarks and longer term participant and community impact.
- **Marketing/Outreach:** The lack of consistent, on-going funding makes marketing and outreach quite difficult. Our research shows that word-of-mouth is the most powerful

marketing tool for these programs. When a program depends on fragmented, one-off funding, there are often large chunks of time when the program is not in operation. At other times the specific type of funding will determine the program location, focus and timing. This greatly impacts word-of-mouth marketing and referrals.

- **Funding:** Our research shows that the two programs which suffer from low participant retention are those which lack consistent, on-going funding. Again, successful word-of-mouth marketing depends on consistency of programming and timing.
- **Materials in multiple languages:** Though the MELD program in Hamilton had the initial funding and partnerships to be able to develop their workbooks in many languages, most of our programs do not have those resources.
- **Physical space:** All of the programs researched suffer from a deficit in working space. In one case, the program leaders struggled to get time in the library and the gymnasium for their families. The majority of the programs were crowded into smaller spaces, often in the basements of buildings
- **Recognition:** These literacy centres are good examples of what recognition of the importance of family literacy can bring over time: consistent funding and a decent amount of support from the schools. Research reveals that all of the family literacy programs lack recognition as proven, successful models. One practitioner said their program sometimes seems like the step-child of the school that houses them. Family literacy programs are often outside of the traditional JK-12 education framework and therefore are not considered part of the education system, although they are a major support to the school system.

Participant Results

We interviewed 20 program participants from the program models in Toronto, Kingston and Hamilton to assess their opinions and perceived impacts. Our participant interviews reveal that the top five reasons participants attend family literacy programs are:

1. School readiness/parenting skills.
2. Upgrading language and literacy skills.
3. Access to resources/services.
4. Contact with other caregivers and children.
5. English language development.

Additional research findings from our participant interviews reveal that:

- 85% of program participants report an increase in self-esteem.
- 100% of program participants report use of learned strategies in the home.
- 30% of program participants report the program as a primary space to practice English.
- 95% of program participants report program materials as helpful and user-friendly.
- 95% of program participants would recommend their program to a friend.

Practitioner Lessons Learned

In our research we surveyed the practitioners and directors of these programs to find out what lessons they have learned in designing and delivering these programs. Here are some highlights:

- It takes up to six months to get a program running.
- A continuous intake of participants can be more successful than pre-registration.
- It is necessary to change to meet the demands of the community.
- Partnerships with businesses, social service organizations and government-funded programs ensure grounding in the experience of the community and provide much-needed support and resources.
- It is necessary to share resources both online and offline.
- Each program needs to have a base number of participants.



Conclusions and Recommendations

What are some recommendations for moving forward? Let's consider ways that we can not only support family literacy programming in Ontario but, specifically, the integration of adult literacy programming with family literacy programming.

Programming:

- 1. Collaboration:** Family literacy practitioners must continue to foster on-going collaborations with existing adult literacy and education programs.
- 2. Breaking the Silos:** Family literacy practitioners must begin to consider cross-provincial collaborations and invite the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) to support this unique approach. Research reveals that some provinces are deeply rooted in a tradition of family literacy programming which others are struggling to cultivate. A recent study conducted by the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick determined that there are many family literacy efforts in that

province but little compilation of outcomes or coordination of practices, elements vital to the growth and advancement of family literacy programming. Each province has their own struggles. For the health and vibrancy of Canadian society, we must break out of our provincial silos in this discussion.

- 3. Evaluation:** Integrated family literacy program practitioners must strengthen evaluation and monitoring systems (program outcomes, positive impact, negative impact and unintended impact). There is a continuing need to document and evaluate the development of integrated family literacy programming in order to make the case for consistent funding of these programs. It is necessary to think beyond outcome evaluation. There are some amazing practitioners and frameworks available—examples include the McConnell Family Foundation's work in Developmental Evaluation and an evaluation and monitoring framework known as "Most Significant Change." Integrating the work of

more consistent, long-term programs would lay the foundation for gathering outcome and impact information.

Funding and Policy:

- 1. Recognize important work:** Federal and provincial funders and policy makers must build on the important work already completed and currently underway. An example is AFLO's position paper, *Family Literacy in Ontario: Putting it on the MAP!* It is also critical to build on the years of important work initiated and conducted by groups like the Ontario Literacy Coalition. At a recent cross-ministerial stakeholder meeting in Toronto the AFLO position paper was the basis of the conversation. The recommendations contained within the document were reviewed by the group and a consensus was built around moving the important goals forward.

2. Investing in Family Literacy Programming:

The advancement of integrated family literacy programs requires universal federal funding from a multitude of government stakeholders for whom family literacy development is essential to their portfolios. Investing in family literacy programming is a concrete, proactive and economical way to address the educational and training needs of Ontario's future. It is important to invest in long term rather than short term project funding. Most family literacy programs have only project-based funding and half run on less than \$10,000 a year.

