



State of Arizona
Office
of the
Auditor General

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

**ARIZONA'S
FAMILY LITERACY
PROGRAM**

Report to the Arizona Legislature
By Debra K. Davenport
Auditor General

March 2000
Report No. 00-3

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DEBRA K. DAVENPORT, CPA
AUDITOR GENERAL

STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL

March 2, 2000

Members of the Legislature

The Honorable Jane Dee Hull, Governor

Ms. Lisa Graham Keegan,
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Department of Education

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, an evaluation of Arizona's Family Literacy Program. This is the fourth evaluation and was conducted pursuant to the provisions of A.R.S. §41-1279.08. I am also transmitting with this report a copy of the Report Highlights for this evaluation to provide a quick summary for your convenience.

As outlined in its response, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) agrees with all of the findings. ADE agrees to implement the recommendations to take action against sites that are repeatedly out of compliance and to provide additional technical assistance to sites to test administration and reporting. However, ADE will implement a different method of monitoring site compliance and reviewing sites.

My staff and I will be pleased to discuss or clarify items in the report.

This report will be released to the public on March 3, 2000.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debbie Davenport".

Debbie Davenport
Auditor General

Enclosure

SUMMARY

The Office of the Auditor General has completed the fourth evaluation of Arizona's Family Literacy Program. This evaluation was conducted pursuant to the provisions of A.R.S. §41-1279.08. This evaluation provides information about the program's effectiveness and recommendations for the program.

The program's intent is to improve the basic academic and literacy skills of economically and educationally disadvantaged parents and their preschool children. It is based on the premise that the educational skills of parents, and, in turn, their children, must increase in order to break the intergenerational cycles of poverty and illiteracy. Arizona's Family Literacy Program uses a model that integrates the four main components advanced by the National Center for Family Literacy. These components are adult literacy instruction, parent and child together, parent education and discussion and support groups, and early childhood education for children ages 3 to 4. Families receive these services in a classroom setting, generally on a school-year basis.

The State Board of Education and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) are responsible for administering Family Literacy. To provide services, ADE contracts with other organizations, including school districts, community colleges, and community-based organizations. ADE currently has contracts with 13 organizations to provide services at 23 sites. These sites are located in five counties: Maricopa, Pima, Coconino, Yuma, and Cochise.

ADE Should Increase Program Oversight to Improve Site Compliance with Program Criteria (See pages 11 through 18)

ADE's Adult Education Division should continue recent efforts to increase program oversight to help ensure that participants are receiving quality services. Although ADE administers the Family Literacy Program, ADE has not used any of the state appropriation for administration. As a result of this lack of funding, some

program sites are out of compliance with basic program standards, such as having a minimum enrollment of 10 families, and integrating all 4 program components. Additionally, program sites did not conduct all of the required tests of participants. As a result, the amount and quality of available program information for this evaluation is so limited that some program outcomes cannot be assessed, and others are only partially assessed.

In July 1999, ADE committed additional resources to overseeing the state-funded Family Literacy program and the Even Start program, a similar federally funded family literacy program. Nevertheless, ADE needs to take additional steps to strengthen oversight and monitoring to help ensure that sites are in compliance with all program, statutory, and contractual requirements.

**Program's Measurable Adult Education Outcomes Are Generally Positive
(See pages 19 through 24)**

Although lack of program information precludes assessing some of the program's adult education outcomes, analysis of those outcomes that can be assessed shows the program is having at least moderate positive results. In several respects, these results are comparable to the results of a similar family literacy program, the federally funded Even Start Program. Standard test scores increased about the same for adults enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages in the Family Literacy and Even Start programs. A similar analysis of test results could not be performed on adult basic education and General Educational Development (GED) instruction, because few participants took the required pre- and posttests. However, available data on progress toward completing the GED suggests that Family Literacy participants make slower progress than Even Start participants do. Differences in participant demographic factors and program duration could account for some of the differences in this outcome. Even Start participants had more available time and resources than Family Literacy participants had. Also, Even Start is a year-round program, typically lasting three years, while Family Literacy is limited to the regular school year and typically lasts only one year.

Employment outcomes are about the same for the two programs; employment rates increased from 14 percent at the beginning of the 1998-99 school year to 34 percent at the end of the school year.

**Adult Participants Show Improvements
in Parenting Attitudes and Behaviors
(See pages 25 through 31)**

Adults enrolled in the parenting skills component of the Family Literacy Program made improvements in their behaviors. Their improvements in parenting behaviors were greater than their improvements in parenting attitudes. Most parents entered the program with favorable parenting attitudes and did not make large improvements to their attitudes. However, parents who entered the program with unfavorable parenting attitudes showed large improvements in their parenting attitudes at the end of the program. A comparison of gains made by participants in the Even Start Program showed that both programs had essentially the same impacts on parenting behaviors. However, the Even Start Program had a greater impact on parenting attitudes. Again, differences in participant demographics and program duration could account for some of the differences in this outcome.

**Preschool Participants Make Progress,
but Less Than Early Childhood
Block Grant Participants
(See pages 33 through 38)**

In this evaluation, attempts were made to compare the school readiness results of participants in the Family Literacy preschool component with the results for participants in two similar preschool programs: the preschool portion of the federally funded literacy program, Even Start; and the state-funded Early Childhood Block Grant preschool program. The latter is a stand-alone preschool program rather than a family literacy program. Attempts to utilize scores from the Even Start comparison group were thwarted because of inadequate data. Therefore, in this evaluation, preschool readiness results from the Family Literacy Program were compared only to the results from the Early Childhood Block Grant preschool program.

Three areas in school readiness were measured: motor, problem-solving, and language skills. The results show that the Family Literacy Program's preschool component continues to have an impact on increasing children's readiness to succeed in kindergarten. However, the state-funded Early Childhood Block Grant preschool program had a greater impact on motor and problem-solving skills. Differences in these two areas may be explained partially by the age differences in the two groups: children in the Early Childhood Block Grant were slightly older. At the beginning of the 1998-99 school year, 28 percent of Family Literacy children were under 4 years of age, as compared to only 3 percent of Early Childhood Block Grant children. Although Family Literacy children were younger than Early Childhood Block Grant children, they were able to make equal gains in language skills.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This is the fourth report issued by the Office of the Auditor General evaluating Arizona's Family Literacy Program. This evaluation was conducted pursuant to the provisions of A.R.S. §41-1279.08. This evaluation report provides information about the program's effectiveness and recommendations for the program.

Family Literacy Program Aims to Improve Literacy Skills of Parents and Children

The Legislature established the Family Literacy Pilot Program in 1994 with legislation known as the Children and Families Stability Act. The pilot program received an outcome evaluation by the Office of the Auditor General in December 1997, and was extended and renamed the Family Literacy Program by Laws 1998, Ch. 295, §5, effective June 1, 1998.

The program is based on the premises that:

- ✓ Parents' educational skills must increase in order to increase literacy and reduce poverty among the current generation of families; and
- ✓ Children's educational skills must increase in order to increase literacy and reduce poverty among the next generation of families.

Program's Intent:

To improve the basic academic and literacy skills of undereducated parents and their pre-school children.

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, children whose parents lack a high school diploma are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than children whose parents

are high school graduates. By improving their literacy skills, parents can improve employment options, consumer and financial skills, and knowledge of health and personal safety procedures.

The program is based on the recognition of the interdependence of children's and parents' education. Parents are their children's first and best teachers; thus, parents must cultivate and value their own literacy skills in order to support their children's educational success. It is critical for parents to have adequate literacy skills to promote their children's healthy development and acquisition of literacy.

**Program Is Aimed at
Disadvantaged Parents
with Preschool Children**

Family Literacy is directed at economically and educationally disadvantaged parents with preschool-aged children. By statute, eligible parents must:

- ✓ Have a three- or four-year-old child;
- ✓ Lack sufficient mastery of basic educational or basic English language skills to function effectively in society, or lack a high school diploma or its equivalent; and
- ✓ Be U.S. or legal residents, or otherwise lawfully present in this country.

Families are recruited through a variety of methods, including flyers, referrals from Head Start, social service agencies, previous participants, advertisements in local newspapers, and radio announcements.

During the 1998-99 school year, program sites served a total of 402 families during all or part of the year. Sixty-two percent of the families had incomes of \$15,000 or less, and 29 percent of the adults had less than a ninth-grade education. Adult participants had a median age of 28. Additional information about

program participants is included in the section on statutory evaluation components (see pages 39 through 50).

Program Model Includes Components for Both Adults and Children

Family Literacy's approach uses adult, child, and parent education in an effort to be more effective than programs that focus exclusively on adults or exclusively on children. Arizona's Family Literacy Program uses a model that integrates components advanced by the National Center for Family Literacy. Families receive services in a classroom setting, generally on a school-year basis. Comprehensive literacy services are provided by integrating the following four main components.

- Based on their individual needs, adults receive one or both of the following adult literacy components:
 - ✓ Adult basic education and General Educational Development (GED) preparation; and/or
 - ✓ Instruction in English for speakers of other languages.
- Early childhood instruction uses a developmentally appropriate curriculum to improve children's motor, language, and problem-solving skills. Teachers focus on:
 - ✓ Developing the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional skills to improve children's school readiness and increase their chances of future academic success.
- Parenting education is provided through a component called Parent and Child Together (PACT), which provides opportunities for parents and children to play together or work on structured activities. Parents learn to:
 - ✓ Teach and communicate with their children, using positive parenting skills that are transferable to the home.

