

The BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy



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Specifically we extend our deepest gratitude to Barbara Bate, a “pioneer and visionary” in the family literacy field in BC, and to.....

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Provincial Family Literacy Development Project Manager



1999 Family Literacy Summer Institute Best Practices Forum Participants

Background Information

For whom is the BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy intended?

The Framework is intended as a guide to promote good practice and provide support and information to the many individuals and groups involved in family literacy throughout the province. Some examples of these individuals and groups are: family literacy practitioners, program developers, school districts, teachers' organizations, early childhood educators, libraries, colleges, family resource programs, appropriate Ministries (Health; Education; Advanced Education, Training and Technology; and Children and Families), funders and evaluators. The Framework reflects the philosophies, principles and realities of the diversity of family literacy programs in the province and provides useful guidelines for development, delivery, funding and evaluation of programs.

Why was the BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy developed?

Family literacy programs in British Columbia are as varied as the communities they are located in, the individuals and groups who develop and implement them, and the family members who participate in them. This great diversity is evidenced by the fact that a roomful of people involved in family literacy can each provide a different answer to the questions: "What is family literacy?" and "What is a family literacy activity or program?"

While flexibility in models and approaches can be helpful in tailoring programs to specific conditions and needs, agreement on best practice standards is needed in order to increase consistency, credibility, accountability and professional standards in the family literacy field.

How was the BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy developed?

In June 1998, a delegation from British Columbia (representing family literacy practitioners and co-ordinators, colleges and the Ministries of Health; Advanced Education, Training and Technology; and Children and Families) attended a conference in Saskatoon hosted by the Saskatchewan Literacy Network called *Family Literacy: Key to a Healthy Future: Provincial Conference and Western Regional Symposium*. The following November, members of this delegation formed the BC Family Literacy Working Group and a number of sub-committees to focus on three areas of family literacy development:

- training and standards
- research and documentation
- public awareness and leadership

The Training and Standards Sub-Committee, whose members include Literacy BC, college representatives and regional/family literacy coordinators, contributed to the design, shape and content of the Framework.

The BC Framework was developed in the following way: Literacy BC brought together more than 50 people

with a vested interest in family literacy to the Best Practices in Family Literacy Forum, held in July 1999 at the Family Literacy Summer Institute. Forum participants from around the province and across the country met to discuss definitions, models, issues and trends in family literacy work and to identify key topics for the development of a best practice framework for BC. Forum participants explored different program models at the provincial and national level from a number of different perspectives.

When they registered, Forum participants were given an information sheet entitled *Preparing for the Two-Day Forum* which asked them to consider: their own definition of family literacy; how they would describe or classify the type of family literacy work they were involved in; and what issues and challenges they faced in the family literacy work they were doing. They were asked to think about the perspectives they brought to the Forum as well consider what constituted key elements of a quality family literacy program.

The goals for the two-day Forum were to:

- share personal experiences
- examine assumptions
- examine exemplary programs
- discuss definitions, models, issues and trends
- clarify philosophies
- collectively begin the process of building a framework of best practices for family literacy in BC

The **methodology** for working in the Forum was to ensure that all voices were heard. Participants worked in small groups and brought the results of their discussions back to the Forum as a whole.

Day one of the Forum, participants addressed three areas:

- what is family literacy?
- what is a quality family literacy program from a number of perspectives?
- what are some successful program models in British Columbia?

Day two of the Forum, participants:

- addressed issues and trends
- clarified principles and philosophy
- identified key topics for the Framework

A fable set the tone of the Forum:

The Seven Blind Men Fable: Just as seven blind men each touching a different part of an elephant cannot describe the entire beast until they share their individual information, we need to examine family literacy from different perspectives in order to understand a complete picture of it.

Literacy BC developed a written report on the work of the Forum. This Report was sent to the Forum and Family Literacy Summer Institute participants, family literacy programs and services in BC, and other stakeholders throughout the province for feedback.