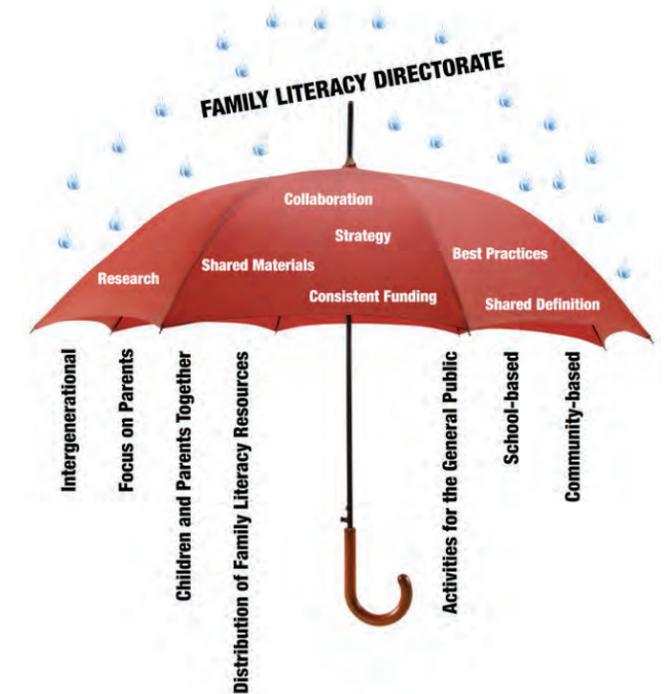
- 3. Knowledge Exchange:** Federal and provincial funders and policy makers must recognize and support the unique role of convening organizations such as the Ontario Literacy Coalition to facilitate cross-sectorial collaborations and knowledge exchanges that fully integrate adult literacy into family literacy programming.

4. Support a "Family Literacy Directorate":

A strong recommendation is that conveners, funders and practitioners create a practical, centralized, cross-ministerial entity to move the family literacy agenda forward. The AFLO's Position Paper refers to this possibility

as the Family Literacy Directorate. Many examples of this type of entity are available in Ontario (Seniors' Secretariat, Women's Directorate) and nationally (Office of Native Affairs). With so many different types of family literacy programs and needs in the province, the directorate would function as an umbrella. This umbrella would house and cultivate:

- On-going, consistent funding and approach.
- Shared definition of family literacy.
- Best practices and research.
- Curriculum materials.
- Partnerships and collaborations.





Convening Ontario Family Literacy Stakeholders

The above recommendations were presented to a diverse group of stakeholders in May of 2008 in Toronto, Ontario. Participants were invited to consider their relationship to integrated family literacy programming. This was a landmark gathering of engaged practitioners, provincial ministry staff and the federal Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES). Participants were also asked to review and consider supporting the implementation of AFLO's position paper, *Family Literacy in Ontario: Putting it on the Map!* Opposite is a list of participants, their stated relationship to family literacy, and the next steps put forth as a result of this important meeting.

The meeting was convened by the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) with delegate representatives from:

- Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO)
- Multicultural Early Learning Development (MELD) Hamilton
- Upgrading for Parents with Preschoolers (UPP) Kingston
- Kingston Literacy
- Adult Basic Education Association (ABEA) Hamilton
- earlyBird, Hamilton
- Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Toronto

Participant	Relationship to Integrated Family Literacy
Kathleen McColm, Ministry of Children and Youth Services	Best Start Strategy, including Ontario Early Years and the Early Literacy Specialist Program.
Judy Spiers, Office of Literacy and Numeracy	Secretariat supporting students after sixth grade with a focus on providing effective instructional practices to educators and families.
Joanne Davis, Toronto District School Board, speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Education	Parenting and Family Literacy Centres developed and supported by continuing funding downloaded by the Ministry of Education to school boards across the province.
Thu Nguyen, Ministry of Community and Social Services	Ontario Works program, introduced in 1998 to replace the general Welfare system. In 2007, literacy activities and basic skills were added to the training provided for participants.
Philippe Brunet, Office of Literacy and Essential Skills	The Office works to generate knowledge, develop on findings and provide outreach implementation. Streams within this work include family and community literacy, as well as Essential Skills.
Jessie Cunningham, Ministry of Health Promotion	Promotes health and information to improve and maintain daily life. Health literacy initiatives are emerging to support this goal.
Ron Grisbook, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities	MTCU funds Literacy and Basic Skills programs exclusively for adults.

Next Step Recommendations and Implementation Plan

Through this meeting the following recommendations from the delegates were tabled:

Recommendation	Action	Timeline
Convene a cross-ministerial and community committee to examine strategies for a provincial family literacy initiative.	OLC to identify potential stakeholders for a committee and convene a meeting.	February 2009
Share research and results from stakeholder meeting with additional ministries, practitioners and networks to invite ongoing participation.	OLC to identify other potential ministries impacted by family literacy initiatives and share their research.	February 2009
Identify gaps and possible partnerships in literacy service plans.	OLC to raise the issue with regional and sectorial networks.	November 2008
Explore models for working together with ministries and additional family literacy stakeholders given the diversity of the group and desired outcomes within the framework of integrated family literacy.	OLC and AFLO to review Constellation model as a potential model for stakeholder engagement.	November 2008 – March 2009
Propose idea of Family Literacy Directorate to act as an umbrella for the variety of integrated family literacy programs needed in Ontario.	Idea to be raised with stakeholders committee.	January – March 2009
Refine and implement the comprehensive recommendations presented in OLC/AFLO Position Paper— <i>Family Literacy in Ontario: Putting it on the Map!</i>	Feedback from project meeting in May 2008—will be incorporated to Position Paper.	February – March 2009

Developing a Partnership Framework in Support of Integrated Family Literacy in Ontario

