



The Value of Texas Even Start Family Literacy Programs

Even Start Family Literacy funds are allocated by the U.S. Department of Education under the authority of the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy (P.L. 100-297), Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110). The Texas Education Agency is granted the funds for the state of Texas, and Even Start is administered through Texas LEARNS, the Texas Adult Education and Family Literacy Partnership.

What is the Even Start Family Literacy Program?

Texas Even Start utilizes a family-centered education model that improves the academic achievement of young children and the literacy skills of their parents in order to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and illiteracy. Texas Even Start programs serve families that are the most economically disadvantaged and have the lowest levels of adult literacy in the state of Texas. In 2003-04, 97.4% of parents participating had less than a ninth grade education and almost 66% of the adults participating were 25 to 44 years of age. Even Start integrates all of the following activities:

- ★ Interactive literacy between parents and their children that transfer educational concepts and values into the home and family
- ★ Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children
- ★ Parent literacy education that leads to economic self-sufficiency
- ★ Age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences

Texas Even Start Family Literacy dollars are currently being used to provide instructional activities that utilize scientifically based reading research and must provide these instructional activities year-round including instructional and enrichment services during the summer months.

How do Texas Families Participate in the Even Start Family Literacy Program?

An eligible Even Start family must qualify for free and reduced lunch under Title I, have at least one parent who either needs a GED/high school diploma or has not yet mastered English, and have at least one child under the age of 8. Teenagers under the age of 16 who are parents are also eligible to participate with their children as long as the local school district provides the basic education component for the teen parent.

There were 95 programs with 142 sites across Texas in the last school year of 2003-2004. In two years, from 2001 to 2003, Texas doubled their enrollment of families served. Texas's goal for 2003-04 was to serve 4,758 families; not only was the service goal met by serving 6,643 families, Texas reached 40% more families. Texas served an overwhelming 16.5% of the total amount of Even Start children served in the nation with 12,749 children participating and 7,954 parents participating. Out of the 12,749 Texas children participating, 75% of the children were less than 5 years old.

Who Provides Even Start Family Literacy Instruction in Texas?

Even Start providers are awarded competitively to applicants who demonstrate proven effectiveness in providing family literacy services. Eligible applicants include: local education agencies, community-based organizations including volunteer literacy organizations, institutions of higher education, and public and private non-profit agencies and institutions. There were 70 independent school districts, 2 education service centers, 1 public charter school, 19 public or private nonprofit organizations, and 3 higher education institutions in 2003-2004.

What are the Outcomes of Texas Even Start Family Literacy?

- ★ The families enrolled in 2003-2004 stayed an average of at least 7 months or longer; scientifically-based research shows prolonged participation equals higher performance in educational gains.
- ★ 70% of the adult participants made significant educational gains, meaning almost 75% of the adults advanced to at least one or more levels last year.
- ★ An average of 87 % of the parents participating increased their involvement in their children's education.
- ★ 71% of the children served exceeded the average expected language development for their age group in 2003-2004.
- ★ Parenting skills improved by at least 76% of the parents enrolled in 2003-2004.
- ★ 69 % of the adults with a goal of retaining their job or advancement in the job, did so in 2003-2004.
- ★ Almost 60% of the adults with a goal of obtaining a GED or high school diploma, met their goal in 2003-2004.
- ★ 36% of the adults with a goal of entering post secondary education or a job training program, met their goal in 2003-2004.

What is the Even Start Family Literacy Investment in Texas?

Even Start programs apply for a fixed amount of federal funds. Local share/match is required for each program and the local share requirement increases with each year of implementation. The United States Congress appropriated \$248,375,000 Even Start funds for the entire nation in 2003-2004. The total federal grant amount awarded to Texas for all the programs in 2003-2004 was \$17,748,989 and the total local match for the state was \$13,405,376. Due to the budget cuts made in November 2004, Texas Even Start was cut by 9% for the 2005-06 school year and Texas will receive \$1,812,165 less than the previous year. The federal funding for Even Start is allocated in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, Part B, Subpart 3.