



The Value of Michigan Even Start Family Literacy Programs

William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy funds are allocated by the U.S. Department of Education under the authority of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title I, Part B, Subpart 3, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110). The Michigan Department of Education is granted the funds for the state of Michigan, and Even Start is administered out of the Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services.

What is the Even Start Family Literacy Program?

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. Michigan Even Start programs serve families that are the most economically disadvantaged and have the lowest levels of adult literacy in the state. In 2004-2005, 94% of the families enrolled in Michigan had incomes below the federal poverty level, and 97% of the adults who enrolled did not possess a high school diploma, while 40% had not completed the ninth grade. 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.

Michigan's 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 Michigan Families Participate in the Even Start Family Literacy Program?

An eligible Even Start family must meet federal poverty guidelines, 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 32 programs across Michigan in 2004-2005. The goal to serve 1,238 families was surpassed by serving 1,378 families. Out of the 2,035 children participating, 1,678 (82%) were under the age of 5.

Who Provides Even Start Family Literacy Instruction in Michigan?

Even Start partnerships consist of a local education agency and a community-based organization. In 2004-2005, eighteen local school districts, one public school academy (charter school), and thirteen intermediate school districts partnered with community service agencies, foundations, institutions of higher education and other community-based organizations to offer comprehensive educational services.

What are some of the Outcomes of Michigan Even Start Family Literacy?

- Sixty-three percent of the families enrolled stayed more than 7 months; scientifically-based research shows prolonged participation equals higher performance in educational goals.
- Sixty-five percent of the adults enrolled at least six months achieved at least a grade-level gain in basic skill areas, while nearly 92% of the adults learning English showed significant gain.
- Ninety-two percent of the adults who tested for the GED received the certificate, with 82% of those adults reaching this goal within two years.
- Sixty-eight percent of the parents who had sufficient credits to receive a high school diploma in 2004-2005 were able to reach their goal, while 87% of all adults seeking a diploma earned credits.
- For those children enrolled in grades K-2, 89% were promoted at the end of the school year.
- Sixty-four percent of the adults who achieved their adult education goal entered post secondary education, a job training program, the military, or obtained employment or a career advancement.

What is the Even Start Family Literacy Investment in Michigan?

Even Start programs apply for a fixed amount of federal funds. Local contributions are required for each program and the local share requirement increases with each year of implementation. The United States Congress appropriated \$225,000,000 for Even Start for the entire nation in 2004-2005. The total federal grant amount awarded to Michigan in 2004-2005 was \$7,127,300, with \$7,052,939 designated to grants and the total identified for local contributions was \$6,271,209. The 2005-2006 allocation was \$6,718,046. Preliminary figures prepared by the Congressional Research Service for 2006-2007 based on the Conference Report which designated a federal allocation of only \$100,000,000, show that Michigan stands to lose \$3,706,046 (allocation of \$3,012,000 - a 55% reduction), which is likely to leave 760 families without service.