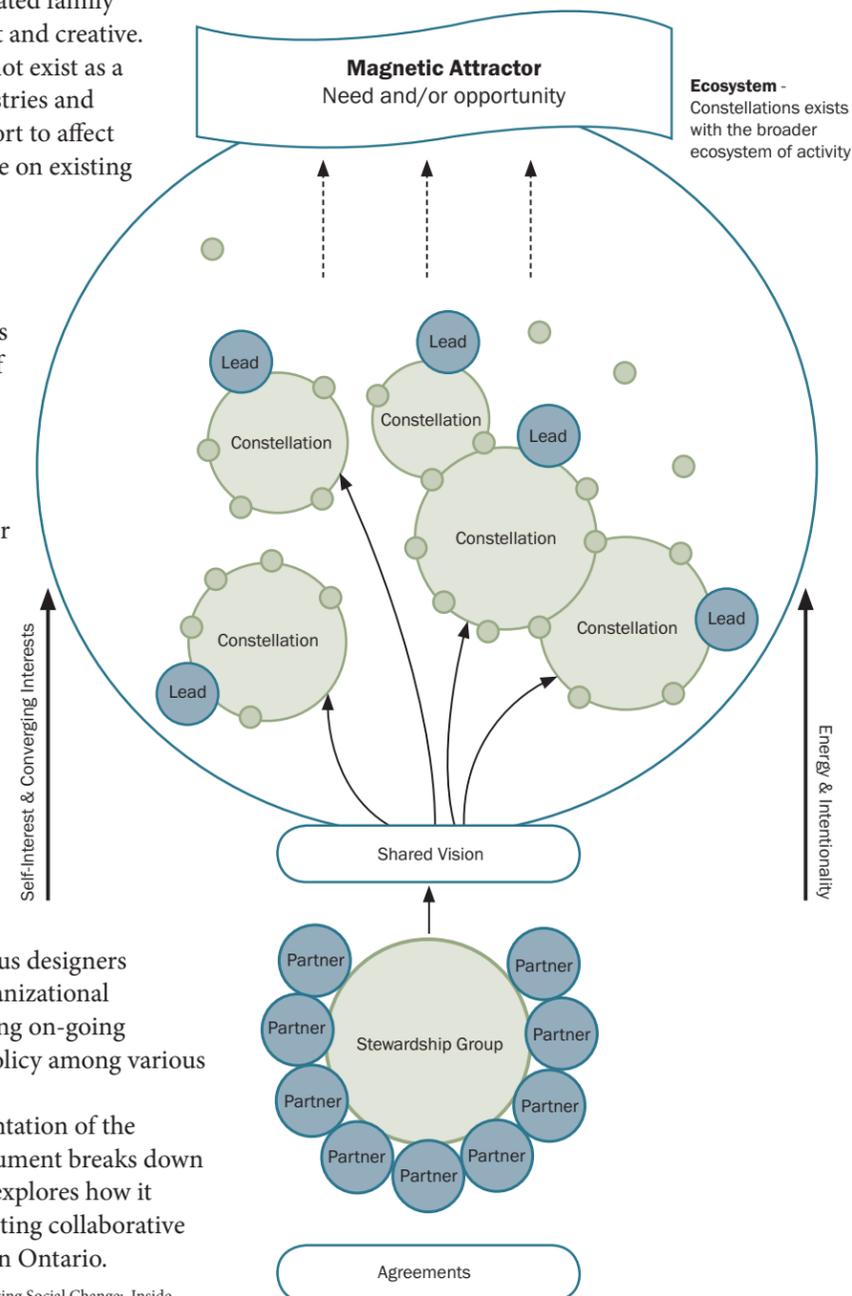
Building on the momentum created by the Integrated Family Literacy Stakeholder Meeting in May of 2008, the following section provides a model for convening a provincial strategy in support of family literacy. It also offers a vision for what a partnership framework—one that can be used as a model in provinces across Canada—can look like. Integrated family literacy programs are emergent and creative. A partnership framework cannot exist as a “top down” model led by ministries and funders. It is, rather, a joint effort to affect policy and continue to innovate on existing and future programming.

Model for Collaboration: The Constellation Model

Given the range of stakeholders and the on-going emergence of new programs and initiatives in support of family literacy, a model for governance and collaboration is necessary. Tonya Surman of the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto developed the “Constellation Model” as a way to organize a group of interested parties to meet a need without having to create a new organization to “hold” the issue⁵. In our case the need is to facilitate and support a provincial strategy for family literacy in Ontario. The Constellation Model is a tool to help stakeholders recognize and become conscious designers in a complex ecosystem of organizational collaboration, while encouraging on-going innovation in programs and policy among various engaged stakeholders.

Opposite is a visual representation of the Constellation Model. This document breaks down the model piece by piece, and explores how it can be applied to building a lasting collaborative framework for family literacy in Ontario.

⁵ Surman, Tonya and Mark Surman. “Open Sourcing Social Change: Inside the Constellation Model.” Open Source Business Resource (September 2008). <http://www.osbr.ca/ojs/index.php/osbr/article/view/698/666>



Applying the Constellation Model

How can we apply this model to the important work of practitioners, policy makers and conveners of family literacy programming in Ontario? Below are the steps required to build a Constellation Model to support programming and strategy beneath the umbrella of family literacy, which extends across ministerial and sector boundaries. This model not only acknowledges the range of committed stakeholders and programs, it provides space for continued innovation in the area of family literacy. It also offers a way for federal stakeholders and funders to acknowledge the important work being done in family literacy in Ontario and share the innovations across provincial boundaries.

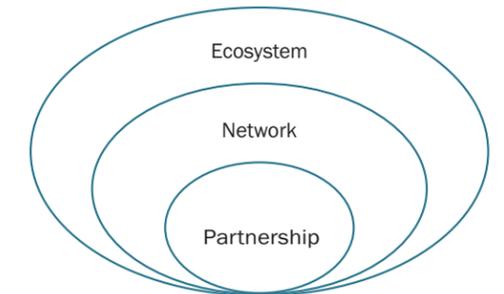
1. Magnetic Attractor: The Ontario Literacy Coalition and key stakeholders recognize the need and opportunity for working together to achieve individual and shared outcomes for family literacy. This opportunity is described as a “magnetic attractor.” The magnetic attractor defines the scope of the work of the collaborative partners in the Constellation Model.