A Stakeholders' Response document accompanied the Report, to provide an opportunity for further contributions to the Framework.

The results from the responses were incorporated into the design and development of the *BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy*.

What are some ways in which the BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy can be used?

- Family literacy program developers and practitioners can use the Framework to identify strengths and as an evaluation tool for enhancing effective literacy practices in their programs.

- Organizations can use the Framework to develop family literacy proposals and programs, and as a vehicle for raising awareness and support.
- Partners can use the Framework for assistance in determining their “best fit” with family literacy programs.
- Funders can use the Framework to make informed decisions on allocating appropriate funding for family literacy programs.



1999 Family Literacy Summer Institute workshop participants

The BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy

1. What Is Family Literacy?

The family is the strongest element in shaping lives. It's the most powerful support network there is. It's where the cycle of learning begins, where the attitudes of parents about learning become the educational values of their children. Through education of more than one generation, family literacy programs build on families' strengths and provide the tools and support they need to become stronger and more self-sufficient. (National Centre for Family Literacy – Kentucky)

Given the diversity of families, programs and materials, the term “family literacy” can be used to mean different things to different people. Family literacy acknowledges the richness and complexity of families and the multiple often-unrecognized literacy tasks that are part of every day life.

Family literacy...

- is the intergenerational sharing of experiences and meanings, which enhance the development of language and numeracy skills
- is an innovative educational approach based upon a powerful premise: *parents are their children's first and most important teachers*
- regards the family as a “learning unit” and provides integrated support and learning opportunities for all family members

- is a shared responsibility that builds on existing community resources and combines the strengths of many partners and builds knowledge within the community
- is culturally responsive and as diverse as the communities in which it is developed
- addresses the intergenerational correlation among education-level, income-level and health status

2. Goals of Family Literacy

- to promote reading and learning as valued family activities that encourage positive interactions and shared experiences
- to enhance the ability of parents to support their children's literacy development, from birth throughout the school years
- to provide children with developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that support “school readiness”
- to support parents in the challenging and critical job of nurturing children who will become successful adults and contribute to a strong society
- to provide an opportunity for parents to pursue their own educational goals
- to promote and support literacy and lifelong learning

3. Statement of Values in Family Literacy

This Framework is built on three core values: Partnership, Respect, and Participation.

We believe that:

- literacy is a universal human right
- supporting literacy development supports families, helps build strong communities and celebrates life
- when all families are valued by all society, all society benefits
- families are the primary source of literacy development, what they do at home is important
- educators need to recognize the expertise of families and view all family members as knowledgeable, capable learners
- at the core of any locally developed family literacy program are the reciprocal practices that are established between family members and educators
- we must honour, validate and use the languages of the parents and children who participate in family literacy programs
- family literacy programs build on the strengths of the families that attend them, respecting their various cultures and backgrounds
- family literacy programs are a partnership between educators, social agencies and families, and should be locally relevant – not based on a generic model
- family members should have the opportunity to work with educators to develop informative assessments of the family literacy program in which they participate

4. Statements of Best Practices in Family Literacy

a) Philosophy

A quality family literacy program has a clearly written philosophy or mission statement, based on the preceding value statements. It is communicated to the people involved with the program and is reviewed regularly.

b) Planning

A quality family literacy program regularly plans and sets goals and objectives consistent with its philosophy. It carries out these activities in a participatory manner.

c) Community Involvement and Linkages

A quality family literacy program responds to the needs of the community in which it is located. It establishes and maintains links with various referral sources and community agencies as well as other relevant educational programs and organizations. It regularly reviews its community and organizational relationships.

d) Awareness Activities — Recruitment, Public Relations, Advocacy

A quality family literacy program initiates a community awareness program to attract potential learners and volunteers and to gain support for the program and literacy issues from other sectors of the community.

