



The Value of Texas

Even Start Family Literacy Programs 2006-07

Even Start Family Literacy funds are allocated by the U.S. Department of Education under the authority of the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy (P.L. 100-297), 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 Texas Education Agency is granted the funds for the state of Texas, and Even Start is administered through Texas LEARNS, the Texas Adult Education and Family Literacy Partnership.

What is the Even Start Family Literacy Program?

Texas 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. Texas Even Start programs serve families that are the most economically disadvantaged and have the lowest levels of adult literacy in the state. In 2006-07, 99% of parents participating had less than a ninth grade education; 69% of the participating parents were between the ages of 25-44. Even Start integrates all of the following activities into a unified family literacy program:

- ★ Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children that transfer educational concepts and values into the home and family
- ★ Training for parents on 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

Texas Even Start Family Literacy dollars are currently being used to provide scientific research-based, year-round, instructional activities and enrichment services.

How do Texas Families Participate in the Even Start Family Literacy Program?

An eligible Even Start family must qualify for free and reduced lunch under Title I, 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. School-aged parents are also eligible to participate with their children in Even Start as long as the local school district provides the basic education component for the parent.

There were 60 programs with 129 sites across Texas in the school year of 2006-2007. Despite funding cuts in the past four years, Texas has exceeded their target goal of families served, while significantly increasing performance. Texas served 3,301 families in 2006-2007, exceeding its goal by 10%. According to the most recent national data, Texas served an impressive 16% of the total number of Even Start children served in the **nation**. Out of the 5,655 Texas children participating, 73% of the children were birth to five years old and 77% had parents that were learning to speak English.

Who Provides Even Start Family Literacy Instruction in Texas?

Even Start grants are awarded competitively to applicants who demonstrate proven effectiveness in providing family literacy services. Eligible applicants include: local education agencies, community-based organizations including volunteer literacy organizations, institutions of higher education, and public and private non-profit agencies and institutions. Providers in 2006-2007 were 46 independent school districts, 2 education service centers, 1 public charter school, and 11 public or private non-profit organizations.

What are the Outcomes of Texas Even Start Family Literacy?

- ★ Even Start children in grades kindergarten through 2nd were promoted to the next grade at higher rates than the state average with 100% for kindergarteners, 97.64% for 1st graders, and 97.14% for 2nd graders in 2006-2007.
- ★ 92.24% of Even Start kindergarteners and 91.34% of 1st and 2nd graders met or exceeded the standard on district-selected reading assessments, a remarkable achievement considering 72% of Even Start families are non-native English speakers.
- ★ 95.25% of Even Start adults enrolled improved their parenting skills in 2006-2007 based on results of the HOME Inventory.
- ★ 78% of Even Start parents self-reported that they retained a job or advanced on the job and 63% of the parents self-reported that they entered the workforce after participating in Even Start in 2006-2007.
- ★ 82% of Even Start pre-schoolers increased receptive vocabulary at least one full year of growth in a 4 to 6 month span of time. Receptive vocabulary is a predictor of reading success.
- ★ 75% Even Start adults remained enrolled long enough to advance at least one level in 2006-07, even though mandatory school attendance laws do not apply to adults.
- ★ 64.98% of the families enrolled in 2006-2007 stayed at least 7 months or longer; scientifically-based research shows prolonged participation equals higher performance in educational gains.

What is the Even Start Family Literacy Investment in Texas?

Even Start programs apply for a fixed amount of federal funds. Local share/match is required for each program and the local share requirement increases with each year of implementation. The United States Congress appropriated \$99,000,000 Even Start of funds for the entire nation in 2006-2007. The total federal grant amount awarded to Texas for all 60 programs in 2006-2007 was \$7,817,553 and the total local match for the state was \$7,891,144. Budget cuts made over the past 3 years have resulted in a discontinuation of funding for 42 Even Start Programs in Texas. That represents a loss of services to 2,955 families at 93 different sites.