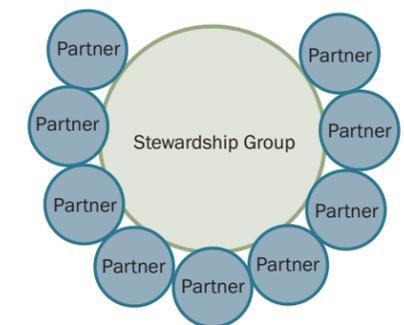
2. Family Literacy Ecosystem: The “ecosystem” is the sphere of activity in which the collaboration operates. It includes all the stakeholders and perspectives that affect the realm of family literacy. The ecosystem is not limited to just the partners or members of the collaboration. The family literacy ecosystem includes the breadth and range of family literacy research and programs around the globe. It also includes other adult literacy and child literacy programs and initiatives. The ecosystem acknowledges and respects the decades of work of stakeholders, distant and near, to set the stage for a provincial strategy in support of family literacy.

A useful activity at this stage is “network mapping” to determine what programs and initiatives are currently underway and who has a stake in family literacy. The Ontario Literacy

Coalition has initiated a huge part of this work by mapping the current work of provincial ministries as it relates to family literacy and inviting those stakeholders to the table to continue to share and imagine a collaboration in support of a provincial family literacy strategy.



3. Stewardship Group: Now that we have convened a group of provincial ministries and organizations that are interested in moving the family literacy agenda forward, we must name a “stewardship” group composed of representatives from each of the partnering organizations. In the case of the network or ecosystem, members of the stewardship group play the role of “stewards” for the ecosystem by providing a clear vision and strategic plan to guide the work of the collaboration. At the Ontario cross-ministerial meeting in support of family literacy convened by the Ontario Literacy Coalition in May of 2008, stakeholders agreed to move forward with forming a committee to consider the feasibility and logistics around building a provincial strategy for family literacy. This group can act as the stewardship group for the Constellation Model.



The stewardship group is responsible for the management of the core agreements (described below), and for ensuring the overall health of the collaboration and constellations. It provides

the management oversight of the projects and constellations. The stewardship group is responsible for:

- Assessing the current assets, successes, gaps and needs in the family literacy ecosystem (Much of this information and research is readily available through the hard work of the Ontario Literacy Coalition, AFLO, and like-minded organizations).
- Inviting new partners to be a part of the collaboration.
- Scoping the nature of how and why the group should work together.

4. Vision and Planning: As the nature of the magnetic attractor is further defined—in this case the cross-provincial strategy in support of family literacy—the group will need to develop a clear set of assumptions, vision and loose plan:

- **Assumptions:** Include a shared understanding of the assumptions related to the magnetic attractors. This could take the form of a “guiding principles” document that articulates a shared understanding of the need or opportunity.
- **Vision:** The group must articulate a shared vision for the collaboration. This could be a re-articulation of the magnetic attractor, which is a provincial strategy in support of family literacy, or it can be a more grand statement of where the group imagines the status of family literacy programming in Ontario in ten years.
- **Plan:** The plan for the collaboration should set out a broad framework for the work together. The plan must build on the assets, core competencies and interests of the partners. It must be specific enough to mobilize action and to be able to measure success, but still loose enough to allow ideas, programs and initiatives to emerge organically.

5. Agreements and Secretariat: At this stage in developing the Constellation Model for family literacy in Ontario, foundational agreements and a formal secretariat role become key. The collaboration agreement articulates the way that the partners work together and describes the

roles and responsibilities of the various players.

There are two models possible for housing the formal secretariat and collaboration director. One vision finds the Ontario Literacy Coalition as an official part of the stewardship group, while also functioning as the formal secretariat and the collaboration director. The second model finds the Ontario Literacy Coalition convening the stewardship group and acting as the formal secretariat and collaboration director, but not taking an official part of the stewardship group.

In some ways this model is essential for the Ontario Literacy Coalition to maintain perspective and impartiality. The responsibilities of the secretariat and the collaboration director, who resides within the secretariat, include: facilitation, conflict mediation, project development, strategy, partnership development, fundraising (as appropriate), incubation and support of the constellations. The secretariat is responsible for facilitating all communication for the collaboration. The Ontario Literacy Coalition is uniquely qualified and positioned to act in this capacity.

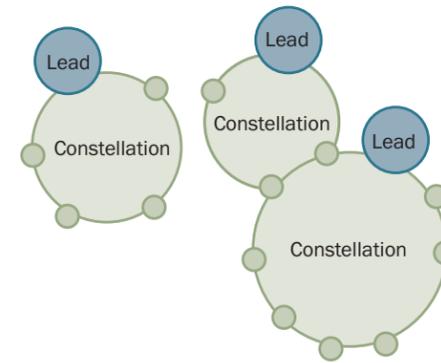
6. Emerging Constellations: Now that systems of accountability and coordination are in place, an “enabling” environment, or structure, is required to allow activities and initiatives to emerge within the larger framework of the shared vision. These “constellations” are self-organizing action teams that operate in cooperation with one another. They are clusters of activity in which a subset of partners voluntarily participate. Constellations can be formal projects, occasional and opportunistic initiatives, or committees that guide particular aspects of the work of the larger collaboration. Constellations must advance the interests of the collaboration and must be consistent with the vision and plan of the group.

Within each constellation, one partner takes a leadership role and acts as the fiscal and legal authority on this activity. The lead is determined on a case-by-case basis, as determined by the partner’s interests, competencies and fit with potential funders.