- Parent education discussion and support groups provide opportunities for parents to learn from the experiences of their peers, receive encouragement from the group, and practice collective problem-solving. Together with PACT, these discussion and support groups attempt to:
 - ✓ Provide parents with opportunities that will help them learn how to best meet their children’s developmental needs.

“Thanks to Family Literacy and to my family for their patience. I learned to listen more when my daughter talks to me, before I heard her but I didn’t listen to her. I feel my daughter is closer to me and she trusts me more than last year. In other aspects Family Literacy has given me the opportunity to learn computers and improve my English. I also know that Family Literacy gives me the confidence I need to achieve my goals by myself.”

“I’m very happy because since my mom is in the Family Literacy she helps me to do my homework. She reads more books to us every night.”

“Learning the importance of reading to our children everyday, helping the children with their homework, valuing our families, gave me too many opportunities to learn, that I can’t express on paper, because I lived them everyday and you need to live them in order to understand how I feel.”

(Comments from program participants)

Program Contractors Operate 23 Sites in 5 Counties

The State Board of Education and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) are responsible for administering Family Literacy. To provide program services, the ADE contracts with other organizations, including school districts, a community college, and community-based organizations.

Introduction and Background

Programs are currently in place in five counties—Maricopa, Pima, Coconino, Yuma, and Cochise. Contractors identify, recruit, and screen participants and are mandated by legislation to provide the following basic services:

- Instructional programs that promote academic and literacy skills and equip parents to provide needed support for their children’s educational growth and success.
- A plan to address program participants’ transportation, food, and childcare needs during the program.
- An organizational partnership involving (at a minimum) a common (public) school, a private preschool provider, and an adult education program funded by ADE.

Family Literacy had 13 contractors during the 1998-99 school year, as shown in Table 1. In all, these 13 contractors administered a total of 23 sites, 12 of them in Maricopa County. At each site, contractors are required to enroll between 10 and 20 participants. Two of the contractors, Mesa Unified School District and Pima County Adult Education, operate “model pro-

Table 1
Family Literacy Program
Contractors, County, Type of Contractor, and Number of Sites
1998-99 School Year

Contractor	County	Type of Contractor	Number of Sites
Cochise Community College	Cochise	Community College	2
Flagstaff USD No. 1	Coconino	School District	2
Literacy Volunteers of Maricopa County	Maricopa	Community-based organization	2
Phoenix Indian Center	Maricopa	Community-based organization	1
Southwest Human Development	Maricopa	Community-based organization	1
Glendale ESD No. 40	Maricopa	School District	1
Isaac ESD No. 5	Maricopa	School District	2
Littleton ESD No. 65	Maricopa	School District	1
Mesa USD No. 4	Maricopa	School District	3
Tempe ESD No. 3	Maricopa	School District	1
Pima County Adult Education	Pima	Adult education program	4
Crane ESD No. 13	Yuma	School District	2
Somerton ESD No. 11	Yuma	School District	1
Total			<u><u>23</u></u>

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Family Literacy Program staff.

grams” that provide technical assistance to all sites and training to family literacy staff.

The Legislature appropriated \$1 million for each of the four school years from 1996 to 2000. ADE does not retain any funds for administration. All monies appropriated for the Family Literacy Program are awarded directly to sites. Any leftover funds are nonreverting and can be carried over to the next year.

Resources required to operate a family literacy program vary depending on the number of days per week the program operates, the program size, and the cost of conducting the program in a particular community. The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) estimates that one full-time program requires \$50,000 to \$90,000 per year in a rural area and \$75,000 to \$125,000 in an urban area. Many of the state family literacy sites have funding collaborators who provide financial support in addition to the state grant.

See Table 2 (page 7) for information on contract amounts during fiscal years 1998 through 2000.

Follow-Up of Previous Evaluation Reports

- **Compliance with Program Model**—The previous three evaluation reports (Auditor General Report No. 95-20, Report No. 96-20, and Report No. 97-22) all addressed program implementation. Although the 1995 evaluation found that the pilot program used a model that followed recommended standards, the 1996 evaluation found that many sites failed to comply with these standards. The 1997 evaluation found that most sites subsequently improved their compliance with the program model, and three sites that continued to have implementation problems were to be closely monitored by ADE to ensure that they met program guidelines. In this fourth evaluation report, compliance

Table 2
Family Literacy Program
Contractors and Contract Amounts
Years Ended or Ending June 30, 1998 through 2000
(Unaudited)

Contractor	1998	1999	2000
<i>Apache County</i>			
Red Mesa USD No. 27	\$ 66,387		
<i>Cochise County</i>			
Cochise Community College ¹	33,419	\$ 89,200	\$ 89,200
<i>Coconino County</i>			
Flagstaff USD No. 1 (2 sites)	56,540	59,700	59,700
<i>Maricopa County</i>			
Glendale ESD No. 40		40,000	40,000
Isaac ESD No. 5 (2 classes)	66,438	71,400	71,400
Literacy Volunteers of Maricopa County ¹	30,248	67,900	67,900
Littleton ESD No. 65		40,000	40,000
Mesa USD No. 4 (3 sites and a model program)	153,148	168,100	169,600
Phoenix Indian Center	32,642	36,600	36,600
Southwest Human Development		30,100	30,100
Tempe ESD No. 3	33,220	38,200	38,200
<i>Navajo County</i>			
Pinon USD No. 4	91,523		
<i>Pima County</i>			
Pima County Adult Education ²	167,003	222,000	226,500
Tucson USD No. 1 (2 sites)	165,968		
<i>Yuma County</i>			
Crane ESD No. 13 (2 classes)	56,824	70,300	70,300
Somerton ESD No. 11	46,508	46,500	46,500
<i>Total</i>	<u>\$999,868</u>	<u>\$ 980,000</u>	<u>\$986,000</u>

¹ Contractor had one site in 1998 and two sites in 1999 and 2000.

² Contractor had three sites and a model program in 1998 and four sites and a model program in 1999 and 2000.

Source : Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by the Arizona Department of Education.

with the program model was again addressed, and considerable variation between sites was found.¹ (See Finding I, pages 11 through 18.)

¹ This Office completed the evaluation requirements under the pilot legislation in 1997. Subsequent legislation, effective June 1, 1998, provided new evaluation requirements. This is the first report issued under the new evaluation requirements.

- **Program Funding**—The 1995 and 1996 evaluations reported on the impact of a budgeting error that resulted in a need to reduce program expenditures. Follow-up in this current report showed that the need to reduce expenditures was no longer present.
- **Inadequate Monitoring**—The 1995 and 1996 evaluations identified inadequate program monitoring and oversight by ADE as a reason for inadequate compliance with the program model. The 1997 evaluation found that ADE had subsequently made great improvements in program monitoring and providing technical assistance. Follow-up in this current report showed that program monitoring had again surfaced as a problem (see Finding I, pages 11 through 18).

Scope and Methodology

Methods used in this evaluation include analyses of tests at the beginning and end of the program, structured observations, and site reviews. Analyses were performed on reported outcomes for families in the program as noted on exit forms and by comparing scores at the end of the school year to those at the beginning of the school year on:

- Results of standardized tests designed to measure
 - a) adult basic education skills,
 - b) English language skills, and
 - c) parenting skills;
- Adult’s parenting behavior scores; and
- Children’s development scores.

All data analyzed are from the 1998-99 school year only; insufficient data was available from the 1997-1998 school year (see Finding I, pages 11 through 18). During the 1998-99 school year, structured site observations were conducted at 20 sites. As part of these visits, program trainings were observed and site documents were reviewed.

Introduction and Background

For this evaluation report, Family Literacy participants were tested to determine if they improved literacy skills. Participants from the 1998-99 school year took standardized tests upon entering the Family Literacy Program and at the end of the school year. They were given the *Language Assessment System* to assess their English language reading and writing skills and the *Comprehensive Assessment System of Academic Skills* to assess their English language listening comprehension.

To assess how these results compare with those of another type of family literacy program, the results were compared to those of participants in the 1998-99 Even Start Program. Even Start is a federally funded family literacy program that is a national leader in family literacy. Both programs adhere to models that integrate components advanced by the National Center for family Literacy (NCFL), though they do have some differences in such characteristics as age of participants, length of the instructional year, and other factors.¹ Even Start participants were administered pre- and posttests using the same instruments.

Attempts were also made to form a comparison group of adult education participants, which would allow for an assessment of how effective the state family literacy program is in contrast to stand-alone programs. These efforts were unsuccessful.

The preschool component was compared to the 1998-99 Early Childhood Block Grant program. The Early Childhood Block Grant program is a state-funded preschool program for at-risk children. Early Childhood Block Grant participants were administered pre- and posttests using the same instrument as the Family Literacy participants, the *Early Success Evaluation* (ESE). Family Literacy children's ESE scores were compared to a group of Early Childhood Block Grant children's scores. The Block Grant group was matched to the Family Literacy group by race and primary language spoken.