e) Access

A quality family literacy program operates from an identifiable and accessible location. It provides flexible time and place arrangements for instruction and facilitates access to other learning opportunities.

f) Participation

A quality family literacy program encourages the participation of families and volunteers in as many different aspects of the program as possible, consistent with its philosophy.

g) Facilities and Equipment

A quality family literacy program operates in facilities which are comfortable, safe, adequately serviced and equipped to meet administrative, instructional and program support needs.

h) Administration

A quality family literacy program uses paid professional staff and is consistently well managed and run.

i) Staff Training and Development

A quality family literacy program uses well-trained professional staff who keep up-to-date with developments in the field.

j) Volunteer Support Services

A quality family literacy program provides a broad range of support services for its volunteers, which includes training.

k) Assessment

A quality family literacy program uses a variety of flexible, learner-centred assessment procedures.

l) Family Support Services

A quality family literacy program provides a broad range of support services for its adults and children, including referrals when appropriate.

m) Instructional Strategies and Materials

A quality family literacy program uses a wide variety of instructional strategies and materials appropriate for families and consistent with the program's philosophy, as well as a wide variety of supplementary support and resource materials.

n) Program Evaluation

A quality family literacy program engages in ongoing evaluation to assure program effectiveness and involves families, volunteers, staff, board members, and other community partners in the process.

o) Resources

A quality family literacy program has the necessary resources for staffing, facilities, materials and other support services the program needs to fulfil its mission.

p) Language Diversity

A quality family literacy program is sensitive to the different ways that individuals use language, gestures and the written word. It is aware that the following may influence a person's understanding of communication:

- gender
- familiarity with print
- regional background
- learning styles
- past experiences
- family background
- cultural background
- education levels
- disabilities
- school experiences

5. Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy

The following standards can be used as an evaluation tool for your program development and planning.

a) Philosophy

A quality family literacy program has a clearly written philosophy or mission statement, which is communicated to the people involved with the program and is reviewed regularly, based on the preceding value statements.

a) Please check the statements that apply to your program.

- Program has written philosophy/mission statement.
- Program has written objectives/goals/statements.

Statements address:

- target population
- ways of delivering program
- needs of families
- instructional approaches, and
- geographic area served
- instructional materials
- Statements are communicated to program personnel.
- Statements are reviewed regularly.

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your philosophy.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of philosophy?

b) Planning

A quality family literacy program regularly plans and sets goals and objectives consistent with its philosophy. It carries out these activities in a participatory manner.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program.

- Planning sessions are conducted regularly
- All associated with the program participate in setting program goals
- All associated with the program are made aware of the goals for the current year
- Progress toward goals is reviewed and results communicated to all associated with the program
- A long range plan is developed for future growth and direction based on input from all associated with the program

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your planning.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of planning?

c) Community Involvement and Linkages

A quality family literacy program responds to the needs of the community in which it is located. It establishes and maintains links with various referral sources and community agencies as well as other relevant educational programs and organizations. It regularly reviews its community and organizational relationships.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program.

- Community needs are assessed
- The program defines the target population with whom it will work, based on community needs and program resources
- Community members are represented on the Board if the program is independent of an institution
- The program has developed and maintains links with various community social service agencies and referral sources as well as other educational programs in the community
- The program takes a pro-active approach in education agencies about family literacy
- The program is a member of, or linked to other literacy organizations (local, provincial, national, international)
- Representatives of community groups are invited to participate in staff and/or training events as well as recognition events
- The program reviews its community and organizational relationships

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your community involvement and linkages.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of community involvement and linkages?

d) Awareness Activities — Recruitment, Public Relations, Advocacy

A quality family literacy program initiates a community awareness program to attract potential learners and volunteers and to gain support for the program and literacy issues from other sectors of the community.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program.

