



**A Decade of Family Literacy:
Programs, Outcomes,
and Future Prospects**
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by

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Family literacy has been the focus of research and practice for at least the past 2 decades. Family literacy programs recognize the influence of parents on children's learning and the link among literacy interactions in the home, school, and community. They bring together both early childhood and adult literacy programs in a whole-family learning effort.

This paper reviews and synthesizes reports about family literacy programs and practices, focusing on outcomes for adult learners. The emphasis is on resources available in the ERIC database from 1990 to the present.

The first section, Programs, reviews the sometimes conflicting definitions of family literacy, finding that a common thread is strengthening intergenerational literacy and preparing parents and caregivers for their role as children's first teachers. Policy and funding issues at the federal and state levels are discussed. This section then addresses three overarching issues that are critical to the success of family literacy programs: the quality of staff, curricular assumptions and instructional practices, and collaboration within and outside programs.

The second section looks at outcomes, first describing the kinds of assessment models that have been used for participants and programs. Specific outcomes that have been documented in research are then discussed.

The third section summarizes the findings by describing a prototype of a successful family literacy program. Areas needing additional research are highlighted.

The paper contains three appendices. A research matrix in Appendix 1 presents the purpose, scope, and design of 35 studies. Appendix 2 contains an annotated list of family literacy websites. A map in Appendix 3 depicts the number and location of sites of Even Start programs in the United States.

Information on the topics in this paper may be found in the ERIC database using the following descriptors: *Adult Learning, Evaluation Methods, *Family Literacy, *Literacy Education, *Parent Child Relationship, *Parent Participation, Program Evaluation, and Student Evaluation. Asterisks indicate terms that are particularly relevant.