¹ For example, Even Start allows children to be age 0-7 (and in some cases up to 10), while Family Literacy restricts eligibility to 3- and 4-year-olds. Even Start programs operate on a year-round basis, while most Family Literacy programs operate only during the school year.

Attempts were also made to form a comparison group of Even Start preschool participants, which would allow for an assessment of how effective the state family literacy preschool component is in contrast to other family literacy programs. These efforts were unsuccessful because of inadequate Even Start ESE data.

This report again addresses issues related to compliance with program criteria (see Finding I, pages 11 through 18). It also focuses on the Family Literacy Program's effectiveness in improving the following:

- English language skills and education and employment abilities of adult participants (see Finding II, pages 19 through 24);
- Parenting skills of adult participants (see Finding III, pages 25 through 31); and
- School readiness of the three- and four-year-old preschoolers in the program (see Finding IV, pages 33 through 38).

Acknowledgements

The Auditor General and staff express appreciation to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, staff of the Arizona Department of Education's Adult Education Division, and the Family Literacy and Even Start Programs' staff and families for their cooperation and assistance.

FINDING I

ADE SHOULD INCREASE PROGRAM OVERSIGHT TO IMPROVE SITE COMPLIANCE WITH PROGRAM CRITERIA

ADE's Adult Education Division should continue recent efforts to increase program oversight to help ensure that participants are receiving quality services. Following the last program evaluation by the Auditor General's Office in 1997 (Report No. 97-22), the extent of monitoring declined. As a result, some program outcomes cannot be assessed at all, and others can be assessed only partially. In addition, a number of program sites are out of compliance with basic program standards, such as minimum enrollments and component integration. In July 1999, ADE committed additional resources to overseeing both the state-funded Family Literacy Program and the federally funded Even Start Program. Nevertheless, ADE needs to take additional steps to strengthen oversight by ensuring that all sites receive structured reviews and by using its model programs to help other sites administer tests and report scores correctly.

ADE Was Unable to Provide Sufficient Oversight to the Family Literacy Program

ADE's administrative oversight of Family Literacy sites deteriorated during school years 1997-98 and 1998-99. Previous evaluation reports had pointed out problems with the extent of ADE's monitoring, and by the 1996-97 school year, improvements had been made. Early in the program, an over-awarding of money to contractors subsequently caused budget cuts that eliminated administrative funding. Despite the lack of administrative funding, ADE improved oversight during the 1996-97 school year, which brought increased compliance with program requirements. However, these oversight efforts did not carry over into the following years.

ADE lacks administrative funding for the Family Literacy Program—Although the Family Literacy Program is administered by ADE, ADE has not used any of the state appropriation for administration. Therefore, in the past the Division of Adult Education has used Federal Leadership funds to assist in program administration. Recent changes in federal legislation have reduced the availability of this fund. ADE estimates that 10 percent of the state appropriation is needed for thorough administration of the Family Literacy program.

Lack of administrative funding lessened ADE's ability to provide adequate oversight to the Family Literacy Program—ADE's data collection for the Family Literacy Program was weakened by a lack of administrative oversight over the program during the 1997-98 and 1998-99 school years. Matters of particular concern, because of their impact on the program, are as follows:

- During the 1997-98 school year, when the Auditor General was not required to evaluate the program, ADE was solely responsible for collecting program data. These efforts were not adequate. Of the 21 sites in operation during that year, ADE collected intake information from 18 sites and exit information from only 9. Even among these sites, information was not complete. For example, only 9 sites provided complete ***parent*** pre- and posttest data, while 8 provided only pre-test data. Only 3 sites provided complete ***child*** pre- and posttest data, while 5 others provided only pretest data.

- During the 1998-99 school year, ADE completed structured visits with 5 of 23 sites operated by 13 contractors (also called "programs" by ADE). These visits involve such matters as budget and expenditure reviews, checks for compliance with legislated program requirements, and reviews of program records. Although ADE did perform less-structured site visits at 17 sites, the information collected and the degree of compliance review was, again, only partial.¹

¹ ADE did not visit one site at all (Leupp, under the Flagstaff contractor). This site has had problems meeting enrollment and eligibility requirements since the 1995-96 school year.

Inadequate Data Submission and Collection Limits Compliance with Program Requirements and Ability to Measure Program Outcomes

Sites did not report enough information to allow any evaluation of outcomes for 1997-98. Evaluators were able to gather some information for the 1998-99 school year showing that compliance problems remained. Some of these compliance problems limited evaluators' ability to assess outcomes for 1998-99.

- **No Assessment Possible for 1997-98**—Although the Auditor General is required to evaluate the Family Literacy Program only for the 1998-99 school year, previous evaluation reports compared program information from the current year to previous years. Because sites did not submit data as stipulated in their contract and ADE did not collect or was not able to collect complete program data for the 1997-98 school year, this evaluation could not make such comparisons between the 1997-98 and 1998-99 school years. The Auditor General does compare outcomes in this evaluation to the outcomes found in the 1997 evaluation.

Partial Assessment Possible for 1998-99 Shows Compliance Problems and Limits Outcome Assessment

In addition to problems with data submission and collection during the 1997-98 school year, the 1998-99 school year data was also incomplete in many instances. Because ADE's monitoring had been so limited, the available information was not complete enough to allow some aspects of the program to be assessed. The available information indicates that statutory and program compliance problems exist at some sites.

Noncompliance with testing procedures limits outcome assessment—Due to a lack of compliance with test administration and reporting requirements, this evaluation cannot report on certain program outcomes. Contracts require the sites to report information on student progress to ADE. However, sites did not administer the *Tests of Adult Basic Education* (TABE) to most

adult basic education and GED students. Because so few students took this test, evaluators were unable to determine the outcomes for participants. Project directors or their staff did not verify that the intake forms contained complete information from both adult and child participants. Further, one site failed to administer the *Early Success Evaluation* (ESE) test to child participants. Finally, ADE did not verify that forms submitted by contractors were complete.

Compliance problems exist in key areas—In addition to testing compliance problems, sites experienced compliance problems with enrollment and component integration, as Table 3 (see page 15) shows. Areas of particular concerns are as follows:

- **Enrollment**—Four sites were out of compliance with minimum enrollment requirements throughout the school year. Although sites are statutorily required to enroll between 10 and 20 families, 4 sites did not maintain a minimum enrollment of 10 families for the majority of the school year.

- **Component Integration**—Sites are required to integrate the four Family Literacy Program components: adult literacy instruction, early childhood instruction, parent and child interaction time, and parent discussion and support group. Four of the 23 sites, including one that had experienced problems in the past, were not in compliance with this requirement.

ADE Has Taken Steps to Improve Oversight

ADE has made some improvements in its oversight of the Family Literacy Program. Besides continuing to offer professional development activities, ADE also created a full-time Family Literacy Program Coordinator position beginning in July 1999.

Professional development opportunities continue—As part of its oversight role, ADE provides opportunities for program staff

Table 3
Family Literacy Program
Instances of Noncompliance by Site and Requirement
1998-99 School Year

Site	Enrollment	Eligibility	NCFL Components	Components Integration	Child Care	Transportation	Total
Cochise College							
Sierra Vista ^a							0
Douglas							0
Crane ESD No. 13							0
Crane AM Session							0
Crane PM Session							0
Flagstaff USD No. 1							
Leupp	X ^b	X					2
Killip							0
Glendale ESD No. 40 ^a				X			1
Isaac ESD No. 5							0
Isaac English for Speakers of Other Languages							0
Isaac GED							0
Literacy Volunteers of Maricopa County							
Montecito ^a	X			X			2
Wesley ^a			X	X			2
Littleton ESD No. 65 ^a	X						1
Mesa USD No. 4							0
Eisenhower							0
Longfellow							0
Lincoln							0
Phoenix Indian Center				X			1
Pima County Adult Education							
Liberty							0
Nash							0
South Tucson ^a							0
Prince ^a							0
Somerton ESD No. 11	X						1
Southwest Human Development ^a							0
Tempe ESD No. 3							0
Total	4	1	1	4	0	0	10

^a New sites in 1998-99.

^b Leupp does not meet enrollment requirements when ineligible participants are excluded from the count.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Arizona Department of Education and Family Literacy program staff.

and administrators to increase their knowledge of topics related to Family Literacy:

- ✓ A statewide Family Literacy conference is held annually for all Family Literacy staff. Over 200 teachers, administrators, staff personnel, and volunteers registered for the January 1999 conference, with representation from all Arizona Family Literacy programs.
- ✓ Also, model programs annually conduct a Family Literacy Implementation training to orient new Family Literacy Program staff.

More staff resources devoted to oversight—ADE created a position that has a direct bearing on the amount of oversight and monitoring in the Family Literacy Program. A staff member was hired in March 1999 as an Education Program Specialist with a focus on Family Literacy. This staff member's ability to provide oversight assistance to the Family Literacy program was initially limited because she was also responsible for monitoring the adult education program. In July 1999, ADE changed the position title to Family Literacy Coordinator. This new position is intended to provide oversight to both the state Family Literacy program and the federal Even Start program.

