



**William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy –
Michigan Even Start Family Literacy Parent Education Profile (PEP)
MDE Clarifications to Questions Submitted on TTA Survey. April 2010**

1) What is the 'definition' of consistency in the behaviors the assessment evaluates? Must see it more than just once, etc.

On page 58 of the *Even Start Family Literacy Parent Education Profile (Full Scales, Directions for Administration, October 2003, Version 2)* it states, "...the intent is to determine the typical behavior patterns that are reflective of a "solid" level, that is, what the parent has consistently demonstrated over time." That section (p. 58, *The rating dialogue*.) also contains discussion questions for the assessment team. On 4/1/10 the PEP developer, Christine Dwyer from RMC wrote that "In terms of seeing consistent behavior on the part of parents, we typically say that the behavior should be observed multiple times over the course of at least 6-8 weeks and in multiple settings (e.g. home, as well as class)--the highest level of consistent behavior." The team that comes together to review the documentation and discuss/rate the parent's behaviors must come to consensus on the level for each of the subscales.

2) Is it correct to use #1 as a "default setting" For example, if a parent has not been observed doing the things in category #2, should the evaluator assume the parent to be #1 even though the description for #1 may include some negative behaviors not observed?

Yes, this is correct. Just like in the response to question #1, this is about the question of consistency. A parent would have to consistently demonstrate all of the behaviors in level 2 in order to be scored there, thus should stay at level 1 until such time there is documentation to prove otherwise. Being scored at the lowest level does not mean that the "negative behaviors" are present with this parent (your documentation would show this), only that not all of the next level behaviors are consistently displayed. On 4/1/10 Chris Dwyer wrote, "If the glass is half full, it is only half full...default to the lower level and then use the information to plan for what the parent needs to move forward." The *Even Start Family Literacy Parent Education Profile (Full Scales, Directions for Administration, October 2003, Version 2)* states "The record is designed to trace the progress of development of parents and to capture the highest level of typical behaviors within each area of development, that is the level of behaviors that represent patterns that are consistently observable." (p. 10)

3) Still feel we don't have a good answer about parents who achieve high scores and then can't move further – our data then looks poor. It seems like we are penalized for doing a good job.

When considering this concern, it is important to not merely focus on the report to the state for the Outcome Indicators, but to instead set our sights on the true purpose and potential uses of the PEP. Based in research, the PEP was designed to assist local programs in the planning of strategies for developing parents' skills to produce literacy outcomes for children and track the progress of parents' skill development, as well as to develop and deliver intentional instruction. During a presentation to Even Start State Coordinators in August 2006, developer Chris Dwyer commented that in reviewing data collected from programs in New York State, "most parents enter Even Start at Level 1 or 2, and we'd love to get them to Level 3 and above."

With regard to the compiled data, there are times when the particular collection of parents who fall into the cohort that is reported to the state have stagnated, or, as the question infers, are at all Level 5 for all of the subscales of a particular scale. While that scale may then be designated in the "probation" category of the criteria status, the overall status determination discussion that is conducted takes many underlying factors into account, such as the longevity of the families enrolled, how many parents are actually being counted in the cohort (the *n*), and the ability of the project to assist families in other areas that are reported, as evidenced by the other outcomes. For instance, questions arise when there is a report of strong Scale 3 scores, and low percentages of children reading on grade level or being promoted to the next grade. The response to question #4 also relates to this question.

4) We have been told that we should not use a score of '5' because no one, even the best parent, would be consistent as a '5'. Why do we have a score of '5' if our families cannot attain it?

While it is true that the MDE staff have cautioned local program staff from using Level 5 too frequently after receiving guidance from the developers of the assessment, there was never an admonishment to totally exclude Level 5 from the scale. The families who are eligible to be considered "most in need of family literacy services" [1235(1)] have significant issues surrounding basic needs, relationships, and goals; in general, it is difficult to navigate while in poverty, particularly when a parent's literacy and numeracy skills impact comprehension. In addition, one must take into account that the expectations of the skills and behaviors for a parent of an infant (or any age child) change as the child ages to toddlerhood (or the next developmental stage) over the year of the assessment, and the assessment team must reconsider the subscale levels all over again to see if they remain true at the level achieved in the past for the current developmental stage of the child/children in the family. Taking all of this into account, the documentation that is examined by the assessment team may identify some of the subscale ratings to be at Level 5, but it would likely be rare. (See also answer to #3).

5) What is the policy for scoring parents with more than one child? A parent's abilities may differ when handling a young baby as opposed to a 2.5 year old.

Local program staff are urged to use the guidance provided on page 59 of the *Even Start Family Literacy Parent Education Profile (Full Scales, Directions for Administration, October 2003, Version 2)* under the heading "Multiple children." Essentially, the behaviors displayed by the parent should be observed for all children in the family, and take into consideration the appropriateness of the behavior for the age and stage of each of the children.

6) How valid is "parent reporting"? Can we feel comfortable using "parent report" in place of documentation some of the time? For example, The TV is off during Home Instruction but you suspect that is not the norm. When you ask, the parent may say that the TV is only on 2 hours/day, but you don't think the parent is being honest.

Local program staff are urged to use the guidance provided on page 57 of the *Even Start Family Literacy Parent Education Profile (Full Scales, Directions for Administration, October 2003, Version 2)* under the heading "Including the parent perspective." Essentially, the assessment team can take parent feedback garnered through an interview into consideration, but it should be only a portion of the evidence considered. When the team disagrees with the parent report, it is important to target some additional parenting education opportunities for that parent so that s/he has a deeper understanding of the expectation.

The final comment in the question that is presented here has an underlying issue of trust and power in the relationship between the parent and the team member who has queried the parent about practices. Local Even Start policies and procedures necessarily provide expectations with regard to attendance and behavior (to name just two), which put program staff in a powerful role. Parent's view of program staff may also be influenced by some cultural expectations, with respect being shown staff by virtue of the position held. Therefore, the enrolled parents may view and treat staff from a disingenuous position, presenting what it is they believe the staff expects to see or to hear from them. Prior to seeking parent report, it would be important to have a candid and frank discussion with the parent about the hope that each of the questions be carefully considered before answering. If after that discussion, the answer given seems "dishonest" (such as the report that the TV is on only 2 hours a day), the staff member could continue the interview, circling back to probe in a different way such as, "You indicated that the TV is on about 2 hours a day. I was wondering what time of day you have the TV on; like before you leave the house to come to Even Start, or while you're preparing a meal?" Going back to the purpose of the PEP, the program staff could use their suspicions of lack of honesty in this response to target some activity or strategy to help the parent understand the importance of limited television viewing in the development of children's literacy, perhaps enhanced by doing a mock-Nielsen rating for an integrated lesson in mathematics, literacy, and parenting.