When constellations emerge, it is the responsibility of the partnership director, in this case the Ontario Literacy Coalition,

to incubate the initiative. The group works together to define their own terms of reference. Each constellation must decide which partner should play the leadership role and who has the organizational capacity to be the financial lead of the initiative. It is important to match roles and responsibilities with the particular assets of each group. As with the larger collaboration framework, it is important to develop a written agreement for how the particular constellation will work together. The Ontario Literacy Coalition holds these agreements and regularly updates them as needed.

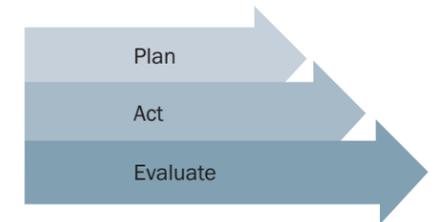
If appropriate, the constellations will work with the Ontario Literacy Coalition to seek the resources necessary to support their work, such as fundraising. Once the resources are secured, the work of the constellation begins. This process of emergence and support can occur repeatedly, so long as the work remains consistent with and supportive of the larger vision of the partnership.



7. Evaluation and Assessment: Once there are several constellations operating with initiatives or programs that support the vision of the partnership, the stewardship group must assess the gaps and evaluate the progress of the collaboration. The group takes this information and uses it to continually evolve the strategy and work of the collaborative partnership

There are a handful of evaluation frameworks and evaluative lenses that support the type of emergence and innovation we are describing with the Constellation Model. One example, from the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, is “Developmental Evaluation.” This is an emergent framework used by a handful of organizations across Canada who are interested in applying

learning to continuous innovation. The process looks something like this:



8. Additional Legal and Administrative Considerations:

Now that we see how the Constellation Model can be applied to our vision for family literacy in Ontario, there are a handful of additional considerations.

- The collaboration should not legally incorporate in any way. This helps avoid uneven power dynamics within the group. A collaboration exists to serve its members and to avoid unnecessary competition. As there is no legal entity, fiscal and legal responsibility move to each member organization on a project-by-project basis. This means that the project lead has the authority to make legal and fiscal decisions. The conflict resolution process, as outlined by the stewardship group and “held” by the secretariat, should clearly establish guidelines to protect the members of the constellation.
- Because constellations drive the model, leadership and resources for them are constantly coming from different places and going to different organizations. This “in motion” money and power management ensures that the active partners are compensated for their initiative. It is the role of the secretariat, the Ontario Literacy Coalition, to balance the flow of leadership and money between participating organizations.
- Because the collaboration does not legally exist, and because resources are generally tied to projects, amassing “core” funding to serve the collaboration is a challenge. It is recommended that a portion of the administration fees fundraised for particular projects emerging out of the constellations are allocated back to the collaboration, and particularly the Secretariat (in this case the Ontario Literacy Coalition).

Potential Constellations

In this section, we will imagine some constellations based on current synergies between various family literacy stakeholders. Again, the Constellation Model allows endless numbers of projects and initiatives to emerge, each feeding the larger vision of an Ontario-wide strategy in support of family literacy.

Essential Skills and Family Literacy

The Ontario Literacy Coalition's recent look at successful, integrated models of family literacy in Ontario highlights Kingston Literacy's "Upgrading for Parents of Preschoolers" program. A key feature of this program is the integration of Essential Skills into the curriculum. Imagine a constellation of the collaboration that focuses on formalizing the insertion of Essential Skills training into family literacy programming throughout Ontario. Below is an image of what the constellation could look like. Notice there is a role for the practitioner (Kingston Literacy) as the lead of the constellation.

Constellation Example



Ministries with a natural stake in combining Essential Skills and family literacy join the constellation either as funding partners or as advisory partners. The Ontario Literacy Coalition plays the role of the project "incubator" by offering capacity-building support and guidance. The Ontario Literacy Coalition, as the formal secretariat/project director of the larger collaboration, houses the learning and outcomes of the project and feeds it back to the larger family literacy ecosystem. The stewardship group also ensures that the work of the constellation remains consistent with the larger vision of the collaboration. The federal Office of Literacy and Essential Skills plays a critical role as either a funding partner

or the conduit for distributing the constellation's knowledge and products across provincial boundaries, or both.

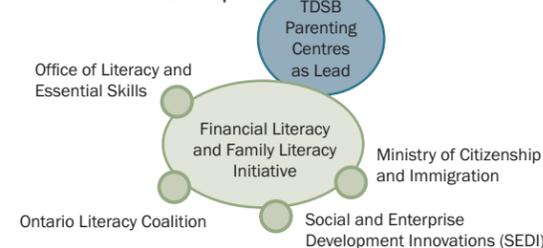
Financial Literacy and Family Literacy

Models of family literacy throughout Ontario incorporate financial literacy as a component of family literacy curriculum. A 2002 discussion paper called "Towards a National Policy/Program on Financial Literacy," put forth by Social and Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI), stated: "It is in the economic and social interests of governments and citizens to ensure that all Canadians have a basic level of financial literacy."

As a result of SEDI's persistence and vision, the 2006 federal budget allocated \$3 million for financial literacy programming to be implemented by the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada. Then in 2008, the federal government approved the creation of Tax-Free Savings Accounts as an option for Canadians.

Let's now imagine a constellation that supports the development of a range of optional financial literacy materials in dozens of languages for family literacy programs. The Toronto District School Board's Parenting Centres are an excellent place to both develop and test the materials. The Parenting Centres are located in more than 50 schools across the Greater Toronto Area and welcome an extremely diverse range of families from all socio-economic backgrounds. The federal Office of Learning and Essential Skills can disseminate these important materials across provincial boundaries. Any of the ministries can act as either a funding partner or an advisory partner. The Ontario Literacy Coalition again plays the role of the secretariat. Below is a visual that imagines this constellation feeding into the larger vision of an Ontario-wide strategy in support of family literacy.