Data Collection System to Enhance Oversight

ADE is currently developing an Internet version of a student information management system that will allow it to track student progress. ADE will link the information about Family Literacy participants to the State's Student Accountability Information System (SAIS), which tracks K-12 student information. In addition to monitoring student progress, an advantage of the Internet data collection system is that it will provide uniformity in Family Literacy sites' reporting of student information.

Additional Steps Are Needed to Improve Oversight

Although the addition of a position to oversee Family Literacy represents a positive step, other actions would help ensure that oversight quality is improved and made more consistent. Specifically, ADE needs to ensure that sites receive more comprehensive oversight visits. During these visits, ADE needs to provide technical assistance on administering tests to participants.

More structured site reviews needed—During the 1998-99 school year, only five sites received a structured site review. All Family Literacy Program sites should receive such a review. Site visits should involve:

- ✓ On-site contact;
- ✓ Structured classroom observation;
- ✓ Budget and expenditure reviews;
- ✓ Checks for compliance with legislated program requirements;
- ✓ Review of data collection on student enrollment and attendance, student progression, and other statistical information required to be reported to the State; and
- ✓ Follow-up when specific deficiencies are identified.

Since sites were out of compliance with test administration and reporting requirements, ADE should also include a review of test documentation during site visits.

Test administration needs more focus—During site visit interviews by Auditor General staff, several site staff requested more training in test administration and reporting requirements. ADE has two “model programs” (Pima County Adult Education and Mesa Family Tree), that have provided training workshops on testing at the beginning of the school year. While these model programs should continue to provide such assistance, ADE should increase the focus on test administration

during site visits. As testing and reporting requirements are key to demonstrating the program's effectiveness, ADE should check to determine that tests are being administered correctly and that scores are reported correctly during site visits to family literacy programs.

Recommendations

1. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) should actively and continuously monitor sites each year for compliance with program requirements.
2. ADE should conduct comprehensive, structured site reviews with each site at least once a year to ensure sites are in compliance with all statutory, program, and contractual requirements.
3. ADE should take action against sites that are out of compliance with statutory, program, or contractual requirements.
4. ADE should provide additional technical assistance to sites related to test administration and reporting.

FINDING II

PROGRAM'S MEASURABLE ADULT EDUCATION OUTCOMES ARE GENERALLY POSITIVE

Although lack of data precludes assessing some of the program's adult education outcomes, analysis of those outcomes that can be assessed shows that the program demonstrates at least moderate results. In several respects, these results are comparable to the results of Even Start, a federally funded family literacy program. Results are most readily measurable in the teaching of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), where scores on standardized tests increased about the same in both programs. A similar analysis of test results could not be performed on adult basic education (ABE) and General Educational Development (GED) instruction, because few participants took required pre- and posttests. However, available data on progress toward completing the GED suggests that Family Literacy participants make slower progress than Even Start participants. Employment outcomes are about the same for the two programs.

Adult Education Provided in Two Basic Tracks

When they enter the Family Literacy Program, adult participants enroll in one or both of two educational tracks (ESOL or ABE/GED), depending on their goals. Of the adult education participants who completed exit forms during the 1998-99 school year, 218 indicated that they participated in the ESOL component, while 170 indicated that they participated in the ABE/GED component.

Family Literacy Participants' Rate of English Language Skill Improvement Matched Even Start Participants' Rate

The adults who participated in the ESOL component of Family Literacy in the 1998-99 school year made statistically significant

gains in reading, writing, and listening comprehension skills, though the gains in reading and writing skills were higher. Their results were comparable to improvements made by adults in the Even Start program.

Reading and writing skills improve—Participants increased their English reading and writing skills during the 1998-99 school year, as measured by reading, writing, and the combined reading/writing score on the Language Assessment System (LAS) test. In all, 149 adults had pre- and posttest scores for the LAS. Scores can range from a low of 0 to a high of 100. As Figure 1 (see page 21) shows, on this 100-point scale the 1998-99 participants' average reading gain was approximately 10 points and the average writing gain was approximately 16 points. Scores are grouped into 5 categories of competence:

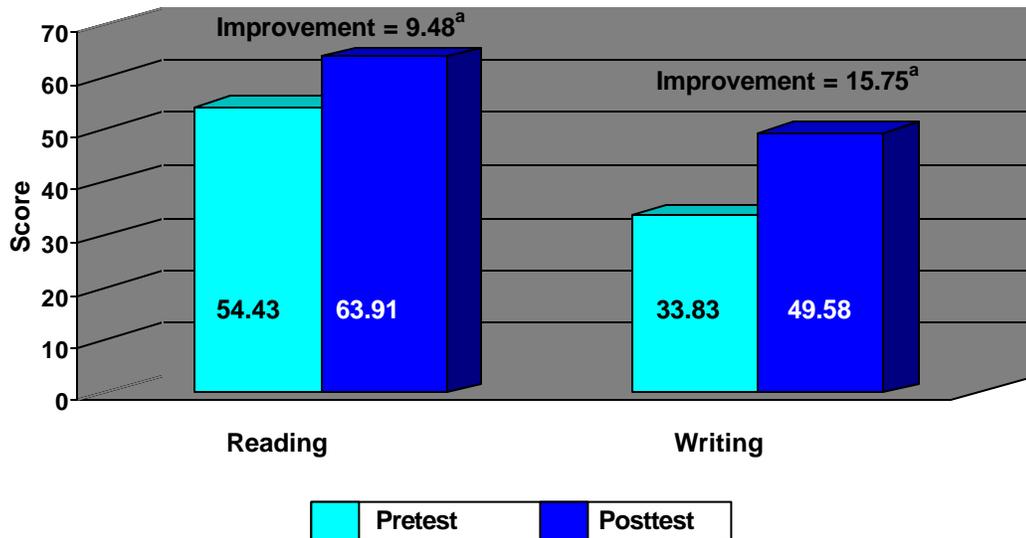
- ✓ Low beginner (0 to 20);
- ✓ High beginner (21 to 40);
- ✓ Low intermediate (41 to 60);
- ✓ High intermediate (61 to 80); and
- ✓ Competent (81 to 100).

On average, participants moved their reading scores from low intermediate to high intermediate and their writing scores from high beginner to low intermediate. The gains were statistically significant.

Smaller gains in listening comprehension—While participants improved their English listening comprehension skills, the gains were smaller than those for reading and writing skills. Listening comprehension skills are measured using the Comprehensive Assessment System of Academic Skills (CASAS). The 136 adults who took the CASAS increased their scores an average of 5 points. Although the CASAS scores increased, they remained in the “intermediate” category of competence. At the intermediate level, students can “satisfy basic survival needs and a very few routine social demands.” Once again, the gains were statistically significant.

Figure 1

**Family Literacy Program
Language Assessment System Test Scores
1998-99 School Year**



^a The improvements are statistically significant at the .01 level. That is, the probability that the average gain occurred by chance is less than 1 in 100.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Family Literacy Program staff.

Family Literacy results similar to Even Start participants and to 1997 evaluation—Even Start participants across Arizona were assessed using the same tests as Family Literacy participants. No significant differences in gains were found between the Family Literacy and Even Start participants, either on LAS or CASAS results. This suggests that the state program is having the same level of success in this area as the federal program. The results are also comparable to the Auditor General’s 1997 evaluation.

Complete Assessment Not Possible for ABE/GED Participants

Due to the lack of test data available from Family Literacy sites, complete assessment was not possible for those participants enrolled in ABE/GED. Information on participants' progress toward the GED indicates that they proceed more slowly than participants in the Even Start program. Certain differences between the two programs may help explain this result.

Basic education outcomes unknown for ABE/GED students—Progress among ABE/GED students is measured using the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE), which measures achievement in mathematics, language, reading, and spelling. Sites should have administered the TABE pre- and posttest to all adult basic education and GED students. However, it is not possible to report on adult basic education outcomes for the adults who participated in the ABE/GED component during the 1998-99 school year because too few students took the TABE. Of the 170 participants who received ABE and GED services, only 28 took both the pretest and the posttest.¹

Family Literacy participants' progress toward attaining GED is slower than Even Start participants'—While sites did not collect sufficient data to allow an evaluation of progress on standard tests, they did collect information on the number of adults who received their GED at the end of the school year. Of the 115 adults who answered the exit form question regarding their participation in the ABE/GED component during the 1998-99 school year, 4 received their GED or high school diploma since they began participating in the Family Literacy Program. Twelve others were in the process of taking the GED tests at the end of the school year but had not yet taken or passed all of them, and 90 more reported that they were working toward their GED at the end of the school year. Two adults who participated in the ABE/GED component during the 1998-99 school year have continued on to college.

¹ The 1997 evaluation found that TABE scores increased for participants in the ABE/GED component.

A comparison of results from Even Start participants showed that Even Start participants were more likely than Family Literacy participants to:

Have obtained their GED;

Be in the process of taking the test; or

Be attending a community college or university.

Thirty-one percent of Even Start participants achieved these outcomes, compared to 16 percent of Family Literacy participants. The difference between the two programs on GED and higher education outcomes is statistically significant.

Certain differences in program participants and program characteristics may help explain these results.