- The program has determined which recruitment strategies are most successful for attracting potential families
- The program has determined which recruitment strategies are most successful for attracting potential volunteers
- Recruitment strategies are implemented in accordance with program needs
- The experience of previous families and volunteers is used in creating awareness activities
- Contacts with relevant media and referral sources are made and maintained
- Program information is publicized regularly by means such as posters, brochures, newsletters and reports to relevant organizations and individuals
- The program undertakes an advocacy role in the community on literacy policy and support issues affecting families

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your awareness activities.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of awareness activities?

e) Access

A quality family literacy program operates from an identifiable and accessible location. It provides flexible time and place arrangements for instruction and facilitates access to other learning opportunities.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program.

- Program has advertised telephone number and hours to call
- Instruction is offered at a suitable time
- Facilities are accessible to families by:
 - public transportation
 - program sponsored transportation
 - private transportation
- Facilities are accessible for persons with disabilities
- Instruction if offered at a suitable time
- Length of program is suitable
- Opportunities exist to introduce families to other learning experiences

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your access.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of access?

f) Facilities and Equipment

A quality family literacy program operates in facilities which are comfortable, adequately serviced and equipped to meet administrative, instructional and program support needs.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program.

- Office space is adequate
- Space for interviewing is available
- Meeting room and/or teaching space is available
- Space for resource materials display and storage is adequate
- Physical space is safe and free from health hazards
- Heating, ventilation and lighting are adequate
- Furnishings are adequate
- Washroom facilities are available
- Social lounge space is available
- Necessary instructional equipment (eg. chalkboards, projectors) provided
- Necessary preschool equipment (large muscle etc) is available
- Kitchen facilities are available

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your facilities and equipment.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of facilities and equipment?

g) Administration

A quality family literacy program uses paid professional staff and is consistently well managed and run.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program.

- Paid staffing level is adequate for the program to meet community needs consistent with the program's philosophy statement
- Job descriptions of staff, including volunteer tutors and Board members are available
- Qualifications for staff, including volunteer tutors, are specified and are appropriate for the education of adults and children
- Specific commitments are required of volunteers and may be formalized in written agreements
- Confidentiality of records is assured
- Adequate bookkeeping and financial records are kept
- Child assessment, attendance and progress records are kept
- Records of support services are kept

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your administration system.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of administration?

h) Participation

A quality family literacy program encourages the participation of families and volunteers in as many different aspects of the program as possible consistent with its philosophy.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program.

Parents and volunteers (or former parents and volunteers):

- participate in program planning and review processes
- are represented on the program's Board of Directors or Advisory Committee
- participate in other committee structures as they exist
- participate in recruitment activities as resource people
- help plan and participate in other program activities such as recognition events and publishing
- previous and current parents are recruited as tutors or other program volunteers when applicable

b) Given your response(s) in (a), check the following statements which best applies to your program.

- Program meets at least six of the above conditions
- Parents and volunteers are involved in at least four or five of the above activities
- Parents or volunteers are involved in at least four or five of the above activities
- Parents and/or volunteers are involved in one to three of the above activities
- Parents and volunteers are not involved in any of the above activities

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of philosophy?

i) Staff Training And Development

A quality family literacy program uses well-trained professional staff who keeps up-to-date with developments in the field.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program

The staff (coordinator/adult and preschool teachers/program assistant)

- have relevant post secondary training in their field
- have several years of practical experience in these fields
- have developed skills and knowledge in family literacy programming
- pay continuing attention to how adults and children learn
- read relevant journals and new publications
- attend professional development events on a regular basis
- give professional development workshops
- work effectively with each other
- work effectively with an advisory committee/board
- do public speaking engagements

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your staff training and development.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of staff training and development?

j) Volunteer Support Services

A quality family literacy program provides a broad range of support services for its volunteers, which includes training.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program

Support services for family literacy volunteer tutors include:

- initial interview with program staff
- orientation to program
- volunteer tutor training
- in service training events
- ongoing monitoring of progress, especially in early stages
- recognition events
- available supplies and instructional materials

