

Arizona's Family Literacy Program (Report Highlights)

December 2000

This is the fifth evaluation of Arizona's Family Literacy Program (Program). The Program is based on the premise that children's ability to succeed in school is linked to the literacy of their parents. Thus, the Program strives to provide a preschool education to disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds and to improve the educational skills of their parents.

Our Conclusions:

Since the last report (Auditor General Report No. 00-3), the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) improved its oversight of the Program and all program sites are now in compliance with program standards. Similar to last year's report, the program's outcomes are generally positive for the adults and children. Adults improved their English language skills, parenting skills, and entry into the workforce. Children improved their kindergarten readiness skills.

Parent's Qualifications

- Have a 3- or 4-year-old child;
- Lack a high school diploma or basic English skills; and
- Be legal residents of the United States.



ADE Improves Oversight

In the 1999-2000 school year, ADE improved its administration of the Program. The Program operates on a \$1 million annual appropriation that is allocated to 13 contractors operating a total of 23 sites. Most of the program's sites are located in Maricopa County, with the remaining sites located in Pima, Cochise, Coconino, and Yuma Counties.

Historically, site compliance with program requirements has fluctuated with the intensity

Whom Does the Program Serve?

- 391 families were served at 23 sites, with 63 percent remaining in the Program throughout the whole year.
- A typical family served had an annual income of less than \$15,000, spoke Spanish as their primary language, and consisted of a mother who participated with her preschooler.

of oversight. Last year 7 of 23 sites were out of compliance with at least one requirement.

In response to last year's report, ADE improved oversight by:

- Hiring a program administrator who monitors all sites;
- Developing an online data collection system; and
- Coordinating training efforts with model programs.

As a result, all sites were in compliance with statutory and program requirements.

Although compliance improved, further improvements are needed—Ten sites failed to report test scores or send complete, accurate data. While software problems accounted for some of this, mid-year reporting of children's pretest results could have addressed this problem earlier.

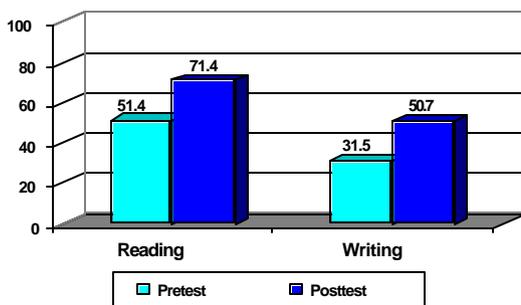
ADE should:

- ✓ Continue monitoring compliance;
- ✓ Monitor contractors' compliance with data reporting requirements; and
- ✓ Revise data submission timelines.

English Language Proficiency Improves

Adult participants made significant gains in reading, writing, and listening comprehension.

Improvements in Language Assessment System Test Scores 1999-2000 School Year



Entry Into the Workforce Improves

Program adults made gains in entry into the workforce and into job training programs. At the end of the Program, over half of the adults were employed or in job training programs.



Adults Improve Parenting Attitudes and Behaviors

Most adults entered the Program with positive attitudes about parenting. Tests on attitude assess each parent's:

- Level of frustration;
- Need for control;
- Understanding of children's play;
- Acceptance of child's creativity; and
- Views about child development.

While tests show that parenting attitudes of Family Literacy parents improved, they did not improve as much as those of parents in a similar, federally funded family literacy program.

Family Literacy parents significantly increased instances of positive parenting behaviors—These behaviors include:

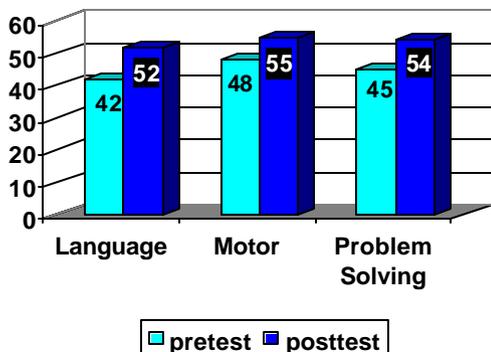
- Taking their children to the library;
- Reading and playing with children;
- Talking to their children's teacher;
- Talking about school; and
- Volunteering at school.

Children Improve Kindergarten Readiness

The Program aims to improve children’s kindergarten readiness skills. The Program assesses this readiness in three developmental areas:

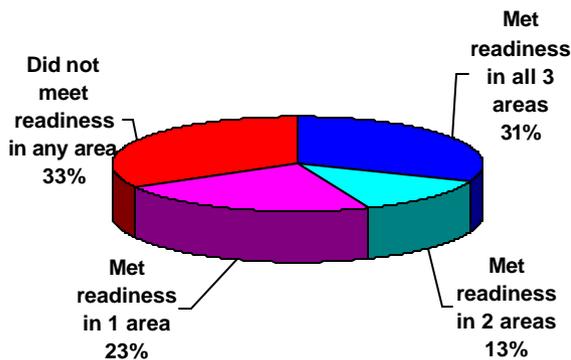
- Language;
- Motor skills; and
- Ability to solve problems.

Improvement in Developmental Skills (In Months) 1999-2000 School Year



Not all 4-year-olds advance to kindergarten readiness—While 67 percent of the 4-year-olds reached kindergarten readiness in at least one developmental area, 33 percent scored below readiness in all developmental areas.

Children Who Met Kindergarten Readiness Levels in Developmental Areas 1999-2000 School Year



Children’s development increases under certain conditions—Children’s readiness for school improves with:

- Home visits by program staff;
- Trips to the library with parents; and
- Parents’ participation in additional parenting classes.

ADE should:

Continue to monitor sites’ efforts to improve kindergarten readiness. Sites should:

- ✓ Conduct more home visits;
- ✓ Encourage positive parenting behaviors; and
- ✓ Provide additional parenting classes.

To Obtain More Information

- A copy of the full report can be obtained by calling (602) 553-0333 or by visiting our Web site at:

www.auditor.gen.state.az.us

- The contact person for this report is **Carol Cullen**.