- **Demographic differences**—There are a number of demographic factors that could account for the differences between the Family Literacy and Even Start programs on GED and higher education outcomes. The Family Literacy participants may have less time and resources to devote to studying for and completing their GED. Specifically:

Twice as many Family Literacy participants (10 percent) as Even Start participants (5 percent) are single parents with children.

Family Literacy participants had slightly less average income than Even Start participants did. Thirty-six percent of Family Literacy participants made less than \$10,000 a year, in contrast to 23 percent of Even Start participants.

Also, more Family Literacy participants (13 percent) were working full-time while they were enrolled in the program than Even Start participants (7 percent).

- **Program duration differences**—Even Start participants may be more successful at attaining their GED because the Even Start Program engages participants for a longer duration than the Family Literacy Program does.

Even Start Program	Family Literacy Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Provides services on a year-round basis for a minimum of three years.✓ Participants are eligible to participate with a child from birth up to age 10.✓ Participants participated in the program for a median of 224 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Provides services during the regular school year only (September through May);✓ Participants must have a 3- or 4-year-old-child to remain eligible for the program; and✓ Participants participated in the program for a median of 144 hours.

Participants' Entry into Workforce Is Comparable for Both Programs

Although many participants are focusing on raising families and therefore not seeking employment, during the 1998-99 school year, Family Literacy participants entered the workforce at the same rate as Even Start participants. At the beginning of the 1998-99 school year, 18 percent of participants were employed either full-time or part-time. By the end of the school year, that figure had grown to 34 percent. There was no significant difference in employment outcomes between Family Literacy and Even Start participants, which is similar to the results found in the 1997 evaluation.

FINDING III

ADULT PARTICIPANTS SHOW IMPROVEMENTS IN PARENTING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

Adults enrolled in the parenting skills component of the Family Literacy Program improved both their attitudes about parenting and the parenting behaviors they reported. Most parents entered the program with favorable parenting attitudes and made small improvements; parents who entered the program with unfavorable parenting attitudes improved the most. On average, however, the federally funded Even Start Program had a greater impact on parenting attitudes. Both programs had essentially the same impact on parenting behaviors.

Program Seeks to Improve Both Attitudes and Behaviors

The Arizona Family Literacy Program focuses on developing parenting skills through two components:

Parent and Child Together (PACT), and

Parenting group discussion.

These components are intended to help parents help their children learn through play and more structured activities and provide parents with opportunities to learn how to best meet their young children's developmental needs. These components are intended to develop both:

- ✓ Positive attitudes about parenting; and
- ✓ Positive parenting behaviors.

To assess the extent to which the Family Literacy Program impacted adults' parenting attitudes and behaviors, participants

were pre- and posttested on two instruments. Even Start participants were given the same pre- and posttest instruments to determine if there was any difference in the two programs' effectiveness.

- **Attitudes**—Attitudes were measured by using the **Parent as a Teacher Inventory (PAAT)**. PAAT identifies favorable qualities and realms in which personal growth is needed in regard to parenting children ages 3 to 9. PAAT items include a variety of statements on:

What parents want or expect of their child,

How they interact with their child, and

What actions are taken in response to specific child behavior.

The responses are grouped into five areas with subscores computed for each area and a total score. The five areas are:

Creativity—parental acceptance of the child's creativity and willingness to encourage its development;

Frustration—parental frustration with the child and focus of the frustration;

Control—parental feelings about the need to control the child's behavior;

Play—parental understanding of play and its influence on child development; and

Teaching/Learning—parental views about child development and their ability to provide a supportive home environment.

- **Behaviors**—The parents' behavior was measured by using a **Behavior Frequencies Assessment (BFA)**, which was developed specifically for the Family Literacy Program evaluation. The BFA is a self-report instrument on which parents indicate how frequently they engage in ten different

behaviors, such as reading to their children and helping their children with homework.

Parenting Attitudes Improve, but Not as Much as Those of Even Start Participants'

Family Literacy participants improved their parenting attitudes, but not as much as Even Start participants improved. Most Family Literacy parents made modest gains in parenting attitudes. However, the parents who began the Family Literacy program with more unfavorable parenting attitudes made larger gains. Average improvement in parenting attitudes was greater for Even Start participants than for Family Literacy participants.

- **Most parents show modest gains in parenting attitudes**—Family Literacy parents entered the program with good attitudes overall. The 213 parents who were pre- to posttested during the 1998-99 school year entered with an average pre-test score of 138.6 on a scale of 0 to 200, well above the 125-point cutoff for “favorable” parenting attitudes. They made small but statistically significant improvements in their total score, increasing it to an average of 143.3. This outcome was similar to results reported in the 1997 evaluation.
- **Parents entering with unfavorable attitudes show the largest improvement**—Parents who entered the program with unfavorable parenting attitudes made the largest gains on the PAAT. The 13 parents who entered the Program with PAAT scores below 125 points gained an average of 19 points. Their average pretest score was 120.77, and their average posttest score was 139.23.
- **Average improvement greater for Even Start participants**—Comparison of PAAT results for Family Literacy Program participants and Even Start participants shows that Even Start had greater impact on parenting attitudes. Even Start participants' average scores were 136.08 on the pretest and 144.45 on the posttest, an improvement close to

4 points higher than that of Family Literacy participants. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant. Even though both groups were initially scoring in the “favorable” range, this suggests that the federal program has a higher rate of success improving parenting attitudes than the state program. This outcome differs from the 1997 evaluation, which found no statistically significant difference between Family Literacy and Even Start participants’ results.

Increases in Parenting Behaviors Were Similar Across Programs

Family Literacy parents made statistically significant improvement in 9 out of 10 of the BFA measures from pre- to posttest, making the biggest gains in the following areas:

- ✓ Going to school activities,
- ✓ Talking to their children’s teachers,
- ✓ Volunteering to help with school activities,
- ✓ Helping their children with homework, and
- ✓ Talking to their children about school.

Of these, the highest scores were in helping children with homework and talking to children about school (see Table 4, page 29). It appears that the program is most useful in increasing parents’ involvement with their children in activities directly related to school.

Comparison of changes for Family Literacy Program participants and Even Start participants on the BFA shows that both programs have essentially the same impacts on parenting behaviors. Both groups showed improvement from pre- to posttest. There are no statistically significant differences between the two groups on any of the BFA subscore pre- to posttest results.

Table 4**Family Literacy Program
Changes in Parenting Behaviors
1998-99 School Year**

Behavior	Number of Days		Improvement
	Beginning	End	
Number of days per week parents:			
Talk about children's day	5.40	5.84	.44 ^a
Read or look at book with children	4.25	4.65	.45 ^b
Let children see them writing	4.47	4.86	.39 ^b
Take children to the library	0.85	1.23	.38 ^a
Play with children	5.74	5.78	.04 ^c
Number of days per month parents:			
Go to a school activity	1.70	2.85	.15 ^b
Volunteer for a school activity	2.17	4.56	2.39 ^a
Help children with homework	10.22	13.69	3.47 ^a
Talk to children's teacher	3.24	5.46	2.22 ^a
Talk to children about school	11.72	16.56	4.84 ^a

^a The improvements are statistically significant at the .01 level. That is, the probability that the average gain occurred by chance is less than 1 in 100.

^b The improvements are statistically significant at the .05 level. That is, the probability that the average gain occurred by chance is less than 5 in 100.

^c Not statistically significant.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Family Literacy Program staff.

**Future Evaluations Will Continue to
Examine Trends of Family Literacy and
Even Start on Adult Outcomes**

With the exception of two outcomes, the Family Literacy and Even Start programs are beginning to show a consistent and similar pattern of results as they pertain to adult-related outcomes. However, because the levels of oversight and program compliance differed during the two periods in which the

evaluations were conducted, the next evaluation conducted by the Office of the Auditor General will examine trends and outcomes as they relate to levels of oversight and program compliance.

Overall, this evaluation found that adult-related outcomes for Family Literacy participants are moderately positive and similar to Even Start adults' performance in three areas:¹

- Development of English language skills;
- Entry into the workforce; and
- Development of parenting behaviors.

However, in contrast to the 1997 evaluation, there were two areas in which the Even Start participants' performance exceeded the Family Literacy participants' performance (see Table 5, page 31). These areas were:

- Progress toward attaining a GED; and
- Development of parenting attitudes.

Future evaluations will examine whether greater oversight and program compliance on the part of the Family Literacy program will improve the adult-related outcomes.

¹ Adult basic education skills were not assessed in this current evaluation due to lack of data. The 1997 evaluation found that Family Literacy participants' performance in adult basic education was positive and similar to the Even Start participants' performance.

Table 5

**Family Literacy Program
Comparison to Even Start Program Improvements in Adult Outcomes
1996-97 and 1998-99 School Years**

Areas of Adult Outcomes	1996-97	1998-99
Adult Basic Education	Comparable	Unable to determine ¹
General Educational Development	Comparable	Less than Even Start
English language skills	Comparable	Comparable
Entry into workforce	Comparable	Comparable
Parenting attitudes	Comparable	Less than Even Start
Parenting behaviors	Comparable	Comparable

¹ Inadequate data.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Family Literacy Program and Even Start Program staff.

