

| DESCRIPTION OF SUCCESSFUL READING PROGRAMME PROGRAMME TITLE: The Family Literacy Project PROGRAMME ORGANISER(S): FLP (http://www.familyliteracyproject.co.za) | |
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| Description Created by LiRe Partner Institution: UPRC | |
| Time & Place | Target Group(s) |
| Since 2000 South Africa (Southern Drakensberg area of KwaZulu-Natal) | 162 adults, 350 primary school children and 52 teenagers during group session; 500 children (under 18 years) are reached through adult members; 335 children are visited in 130 homes |
| Short Description (Max. 200 words) | |
| <p>The project is aimed at families as a means of addressing the low literacy achievement of many pre- and primary school children, and the lack of confidence of parents in their ability to provide support to these children. As parents/caregivers are the first and most important educators of children, the family literacy approach supports both adults and children. The adult groups regularly discuss issues related to children, consider ways of supporting their development, and have fun with them as they read or look at books together. They also focus on building literacy skills, sharing local knowledge and introducing new information where necessary. The children groups explore a wide range of issues and relate these to the enjoyment of books and reading. Often, the topics will be the same as those covered in the adult groups, providing opportunities for families to discuss these issues together at home. The project combines multifaceted actions, such as: Family literacy groups; Child-to-child groups; Home visiting; Community notice boards; Family Journals; Box libraries and book clubs; Community libraries; Pen friends; Group Newsletters.</p> | |
| Objectives (General & Specific) | |
| <p>The main objectives of the programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to transform literacy into a collective pleasure and a valuable skill shared by the whole family; • to help develop a critical mass of community members of all ages who see literacy as important and enjoyable; and • to stress the importance of the parent/caregiver as the children’s first educator and support them in assuming this role. | |
| Scheme of Reading Promotion Actions & Activities | |
| <p>The FLP (Family Literary project) is quite a large-scale project, composed of smaller programmes running in parallel to each other. All programmes are based on educating and engaging parents and caregivers in reading promotion:</p> <p>Reading Enrichment programmes: They are intended for any pupils interested in attending after normal school hours. The sessions take place in primary schools in the areas in which FLP operates and each focuses on a theme with activities that include discussion, singing,</p> | |

art, the completion of worksheets, role-plays and listening to stories read by the facilitators. Each child is required to borrow a storybook at the end of each session and, depending on their age, to look at and discuss it with, or read it to, a family member.

Family literacy groups: These groups meet twice a week to discuss a range of issues as well as to improve language and literacy skills. They regularly discuss issues related to children, consider way of supporting their development, and have fun with them as they read or look at books together.

Child-to-child groups: About 350 primary school children meet once a week to read, draw and discuss different topics. These topics often mirror those of the family literacy groups, thus nurturing links between family members. The groups are multi-age, with Grades 3 and 4 children helping Grades R, 1 and 2 children. International research confirms that programmes like this build self-confidence in both the reader and the listeners.

Home visiting: The group members' desire to spread the message of early literacy gave rise to the home visiting scheme. Women take books with them to read to children; they also talk to mothers about their role in their children's healthy development. Once a term, each site supports the women by running a workshop on activities that can be done at home. These workshops focus on storytelling, reading books and other games and activities designed to support the development of early literacy skills.

In-School Programmes: FLP introduced a programme in reception classes in the areas in which it works. Storybooks were read to the children on a regular basis at school by their teacher and in some cases, at home by mothers who were attending adult literacy classes.

Family Journals: The FLP supplies adults with a notebook so that they can keep a diary with a child. These journals are known as Umzali Nengane (Parent and Child) journals. The adults and children select a picture to paste into the book or draw one of their own. They then talk about these images, and the adults write down the ensuing conversation.

Community notice boards: These provide an opportunity for group members to display their literacy skills and share information gained from the topics covered in the sessions. One group member is responsible for organising the notice board and encouraging others to contribute to the displays.

Pen friends: Each family literacy group member is encouraged to write to someone in a neighbouring group. These letters are exchanged when the facilitators meet. Pen friends meet at the end-of-year event.

Newsletters: This initiative started when group members were asked to write to the FLP. Their letters were printed, followed by a few pages of news and photographs. The newsletter is now produced professionally. As it contains news from the different groups, it is very popular.

Box libraries and book clubs: Each group was given a box of books for women to borrow. At

first, participants tended to borrow mainly children's books; this was encouraged so that the women could read with their children or at least look at the pictures. At Stepmore, the facilitator soon noticed that the group members were discussing books together. This led to the first of the book clubs, which have now been established in every group.

Community libraries: The community library is open to anyone in the community and is run by one of the programme's group members, with support from the facilitator.

Results / Indicators of Success

The following research result is quite impressive:

FLP introduced a programme in reception classes in the areas in which it works. Storybooks were read to the children on a regular basis at school by their teacher and in some cases, at home by mothers who were attending adult literacy classes. Researchers from the University of South Africa (UNISA) conducted tests of the literacy skills of these children and of children who were already in the first year of school. The results showed that the pre-school children scored better than the children in Grade 1 at the same school. (Machet & Pretorius, 2002)

Furthermore, systematic external and internal evaluation has shown that:

- FLP members and their children found that reading books can be a pleasure rather than a chore and that the pleasure can be shared
- FLP has started a culture of reading amongst its members
- The responsibility of being their child's first teacher was recognized and acted upon by FLP members
- Visits by FLP members to the homes of neighbours helped the latter to develop their parenting skills and improve their children's literacy skills
- Members of FLP groups spent more time reading, writing and engaging in activities that improved their children's literacy skills
- FLP's programme of reading storybooks to pre-school children developed the literacy skills that would help them learn to read and write
- Membership of FLP groups made mothers feel more able to support and help their children with homework
- Keeping a family journal helped FLP members improve their reading and writing skills
- FLP members felt that the project could continue making a positive contribution to improving their English and other skills
- The establishment of community libraries by FLP was seen by members as significant in the lives of their communities



CONCLUSIONS

(WHAT WORKED WELL AND WHY)

- Successful reading promotion should always strive to educate and involve parents, caregivers and the wider community. The FLP clearly demonstrates the success of such an approach, especially in communities with low literacy skills.
- Children who are supported by their parents and are encouraged to read at home, usually do well at school, and this motivates adults to continue offering this support.
- The FLP has shown that well-supported facilitators are key to the successful implementation of a programme.
- Combining adult and child reading activities in a participatory manner works.

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LINKS TO FURTHER MATERIAL

The FLP website: <http://www.familyliteracyproject.co.za/>

Details about this and other successful literacy projects at the UNESCO website: <http://www.unesco.org/ui/litbase/?menu=4&programme=43>





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