Constellation Example



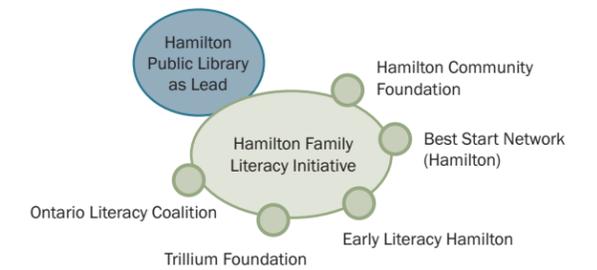
Keeping it Local: Municipal Engagement

We are frequently reminded, as family literacy practitioners, researchers and strategists, that municipal initiatives often have more flexibility and relevance for their particular community. The innovation and learning that takes place at the community level can drive a provincial strategy in support of family literacy. Hamilton has a rich history as innovators of family literacy programming. Beginning in 1998, a coalition of practitioners and community groups known as the Family Literacy Network came together to promote early literacy in the city. After many successful programs and initiatives, the Family Literacy Network merged with the Literacy Advisory Committee in 2003 to form Early Literacy Hamilton.

Early Literacy Hamilton is a coalition of over 35 members representing four school boards, teaching both French and English, that seeks to improve the literacy levels of all children in the community. Soon, the coalition will become a sub-committee of the local Best Start Network, with the intention of moving the Best Start vision forward. In a community like Hamilton, with its rich history of collaboration around literacy and family literacy initiatives, it's not hard to imagine a constellation emerging that infuses schools and community programs with family literacy materials.

For example, the Multicultural Early Learning Development program (MELD), based in the Hamilton Public Library, has had great success over the last five years in creating and distributing dual-language family literacy workbooks to hundreds of families. Simultaneously, it has also been building bridges between newcomers to the community and the wealth of resources and services available at the public libraries. Much like the constellations above, Ontario Literacy Coalition and the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills could play the role of distributing the resources and learning from Hamilton's community-based initiatives. At the community level, there are endless possibilities for unique, innovative constellations to emerge that will feed the larger vision of a provincial strategy in support of family literacy.

Constellation Example



Again, these are just a handful of possibilities for constellations that can support the larger vision of a provincial strategy in support of family literacy. The role of the stewardship group, and the Ontario Literacy Coalition as the formal secretariat, should first be to map all of the synergies within the group of partners and then imagine constellations that contribute to the vision of the group. Many of the constellations may already be in existence and can be shepherded into the collaboration.

The Ontario Literacy Coalition and its committed partners are in a unique position to implement the Constellation Model and share their knowledge across sector and provincial boundaries. The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills can play a key role in helping other provinces implement this model in ways that serve their unique interests, needs and mandates.

Bibliography of Relevant Research

This annotated bibliography was developed through a review of the most relevant sources of literature. Each entry explains the value of the document and a summary of its contents. A bibliography of all sources consulted follows.

1. Bel Fiore, Mary Ellen, and Sue Folinsbee. *Libraries and Literacy: A Decade in Review. National Summit on Libraries and Literacy, 2006.*

The purpose of this paper was to “set the stage” for the 2006 National Summit on Libraries and Literacy. In it, the researchers look at the progress made since the 1995 Summit. Literacy providers and libraries worked over the last decade to address barriers to true collaboration. They recommend recognition, more partnerships (especially with existing adult literacy and adult education programs), effective community involvement and the integration of adult literacy into library services. Part of this success in collaboration is due to the growth and availability of online technologies. The paper advocates further steps toward collaboration be made through libraries mounting adult literacy campaigns, promoting libraries as educational partners and buying online databases to use as partners in adult literacy work. Libraries can utilize knowledgeable and flexible staff to work with adults facing challenges with literacy. Libraries and literacy providers can also work together to create community-wide strategic plans to address the unique literacy needs of that particular community.

2. Canadian Council on Learning. *State of Learning in Canada: No Time for Complacency.* Ottawa, ON: Canadian Council on Learning, 2007.

This comprehensive report identifies emerging patterns and trends in learning across the country. The study covers all aspects of learning – from early childhood to workplace and community-based learning. Of particular interest is the chapter titled “Learning and

Literacy: Canada’s Challenges.” In this chapter, the CCL recognizes the importance of literacy for the success of education and lifelong learning. Literacy is identified as a “crosscutting theme” for the CCL, along with culture, E-learning, French minority-language settings, and gender. The chapter goes on to reveal four possible explanations to the question, “Why isn’t more money invested in literacy?” The study suggests that:

1. Until the advent of adult literacy assessment in the mid-1980’s, economists did not have the means to determine the impact of literacy skills on economic growth and social inequity.
2. Canadian economic policy-makers assumed that literacy was merely a means for employers to allocate higher wages from a fixed economic pie to those with more skills/training. We now know that literacy actually makes the economic pie bigger for all of Canadian society.
3. Economic theory suggests that those who benefit from investments in skills should have to pay for this education/training. This belief leads some to advocate that individuals and businesses rather than governments should pay for literacy skill training.
4. Governments have tended to assume that the cost of doing nothing—like investing in literacy training—is low. However, we are now learning that the cost of doing nothing is actually quite high.

3. Horsman, Jenny, and Helen Woodrow, eds. *Focused on Practice: A Framework for Adult Literacy Research in Canada.* Vancouver, BC: Harrish Press, 2006.