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FINDING IV

PRESCHOOL PARTICIPANTS MAKE PROGRESS, BUT LESS THAN EARLY CHILDHOOD BLOCK GRANT PARTICIPANTS

The Family Literacy Program's preschool component continues to have an impact on increasing children's readiness to succeed in kindergarten. Analysis of program children's scores on a kindergarten readiness assessment shows that, on average, they increased their development by three to six months in all developmental areas. Both the Family Literacy and Early Childhood Block Grant programs had essentially the same impact on language skills. However, the Early Childhood Block Grant preschool program had a greater impact on motor and problem-solving skills.

Program's Preschool Education Component Aims to Enhance Kindergarten Readiness

The Family Literacy Program strives to improve the school readiness of the 3- and 4-year-old children in the program by providing developmentally appropriate preschool education. To assess the degree to which this education affected children's progress toward school readiness, children were pre- and posttested on the **Early Success Evaluation (ESE)**. Chosen for the Family Literacy Program evaluation because of its developmentally appropriate testing methodology, the ESE provides a total score and subscores in three areas:

- **Problem Solving**—measures the processes by which children acquire and use cognitive skills, such as the:
 - ✓ Ability to classify objects,
 - ✓ Understanding of numbers,

- ✓ Understanding of the positions of objects, and

- ✓ Ability to order and compare objects.

- **Motor Skills**—measures:

- ✓ Gross motor skills, such as balance and coordination, and

- ✓ Fine motor skills, such as grasp, release, and manipulations.

- **Language**—measures stages of vocabulary and sentence structure, expression, and comprehension.

In previous Auditor General evaluations, the same test was administered to two comparison groups of children. The development of children in the Family Literacy Program was compared to the development of children who were not in any program and children who were in the Even Start program. Family Literacy preschool participants had a developmental rate that averaged four months ahead of the group that was not in any program, and the comparison of progress between Family Literacy and Even Start children suggested the Family Literacy children may be doing slightly better. In the current evaluation attempts were made to administer the ESE to two comparison groups of children: Even Start and Early Childhood Block Grant. However, Even Start ESE scores are unavailable for use in this evaluation because too few of the children in that program are preschool age. This year, the ESE was administered to a comparison group of children enrolled in the state-funded Early Childhood Block Grant preschool program. The Early Childhood Block Grant preschool is a stand-alone preschool program rather than a family literacy program.

Increases in Language Skills Were Similar Across Programs

Family Literacy children's average language pretest scores were 12.80 on a scale of 1-29, well below the kindergarten readiness cutoff of 20 points. They made small but statistically significant

improvements in their language skills score, increasing it to an average of 17.07 on the posttest. Their language skills development increased by six months; from three years, ten months on the pretest to four years, four months on the posttest.

Comparison of changes for Family Literacy Program participants and Early Childhood Block Grant preschool participants on the ESE shows that both programs have essentially the same impacts on language skills. Both groups showed improvement from pre- to posttest.

Family Literacy Participants’ Problem-Solving and Motor Skills Improve, but Not as Much as Block Grant Participants’

As shown in Table 6 (see page 37), the 85 children who had pretest scores from the start of the 1998-99 school year and posttest results from the end of the school year made small but statistically significant improvements toward “kindergarten readiness” in their problem-solving and motor skills assessed by the ESE. However, Early Childhood Block Grant preschool participants made greater improvements in their problem-solving and motor skills. Certain differences between the two programs may help explain this result.

Children show modest gains in problem-solving skills—Family Literacy preschool participants entered with an average problem-solving pre-test score of 15.4 on a scale of 1-34, well below the 25-point cutoff for “kindergarten readiness.” They made small but statistically significant improvement in their problem-solving score, increasing it to an average of 20.4. Their test scores were converted to age equivalents, which measure the age at which the children are performing. Children in the Family Literacy Program increased their development in problem-solving abilities by five months; from four years, one month on the pre-test to four years, six months on the posttest.

Average problem-solving improvement greater for Early Childhood Block Grant Preschool participants—Comparison of ESE results for Family Literacy Program participants and Early

Childhood Block Grant preschool participants shows that the Block Grant program had a greater impact on problem-solving skills. Block Grant preschool participants' average problem-solving scores were 15.9 on the pretest and 22.8 on the posttest—an improvement close to 2 points higher than that of Family Literacy participants. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant. This suggests that the Early Childhood Block Grant preschool program has a higher success rate at improving problem-solving skills than the Family Literacy preschool program component.

Children show modest gains in motor skills—Family Literacy preschool participants began the 1998-99 school year with an average motor skills score of 16.5 on a scale of 1-24, well below the 22-point cutoff for “kindergarten readiness.” They made small but statistically significant improvement in their motor skills score, increasing it to an average of 18.5 at the end of the program. Their development in motor skills increased by three months; from four years, four months on the pretest to four years, seven months on the posttest.

Average motor improvement greater for Early Childhood Block Grant Preschool participants—The Early Childhood Block Grant program also had a greater impact on motor skills. Block Grant preschool participants' average motor scores were 15.8 on the pretest and 19.8 on the posttest, an improvement 2 points higher than that of Family Literacy participants. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant. This suggests that the Early Childhood Block Grant preschool program also has a higher success rate at improving motor skills than the Family Literacy preschool program component.

Certain differences between the age of participants in the two programs may explain differences in improvement—The children in the Family Literacy preschool component were slightly younger on average than those in the Early Childhood Block Grant preschool program. The average age of children in the Family Literacy Program was 4.2 years, as compared to 4.6 years for children in the Early Childhood Block Grant Program. In addition, there was more variation in ages among the Family Literacy preschool participants than the Block Grant participants. Specifically, 28 percent of the Family Literacy children were under four years old at the beginning of the 1998-99

school year, compared to only 3 percent of the Block Grant preschoolers. These differences may provide a partial explanation for the differences in the group scores.

Table 6

**Family Literacy Program
Early Success Evaluation
Comparison of Family Literacy and Early Childhood Block Grant Program Participants'
Improvements in Average Test Scores
1998-99 School Year**

Test Component	Participants' Average Gain in Test Scores	
	Family Literacy	Early Childhood Block Grant
Language skills ¹	4.27	5.49
Motor skills ²	1.99	3.98
Problem-solving skills ³	4.98	6.91
Total improvement in average test scores ³	<u>9.90</u>	<u>12.48</u>

¹ The difference between the two groups is not statistically significant.

² The difference between the two groups is statistically significant at the .01 level. That is, the probability that the average gain occurred by chance is less than 1 in 100.

³ The difference between the two groups is statistically significant at the .05 level. That is, the probability that the average gain occurred by chance is less than 5 in 100.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Family Literacy and Early Childhood Block Grant Program staff.

**Future Evaluations Will Continue to
Examine the Relative Effectiveness of
the Family Literacy Program in Increasing
Kindergarten Readiness Skills**

Overall, this evaluation found that Family Literacy preschool participants improved in language, motor, problem-solving, and total skills. However, as Table 7 (see page 38) illustrates, the Early Childhood Block Grant preschool comparison group outperformed the Family Literacy participants in all but one area: language skills. In comparison, Family Literacy participants

outperformed the Even Start comparison group in two areas in the 1997 evaluation: language and total readiness. Therefore, future evaluations conducted by the Office of the Auditor General will continue to examine the relative effectiveness of the Early Childhood Block Grant Program and the Family Literacy Program in increasing kindergarten readiness skills.

Results from the 1999 evaluation—Results from the 1999 evaluation show that on average Family Literacy preschool participants increased their development in all developmental areas: language, problem-solving, motor skills, and total readiness. However, the Early Childhood Block Grant preschool program had a greater impact in three of these areas: motor, problem-solving and total readiness. Both programs had essentially the same impact on language skills.

Results from the 1997 evaluation—In 1997 the Family Literacy preschool component had an impact in increasing children’s development in all four areas, and Family Literacy participants outperformed the comparison group in two areas: language and total readiness. The comparison program in the 1997 evaluation was the Even Start program, a similar Family Literacy program.

Table 7

**Family Literacy Program
Improvements in Child Outcomes Comparison to Even Start Program 1996-97 and
Early Childhood Block Grant Programs 1998-99**

Child Outcomes	1996-97	1998-99
Language skills	Greater than Even Start	Comparable to Early Childhood Block Grant
Motor skills	Comparable to Even Start	Less than Early Childhood Block Grant
Problem-solving skills	Comparable to Even Start	Less than Early Childhood Block Grant
Total skills	Greater than Even Start	Less than Early Childhood Block Grant

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Family Literacy Program and Even Start Program and Early Childhood Block Grant Program staff.

STATUTORY EVALUATION COMPONENTS

Pursuant to Laws 1998, Chapter 295, §8, the Office of the Auditor General is required to include the following information in the annual program evaluation.

C.1. Information on the number and characteristics of the program participants.

The following participant information is presented in composite from all 23 sites for the 1998-99 school year.

