



ACA: 03-09-06
ITEM: b

Memorandum

TO: ALL CHILDREN ACHIEVE
COMMITTEE

FROM: Jane Light

SUBJECT: REPORT ON FAMILY LITERACY
PROGRAMS AND FAMILY
LEARNING CENTERS

DATE: February 23, 2006

Approved

Date

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee accept this report on the Library's role in helping children achieve through Family Literacy Programs.

BACKGROUND

Instilling the love of reading and learning is the primary mission of library services for the children of San José. Through our Youth Services Program, Early Care and Lifelong Literacy Programs and Family Learning Centers, the library provides an array of programs and services to introduce, encourage, instill, and nurture the importance of reading in children and in families as key to success in school and adult life.

Services are available at all branches and are geared towards the needs of the particular community. Some of the programming offered throughout the library includes ESL conversation club, storytimes, family summer reading celebration, TeensReach, homework centers, and online tutoring through.tutor.com.

The library helps all children achieve through four major service objectives: promoting reading from birth through age 18; supporting the educational achievement of all children and young adults; supporting parents and caregivers in their efforts to raise healthy, happy, and successful children; and providing programs and services that will help young people develop effective life skills.

Some parents and caregivers need library services and programs that will help them to improve their basic reading and writing skills and to provide a home environment that will help their children be ready to succeed in school. Parents with low literacy skills are often highly

motivated to improve them but also very challenged by their responsibilities to work and provide for their family and to raise their children.

Families for Literacy, (FFL) is a program component for learners in the Library's Partners in Reading (PAR) adult and family literacy unit. Participants are either adults receiving volunteer tutoring in the literacy program with preschool age children in their family or under their care, or in the case of those served with funding from FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, they are adults with children under the age of six living within targeted school neighborhoods of the Franklin McKinley and San Jose Unified School districts. They and their families participate in monthly literacy events, involving educational toys, storytimes, parent workshops, children's hands-on activities and the distribution of new books for all of the children present. Families for Literacy is funded by grants from the California Library Literacy Services and the FIRST 5 of Santa Clara County. FIRST 5 funding will end June 30, 2006.

As the City has planned new and expanded branch libraries funded by the 2000 Library Bond Measure, community meetings were held before design of each neighborhood branch to learn about the specific needs of that community. In several cases, participants identified a need for more intensive services including ESL, adult basic education, and citizenship preparation classes. In those branches, the Family Learning Centers were included to offer a variety of educational activities for youth and adults, providing each with the skills and confidence to achieve their learning potential and empowering parents with the knowledge to create a learning environment in the home.

In January 2004, the first Family Learning Center opened at the Tully Community Branch library. Dr. Roberto Cruz Alum Rock branch library opened in July 2005 with the second family learning center. A third is included at the new Hillview Branch that will open in the Fall of 2006.

It is the goal of the Library to provide a continuum of services for families at various levels of literacy needs. Family Learning Center participants are given opportunities to move from ESL classes and ESL conversation groups to becoming learners in the Partners in Reading literacy program, where they can receive literacy tutoring from trained volunteers. To provide this continuum of services, the library continues to collaborate with other agencies as well as train staff internally to identify and provide opportunities for families to become lifelong learners.

ANALYSIS

The goal of **Families for Literacy** is to reach the child by providing low literate parents/caregivers with the skills, materials, and resources needed to make the sharing of books and reading a part of daily life. These families are also introduced to programs and services available at the San José Public Library, and offered assistance in completing a library card application, if they or their children do not yet have one. Since 2001, staff has observed a shift in the primary language of participants from English to Spanish.

Families for Literacy summary data from beginning of FIRST 5 funding

Total number of programs: 218
Total number of partnerships: 30
Total number of families: 666
Total number of children: 1458
Children under 6 years of age: 894
Total number of books distributed: 4013
Library cards issued: 123

Success is measured through surveying parent/caregiver reading and library practices and a PAR/FFL in-house needs assessment. In the case of programs funded specifically by FIRST 5, additional evaluation is done through parent satisfaction interviews.

Since the opening of the first **Family Learning Center**, there has been a significant expansion of programming offered at the two sites. To date there have been 21 programs broken into three categories (Family Programs, ESL, and Life Skills & Basic Education) offered through the Family Learning Centers. Some of the programming offered includes:

Family Programs:

- **Reading Readiness**; a four-week early literacy program for parents and children to teach them six pre-reading skills and activities (print awareness, print motivation, letter knowledge, vocabulary, narration, and phonological awareness)
- **Homework Center**; drop-in program with paid tutors to assist students in grades K-12
- **Children's Discovery Museum**; two on-site programs administered by CDM on interactive storytime and age appropriate activities on circles and tops.

ESL:

- **ESL classes** for adults through East Side Adult Education
- **Conversation** groups to practice English language skills
- **Bilingual storytimes**
- **Citizenship classes**

Life Skills & Basic Education:

- **Small group writing class** administered by Partners in Reading staff to reach adults who are lacking basic writing skills.
- **Gang Awareness** presented by city Gang Task Force to teach parents and teens about gangs and what to be aware of.

New Activities for 05/06:

These activities are designed to meet the needs of the branch communities in collaboration with outside partnerships. Within the next several months, several new activities are planned, they include:

- **Prime Time Family Reading Time:** This six-week session funded through the California State Library Literacy Services will take place at the King Library. This program will engage parents/caregivers and their children ages 6-10 in dialogue on folktales from around the world. Twenty families will participate, gathered from PAR learners and “at risk families” of Horace Mann School. Preschool children will be involved in their own activities in an adjoining room.
- **CTC/WorkNet:** Seven-week workshop series on resume writing, job searching, and job etiquette administered by Center for Training and Careers.
- **Start Up:** Workshop for Spanish Speakers wanting to start their own small business.
- **Diabetic Society:** Six-week workshop series on taking control of diabetes, geared towards Spanish speaking adults living in San José.
- **Alum Rock Counseling Center:** Six-week workshop for parents about family wellness, nutrition, and communication.

JANE LIGHT

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