This unique study builds a framework to support research in practice in adult literacy in Canada. The authors reveal findings on the state of adult literacy, and on conceptions and responses to adult literacy research. Several resources were

identified as critical in supporting research in practice in adult literacy. They include money, time, professional development and mentors, networks and gatherings, and dissemination and resources. Research practitioners also recommended a balance between local initiatives, appropriate to the local context, and national initiatives.

4. Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick. *Live, Horse, ‘Til the Grass Grows! A Study of Family Literacy in New Brunswick: Work, Outcomes, and Best Practices.* Fredericton, NB: Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick, 2006.

Researchers scanned the Canadian horizon of family literacy to assess all research and models surrounding family literacy. This work provides a lens through which to view the landscape of family literacy in New Brunswick. The work reveals that the intergenerational model of family literacy is barely present in New Brunswick at this time. Practitioners struggle to implement family literacy programs. One interesting finding is that some practitioners feel that partnerships may not be ideal for delivering effective family literacy programs because they may interfere with the participants’ voice in the programming. Additional findings concern the level of financial instability most family literacy programs experience. Other helpful information includes recommendations for evaluating program outcomes in family literacy programming.

5. Ningwakwe (Priscilla George). *Exploring Approaches to evaluation in Literacy Programs: A Provincial On-line Evaluation Workshop Summary.* Saskatchewan Literacy Network, 2006.

This paper is a summary of an online workshop hosted by the Saskatchewan Literacy Network for twelve literacy practitioners from around the province. The facilitator took the group through a series of exercises designed to help them understand different evaluation processes that can be implemented in literacy programs, such as how to capture and describe successes of learners, and how to plan for future programming based on the evaluations the practitioners designed. The exercises were creative and unique in that they were based on

the “Rainbow/Holistic Approach” to Aboriginal Literacy. The idea is to demonstrate a variety of approaches to learning so people can learn in ways they could not in a regular classroom. Ningwakwe focuses heavily on the “whole person” approach to learning and how it can be evaluated.

6. Nunavut Literacy Council, and NWT Literacy Council. *Improving Essential Skills for Work and Community: Workplace and Workforce Literacy.* Nunavut Literacy Council, and NWT Literacy Council, 2007.

In this paper the authors take a close look at elements of best practices for effective workplace and workforce literacy. The paper provides some helpful tools and resources as well as a summary of eight collaborative models.

7. Padak, Nancy, and Tim Rasinski. “Family Literacy Programs: Who Benefits?” Columbus, OH: Ohio Literacy Resource Center, Kent State University, April 2003. literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/WhoBenefits2003.pdf

The authors seek to answer the questions, “Do family literacy programs really work? And if so, who benefits?” This American study reveals that family literacy programs benefit at least four primary groups:

- Children
- Parents
- Families
- Society at large

8. Rasmussen, Jean, et. al. *The BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy.* Vancouver, BC: Literacy BC, 1999.

Family literacy programs in BC are as diverse as the people who develop and implement the programs, and the wide range of program participants. The authors recognized that while flexibility in program models/approaches is ideal, it is important to have a set of best practice standards to increase overall program effectiveness. The BC Best Practice Statements are fully in line with Ontario Literacy Coalition’s 2005 *A Guide to Best Practices*, thus lending additional credibility to the Ontario framework.

9. Sanders, Maureen, and Janet Shively. *Promising Practices in Family Literacy Programs*. 2007.

The authors showcase a handful of Canadian literacy programs in an effort to offer some common “promising practices.” These promising practices of successful family literacy programs are as follows:

- Family literacy programs are participatory and inter-generational. They support diversity, and build on the strengths and goals of families and their community.
- Family literacy programs reduce barriers to participation and retention.
- Family literacy programs encourage community involvement, partnerships, support and referrals.
- Family literacy programs engage in ongoing assessment, evaluation and documentation strategies.
- Family literacy programs recruit, train, and retain high quality staff who can meet the diverse learning needs of participating family members.

10. Wasam-Ellam, Dr. Linda. *What Really Matters in Family Literacy? A Saskatchewan-based, Interorganizational Research Project*. Saskatchewan Literacy Commission, 2008.

This research is currently in progress and needs to be mentioned because its intended to inform provincial policies and programs on family literacy. This research will be valuable for the Ontario Literacy Coalition and the many organizations within its network. The objectives of the Saskatchewan Literacy Commission’s research are:

- To clarify how family literacy is currently understood in Saskatchewan.
- To identify how family literacy programs are developed, delivered and evaluated.
- To assess the impact of current family literacy programs.
- To draw conclusions about possible directions for future family literacy programs.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Interviews

Purpose

Interviews were used to get more specific information from program participants regarding what has worked in the family literacy programs and what motivates participants to use them.

Methodology

Approximately 20 program participants, past and present, were interviewed.

Interview Method	
Participants	Individuals who have either participated in the pilot integrated family literacy programs or are currently participating in the programs.
Approach	Interviews will be conducted one on one.
Location	The interviews took place at one of three participating partner organizations or at the pilot programs in Kingston, Hamilton and Toronto.
Data collection	Interviews were recorded using a digital mini-recorder. Recordings were then be transcribed. All participants were asked to sign a consent form.
Length	20 – 30 minutes
Number of interviews	Approximately 20
Time window	February/March/April 2008

Guiding Questions

- How did you hear about this program?
- Why did you sign up for the program?
- What keeps you coming to the program?
- Would you recommend this program to someone? Why or why not?
- How do you travel to and from the program site?
- Are there any incentives for you to participate in the program (grocery vouchers, bus tickets, stipends, etc.)?
- Are you a parent/caregiver/grandparent/other relative of the child or children participating in the program?
- What are their age(s)?
- What do you think of the program materials?
- What is the thing you have learned most and how do you use it?
- What kinds of things are you doing differently at home because of this program?
- Are there any barriers for you in participating in this program—list examples, religious practices, financial barriers (money), health problems, etc.