- **Program Families**—Typically, the family members directly served by the Family Literacy Program include a mother and her three- or four-year-old child. Occasionally a mother may have more than one child in the preschool component (a three- and a four-year-old, or twins). In addition, there are some cases in which a grandparent, aunt, or father is served by the adult education component. There are also several cases of more than one adult from the family being enrolled in the adult education component. Eighty-five percent of the families in the program have three or fewer children.
- **Program Parents**—The majority of adult participants are female, with only 7 percent being male. Further, the majority of adult participants are younger than 40 (93 percent). Participants' ages range from 16 to 68, with a median age of 28.
- **Program Children**—Thirty-six percent of the children served are three-year-olds, and 57 percent are four-year-olds. Sites enrolled some children who did not meet the eligibility requirement of being 3 or 4 years old. Two percent of the children were under three years old, and 5 percent were over four years old.

- **Number of Enrolled Participants**—Throughout the 1998-99 school year, 23 sites enrolled 402 families. By statute, family literacy sites target between 10 and 20 families per site. In an attempt to maintain the minimum enrollment of 10 families, sites enrolled participants continuously throughout the year as enrollment fluctuated due to attrition. Out of 402 families, 204 completed the program.
- **Family Ethnicity**—The majority of families enrolled are Hispanic (89 percent). Other ethnicities represented include 5 percent White, non-Hispanic; 3 percent Native American; 2 percent Asian/Pacific Islanders; and less than 1 percent African-American. “Others” or “unknown” make up the balance. English language literacy is low, with only 15 percent of the families reporting English as the primary language spoken at home.
- **Family Status**—Participants come from poor and undereducated (have not graduated from high school) backgrounds. Sixty-two percent of the families have incomes of \$15,000 or less, and 29 percent of the adult participants have less than a ninth-grade education.
- **Employment Status**—Though 74 percent of participants report that their primary source of family income is wages, a vast majority (82 percent) of participants are unemployed. Fifteen percent state that government assistance is their primary source of income.
- **Living Arrangement**—Seventy-six percent of the participants in the program describe their living situation as a couple with children. An additional 14 percent live in extended families, and 10 percent are single parents with children.

C.2. Information on contractors and program service providers.

- **Thirteen Program Contractors**—See Table 1 (page 5) in the Introduction and Background for a list of these contractors.

- **Two Model and Training Resource Contractors—** Mesa Unified School District's Family Tree Project and Pima County Adult Education served as model and training programs. Mesa Unified School District serves 12 sites in Arizona's northern region (including 10 sites in Maricopa County and 2 sites in Coconino County), and Pima County Adult Education serves the remaining 11 southern Arizona sites (including 4 sites in Pima County, 3 sites in Yuma County, 2 sites in Cochise County, and 2 sites in Maricopa County).

- **Program service providers given extensive opportunities for family literacy training—**A statewide Family Literacy conference was held in January 1999. This conference provided professional development and networking opportunities for all Family Literacy staff. The comprehensive statewide training was a collaboration between the Arizona Department of Education/Division of Adult Education, model programs from Mesa and Tucson, and the Even Start Program. In addition to this conference, Arizona's Family Literacy Program staff received training in implementing a family literacy program prior to the beginning of the 1997-98 and 1998-99 school years. The training was provided by each of the two model programs.

The above trainings were supplemented by training sessions throughout the year and on-site training conducted by the two model programs.

C.3. Information on program revenues and expenditures.

Since its existence, appropriations to the Family Literacy Program have been approximately \$1 million each year. They have been nonreverting since 1998. (See Table 2, page 7, for information on contractors and contract amounts.)

C.4. Information on the number and characteristics of enrollment and disenrollment.

The 23 sites served 402 families over the course of the 1998-99 school year. The sites have retained 51 percent¹ of the participants for the entire school year; however, there is great variability among these sites as far as their success in retaining participants. Sites had retention rates ranging from 18 to 100 percent for the 1998-99 school year. The sites that have been in existence for a longer time tend to have better retention rates. (See Table 8, page 43.)

Of the families who exited the program prior to the end of the school year, 126 indicated the reason they did so. Some exits were for positive reasons, such as meeting program goals and finding employment. (See Table 9, page 44.)

Retention rates for the Family Literacy sites are similar to family literacy programs across the country. As noted in the 1997 evaluation report, the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) reports that programs across the country have a 50 percent rate of attrition, and national studies of program effects are reported on an average of only 10 percent of the families with matched pre- and posttest scores.

¹ Percentage is based on sites with complete posttest and exit data. Since some participants were not enrolled in the program for the entire year, the reported rate is deflated.

Statutory Evaluation Components

Table 8

**Family Literacy Program
Number and Percentage of Families Completing Programs by Site
1996-97 and 1998-99 School Years
(Unaudited)**

Site	1996-97			1998-99		
	Number Served	Number Completed	Percentage Completed	Number Served	Number Completed	Percentage Completed
Cochise College ¹	19	11	58%			
Douglas ²				12	8	67%
Sierra Vista ²				22	9	41
Crane ESD No. 13 (2 classes)	26	18	69	32	19	59
Flagstaff USD No. 1						
Killip	22	12	55	21	10	48
Leupp ³	23	NA	NA	16	7	44
Isaac ESD No. 5 (2 Classes)	32	24	75	42	25	60
Literacy Volunteers of						
Maricopa County ¹	23	11	48			
Montecito ²				8	4	50
Wesley ²				18	7	39
Mesa USD No. 4						
Eisenhower	29	11	38	15	9	60
Lincoln	28	11	39	17	7	41
Longfellow	24	16	67	21	16	76
Pima County Adult Education						
Liberty	18	16	89	23	7	30
Nash	15	12	80	21	13	62
Ochoa ¹	16	6	38			
Prince ²				17	3	18
South Tucson ²				19	11	58
Tucson USD No. 1						
Lawrence ¹	11	5	45			
Pueblo Gardens ¹	20	6	30			
Tucson High School ¹	18	6	33			
Wakefield ¹	27	13	48			
Contractors with single classroom sites						
Glendale ESD No. 40 ²				18	7	39
Littleton ESD No. 65 ²				4	4	100
Phoenix Indian Center ³	13	NA	NA	21	9	43
Pinon USD No. 4 ¹	39	7	18			
Red Mesa USD No. 27 ¹	29	22	76			
Somerton ESD No. 11	28	11	39	16	7	44
Southwest Human Development ²				22	10	45
Tempe ESD No. 3	<u>22</u>	<u>6</u>	27	<u>17</u>	<u>12</u>	71
Total	<u>482</u>	<u>224</u>		<u>402</u>	<u>204</u>	
Average			50%			51%

¹ One site for the 1996-97 school year and 2 sites for the 1998-99 school year.

² Contractor for the 1998-99 school year but not for the 1996-97 school year.

³ Completion data unavailable.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Family Literacy Program staff.

Table 9

**Family Literacy Program
Number of Families Who Left the Program
and Reasons for Leaving by Percentage
1998-99 School Year**

Reason	Number	Percentage
Met goals or completed eligible planned education	27	21.4%
Found employment that prevented further participation	27	21.4
Moved out of area	18	14.3
Conflicts or problems prevented further participation	15	12.0
Family crisis prevented further participation	14	11.1
Dropped, owing to poor attendance or incomplete participation	9	7.1
Other reason	8	6.3
Stopped participating, owing to a lack of interest	5	4.0
Switched programs	2	1.6
Reason unknown	<u>1</u>	<u>0.8</u>
Total	<u>126</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Family Literacy Program staff.

C.5. Information on the average cost for each family in the program.

Budgets required to operate a family literacy program can vary depending on the number of days per week the program operated, the program size, and the cost of conducting the program in a community. The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) estimates that one full-time program requires an annual budget of \$50,000 to \$90,000 in a rural area and \$75,000 to \$125,000 in an urban area (telephone conversation between NCFL staff and Auditor General Staff, 12/9/99).

- **Cost per family**—The average cost per family is \$2,438 for the 1998-99 school year. Auditor General staff calculated the cost per family using state monies awarded to contractors for the 1998-99 school year and the total number of families participating throughout the school year.
- **Comparable programs' cost comparisons**—The Arizona Family Literacy Program and the federally funded Even Start Program provide similar family

literacy services to families. The Even Start Program provides family literacy services at a cost of roughly \$3,000 per family¹ compared to the Arizona Family Literacy Program that had an average cost of \$2,438 during the 1998-99 school year. The federally funded Head Start Program provided preschool services at an average cost of \$5,147 per child in fiscal year 1998.²

C.6. Information concerning progress of program participants in achieving goals and objectives.

- Finding II (see pages 19 through 24) describes the progress adult participants made in improving their English language skills, attaining GEDs, and obtaining employment. Adults made gains in their English language skills, and 18 percent of participants whose goal was to obtain their GED either successfully completed it or were in the process of taking the test. Additionally, at the end of the 1998-99 school year, 34 percent of the participants were employed either full- or part-time or through a job training program and an additional 11 percent were enrolled in a vocational program.

- Finding III (see pages 25 through 31) describes the progress adult participants have made in improving their parenting skills. Adult participants made improvements in their parenting behaviors and parenting attitudes. Improvements in parenting behaviors were slightly greater than improvements in parenting attitudes. Most parents entered the program with favorable parenting attitudes.

- Finding IV (see pages 33 through 38) describes the developmental gains that the participating children are making as a result of program participation. The

¹ St. Pierre, R., B. Gamse, J. Alamprese, T. Rimdzius and F. Tao. *Even Start: Evidence from the Past and a Look to the Future*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service.