Appendix B: Practitioner Focus Groups

Purpose

Focus groups were used to explore broad questions concerning the development and evolution of integrated family literacy programs. We primarily used focus groups in pilot settings where the program is no longer in existence or has evolved into another model.

Methodology

The following is a break down of the approach used for these focus groups:

Focus Group Method	
Participants	All participants were program advisors, directors or program delivery staff engaged either currently or formerly in developing or evolving integrated programming in family literacy.
Approach	The focus groups used a mixture of traditional questions and group discussions on the programs they helped develop, evolve or deliver.
Location	Most of the focus groups occurred on site at one of three participating partner organizations in Kingston, Hamilton and Toronto.
Data collection	Focus groups were recorded using a digital mini-recorder. Recordings were transcribed. All participants were asked to sign a consent form.
Length	1 – 1.5 hour(s)

Guiding Questions

- Does the program currently exist in an evolved form or is it no longer in operation? Why or why not?
- Please describe the program model.
- Tell me about the funding sources for the program? Do those sources exist today?
- What were the program supports in terms of space, materials, volunteers and partners?
- Tell me more about the partnership development process—both program delivery partners and funding partners.
- What do you consider to be the successes of the program?
- Please describe challenges in designing, delivering or continuing this program.
- What solutions did you use to address these challenges?
- What changes, if any, did you make to the program design or delivery over the course of the life of the program?
- How did you evaluate the program and integrate those learnings?
- How did you market the program?
- Did you make use of the Web for any part of the program (marketing, resources, funder updates, etc.)?
- Please describe any family literacy professional development activities or trainings delivered or attended by you and the other program staff.

Appendix C: Practitioner Surveys

Purpose

Pilot site program delivery staff and program directors of active programs were asked to complete an online or paper-based survey that asks questions based on the 14 Best Practice Statements drawn from earlier research conducted by the Ontario Literacy Coalition.

Methodology

Participants had the option to complete the online or the offline survey. Details of the survey implementation include:

Survey Method	
Participants	All program delivery staff and program directors of active programs were asked to participate in the survey.
Delivery method	Online (program sites with computer access) or paper-based survey (program sites without computer access).
Data collection	All data was collected using SurveyMonkey.
Length	20 minutes
Sample size	12 –15

Survey Questions

- What is the name of your program?
- When did your program start? Is it still in operation? If not, why?
- Please describe your program. What is your program model?
- How was the need for your program determined? Where did it originate?
- Do you have any program partners?
- Did you develop your program content/curriculum on site or is it based on outside resources? Please name those resources.
- Does your program utilize volunteers? In what capacity?
- What languages does your program incorporate? Do you use interpreters?
- How do you promote/market your program?
- What lessons have you learned in delivering this program?
- Do you have any recommendations to evolve or enhance your current integrated family literacy program?
- What other organizations or funding entities would you consider to be natural partners for your program?
- How many staff does your program have?
- Please describe the experience and/or qualifications of the program directors and staff. Please refer specifically to professional experience in areas of literacy and training therein.
- What materials do you use in your program and how are they used?
- How is your program funded? Please describe any adaptations/alterations you've had to make to your program based on funding.

Appendix D: Observations

Purpose

The purpose of program observation was to assess the physical conditions of the program sites, as well as the delivery materials and methods.

Methodology

Researchers personally observed each of the active programs in the pilot sites and documented their findings. Details of the observation phase of the research include:

Observation Method	
Participants	All active pilot site programs.
Data collection	In-person observation.
Length	2-4 hours per site for each visit, depending on length of program. The researcher observed each site twice over the course of the research.
Sample size	Up to 6 pilot program sites.

Observation Framework

In addition to incorporating unanticipated observations, we assessed the programs in action for the following:

- Site accessibility
- Space description
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Materials used, and how
- On-site incentives (lunch, vouchers, etc.)
- Program delivery methods
- Participant response and engagement

Appendix E: Consent Form

I, _____ (please print name),
voluntarily consent to participate in a focus group or interview on _____,
at _____.

I understand that...

- The purpose of this research is to help the Ontario Literacy Coalition, and its funding and program partners, to better understand integrated models of family literacy programming in Ontario.
- This research is being performed by the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC).
- In this focus group or interview I will be asked to share my views and experiences with integrated family literacy programming.
- I am free to ask questions at any time about this research and the organizations involved, and the researchers will answer my questions to the best of their abilities.
- I may leave at any time.
- The discussion will be recorded by a digital voice recorder for later transcription.
- My comments may be quoted in the final research reports, but I will not be identified.
- My name, and any information that may identify me, will not be made public at any point in this research.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Best Practice Statements Lens

The following chart shows how the examined programs in Toronto, Kingston and Hamilton “line up” with the Best Practice Statements developed by the Ontario Literacy Coalition and Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO) described earlier in the document.

14 Best Practice Statements	Multicultural Early Learning Development	earlyBird	Parenting and Family Literacy Centres	Upgrading for Parents with Preschoolers
Philosophy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Needs assessment and planning	✓	✓	✓	✓
Policies and procedures	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program models	✓	✓	✓	✓
Program content	✓	✓	✓	✓
Resources, materials and facilities	✓		✓	
Staff development	✓		✓	
Volunteers	✓		✓	
Promotion and recruitment	✓		✓	
Access, participation and retention	✓		✓	
Supporting families' diversities and differences	✓	✓	✓	✓
Funding and sustainability	✓		✓	
Community involvement and partnerships	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assessment and evaluation	✓		✓	