² Head Start Bureau (1999). *1999 Head Start Fact Sheet*. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services.

Family Literacy Program continues to have an impact on increasing the kindergarten readiness of pre-school participants.

In addition to the progress reported in Findings II through IV, participants have achieved other outcomes. For example, 188 participants received library cards, 32 participants earned their First Aid card, and 32 participants received CPR certification. Ten participants became newly registered voters while in the program. Additionally, 3 participants became U.S. citizens while in the program, and 39 worked on acquiring their citizenship. Further, ADE reports that for fiscal year 1999, participants completed 11,890 Community Service hours, or approximately 17 percent of the total hours of participation. The required Community Service benchmark is volunteer hours equal to at least 10 percent of the total participation hours. A report documenting this activity was submitted by the ADE to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House on December 31, 1999.

C.7. Information on any long-term savings associated with program services.

When the Family Literacy Program was continued, information on long-term savings was added as a new element of the evaluation. For this report, evaluators studied short- and long-term benefits provided by the program. Although program costs were identified, evaluators were unable to estimate short- or long-term savings associated with the program because many of the program's benefits, such as improvements in child development and improvements in adults' skills that can help them obtain employment, are not amenable for translation into dollars. Additionally, other potential program benefits, such as decreasing a child's chances of being retained in school, are long-term and cannot be measured at this time.

Eventually, the program could result in increased long-term benefits to society through helping adults complete school, through increased wages and through tax reve-

nues paid by those who obtain employment after the program assists them in developing job-related skills. In this evaluation, 34 percent of participants were employed at the end of the school year. Additionally, 16 percent of program participants had passed all or some of their GED, or were attending a community college or university at the end of the school year. Studies have shown that the acquisition of a GED translates to as much as a 19 percent increase in earnings over the earnings of a high school dropout.¹

As part of future studies, evaluators will be collecting data on long-term savings and will report this information as appropriate in future years. OAG evaluators will attempt to follow up on participants for several years after they complete the Family Literacy Program. We will attempt to collect data on higher education and work experience after a participant attains a GED, and on how these achievements affect income. Attempts will also be made to collect data on former preschool participants to measure the program's impact on school retention.

C.8. Recommendations regarding program administration.

In Finding I (see pages 11 through 18), it is recommended that:

- ✓ ADE actively and continuously monitor sites for compliance with program requirements.
- ✓ ADE should conduct comprehensive, structured site reviews with each site at least once a year to ensure sites are in compliance with all statutory, program, and contractual requirements.

¹ Tyler, J., Murnane, R., and J. Willett (February 1, 1998). *Estimating the Impact of the GED on the Earnings of Young Dropouts Using a Series of Natural Experiments*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 6391.

- ✓ ADE should take action against sites that are out of compliance with statutory, program, or contractual requirements.
- ✓ ADE should provide additional technical assistance to sites related to test administration and reporting.

C.9. Recommendations regarding informational materials distributed through the programs.

Family Literacy Program sites offer a variety of educational materials for families. No recommendations specific to the informational materials are made.

Sites offer an assortment of the following informational materials for participants: computers, reference materials, adult and children's books that are available for parents to check out with their children from the site, magazines, audio materials, parenting information, community resource information, GED study materials, dictionaries, science informational materials, English language books, and social service information.

E. Determine which program delivery models are most effective in meeting program goals.

A variety of program delivery models were effective in meeting program goals. The ADE contracted with a variety of providers for the Family Literacy Program. Contractors include school districts, community-based organizations, an adult education provider, and a college. These contractors all provide the same four Family Literacy components. The sites that were most effective in meeting program goals came from each of the four types of providers: a community-based organization (Literacy Volunteers of Maricopa County), an adult education provider (Pima County Adult Education), a school district (Mesa Unified School District), and a community college (Cochise College).

No program model (site) stood out as being most effective; rather, each site met different goals with varying success, as Table 10 (see page 50) indicates.

The Montecito site, from the community-based contractor's program model, was most effective in meeting the Family Literacy Program goal of improving the parenting skills of adult participants by improving their parenting attitudes. Monticeto was also most effective in meeting the goal of improving the literacy skills of adult participants by improving their ability to read and write English. The South Tucson site, from the adult education contractor's program model, was most effective in meeting the goal of improving the literacy skills of adult participants by improving their English listening comprehension skills. Both the Lincoln site, from the school district contractor, and the Douglas site, from the college contractor's program model, were most effective in meeting the goal of improving the parenting skills of adult participants by improving their parenting behaviors.

Table 10
Family Literacy Program
Sites Ranked in Comparison with Each Other by Improvement on Test Measures
1998-99 School Year

Delivery Model and Site	Comprehensive Assessment System of Academic Skills	Language Assessment System	Parent as a Teacher	Behavior Frequency Assessment (Monthly)	Behavior Frequency Assessment (Weekly)
School district programs					
Crane	15	8	18	13	7
Killip	14	13	17	10	15
Glendale	3	12	11	NA	NA
Isaac	9	6	6	12	14
Littleton	2	3	2	6	4
Eisenhower	NA	NA	12	7	2
Longfellow	12	15	8	4	13
Lincoln	NA	NA	7	2	1
Community-based organization programs					
Montecito	8	1	1	NA	9
Wesley	7	2	9	9	17
Phoenix Indian Center	10	7	14	3	10
Southwest Human Development	5	14	15	14	8
Adult education programs					
Liberty	11	4	3	16	3
Nash	6	5	13	15	6
South Tucson	1	9	4	5	12
Prince	4	11	16	8	5
Community College programs					
Sierra Vista	NA	NA	10	11	16
Douglas	13	10	5	1	11

Note: Leupp, Somerton, and Tempe, categorized as school district programs, had incomplete data or problems with the data. Consequently, these three sites are not included in this table.

NA = Data not available.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data provided by Family Literacy sites.

AGENCY RESPONSE



State of Arizona
Department of Education

Lisa Graham Keegan
Superintendent of
Public Instruction

February 28, 2000

Ms. Debbie Davenport
Auditor General
State of Arizona
2910 North 44th Street Suite 410
Phoenix, AZ 85018

Dear Ms. Davenport:

I am responding to your agency's final evaluation of the Arizona Family Literacy Program. A meeting to review the report draft was held in our office with members of my staff on February 7, 2000. The discussion was very beneficial.

The report contains four recommendations for program improvement and our agency addresses the recommendations as follows:

1. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) should actively and continuously monitor sites each year for compliance with program requirements.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and a different method of dealing with the finding will be implemented. ADE will continue to actively monitor programs for compliance, and is developing a comprehensive program accountability system, which includes an electronic data collection application, to assist in this effort.

2. ADE should conduct a comprehensive, structured site review with each site at least once a year to ensure sites are in compliance with all statutory, program and contractual requirements.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and a different method of dealing with the finding will be implemented. ADE will continue to review programs and their sites. ADE will determine the best design and implementation of that monitoring. An intensive, comprehensive, structured site review each year will interfere with the provision of services at the sites. ADE will continue to visit each site and provide technical assistance as needed. The comprehensive accountability system will assist in ensuring program compliance.

3. ADE should take action against sites that are repeatedly out of compliance with statutory, program and contractual requirements.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will continue to be implemented. ADE has taken appropriate action with sites repeatedly out of compliance. Two sites that were out of compliance in Fiscal Year 1999 are no longer operating. The program administering those sites requested a change of location to a community with stronger support for Family Literacy.

4. ADE should provide additional technical assistance to sites related to test administration and reporting.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented. Additional assistance by ADE has already been planned in this area.

Our agency extends our appreciation to your staff for the assistance provided in the evaluation of the Arizona Family Literacy program.

Sincerely,



Lisa Graham Keegan
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Cc: Brian Jones
Jennifer Mabry
Karen Liersch
Lois Schneider

Other Performance Audit Reports Issued Within the Last 12 Months

99-5	Department of Gaming	99-17	Department of Health Services’ Tobacco Education and Prevention Program
99-6	Department of Health Services— Emergency Medical Services	99-18	Department of Health Services— Bureau of Epidemiology and Disease Control Services
99-7	Arizona Drug and Gang Policy Council	99-19	Department of Health Services— Sunset Factors
99-8	Department of Water Resources	99-20	Arizona State Board of Accountancy
99-9	Department of Health Services— Arizona State Hospital	99-21	Department of Environmental Quality—Aquifer Protection Permit Program, Water Quality Assurance Revolving Fund Program, and Underground Storage Tank Program
99-10	Residential Utility Consumer Office/Residential Utility Consumer Board	99-22	Arizona Department of Transportation A+B Bidding
99-11	Department of Economic Security— Child Support Enforcement	00-1	Healthy Families Program
99-12	Department of Health Services— Division of Behavioral Health Services	00-2	Behavioral Health Services—Inter- agency Coordination of Services
99-13	Board of Psychologist Examiners		
99-14	Arizona Council for the Hearing Impaired		
99-15	Arizona Board of Dental Examiners		
99-16	Department of Building and Fire Safety		

Future Performance Audit Reports

Family Builders Pilot Program

Department of Public Safety—Aviation Division