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your volunteer support service.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of volunteer support services?

k) Assessment

A quality family literacy program uses a variety of flexible, learner-centred assessment procedures.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program

A program staff person

- conducts an initial interview and orientation session with potential participants
- identifies any special learning needs among potential participants
- makes any necessary referrals to other programs and/or agencies
- considers initial assessment results when reviewing learning needs

Participants are involved in

- assessing their own needs
- setting their own learning goals and objectives
- designing assessment procedures

While participants are in the program

- progress and achievement checks related to their goals and objectives are built into the program
- new goals and objectives may be defined as former ones are attained
- if progress is not being made, referrals may be made to other support services

When participants leave the program

- assessment is based on the attainment of learner-stated goals
- assessment is also based on participation progress and changes in areas such as self-esteem, body language, new uses of literacy, social achievements, parenting skills, job readiness and advocacy
- assessment may also be based on testing procedures required by the program in specific content or skills areas.

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your parent assessment.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of adult assessment?

l) Family Support Services

A quality family literacy program provides a broad range of support services for its adults and children, including referral when appropriate.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program.

Support services for families include:

- assistance with childcare
- hot breakfast and/or lunch
- information about counselling and referral services
- information about financial services
- information about educational opportunities
- information about volunteer and/or employment opportunities
- information about supplies and resource materials
- regular follow up on absenteeism
- follow up on registered participants who don't attend
- provision of opportunities for participant networking
- involvement of former participants to assist current participants

___ information about follow up activities at program end

___ information on child development issues and concerns

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your family support service.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of family support service?

m) Instructional Strategies and Materials

A quality family literacy program uses a wide variety of instructional strategies and materials appropriate for families and consistent with the program's philosophy, as well as a wide variety of supplementary support and resource materials.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program

Instructional strategies should:

- ___ be built around the needs, interest and learning style of participants
- ___ take into account the initial assessment results
- ___ build in progress checks
- ___ acknowledge achievements
- ___ encourage discussion and critical thinking
- ___ present reading/writing skills and strategies as part of an integrated communication process
- ___ encourage creative expression

___ recognize modifications required due to age or physical limitations

___ recognize multicultural requirements

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your instructional strategies.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of instructional strategies?

n) Program Evaluation

A quality family literacy program engages in ongoing evaluation to assure program effectiveness and involves families, volunteers, staff, board members, and other community partners in the process.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program

- ___ program annually assesses the extent to which adults have achieved their goals
- ___ results are compiled to show the progress made by parents and children still in the program and those who have "graduated"
- ___ reasons for those who have dropped out are known
- ___ information is compiled on volunteers' contributions to the program, their performance and willingness to continue
- ___ other necessary information to assess program performance is compiled from appropriate sources
- ___ parents, volunteers and children's opinions on the program are sought by appropriate means (e.g. questionnaires, interviews)

- ___ annual review of all program operations (e.g., A to P) is undertaken in a participatory process
- ___ results are analyzed and priorities for the next year are decided on
- ___ plans are made to seek the resources or make the adjustments necessary to implement the priorities
- ___ annual report produced and distributed to interested participants and community members

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your philosophy.

c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of philosophy?

o) Resources

A quality family literacy program has the necessary resources for staffing, facilities, materials and other support services the program needs to fulfil its mission.

a) Please check the statements which apply to your program.

- ___ resources are adequate for required staffing levels
- ___ resources are adequate for required facilities
- ___ resources are adequate for supplies, resource materials and any instructional equipment deemed necessary for the program according to its philosophy
- ___ resources are adequate for public awareness activities
- ___ resources are available to cover support services for families and volunteers i.e. childcare, transportation, etc.
- ___ funding is assured on a regular basis
- ___ no fees charged for tuition

- ___ funds are available for program expansion when required
- ___ a diversified financial support base has been developed if the program is independent of an institution

b) If possible, provide specific examples of your resources.

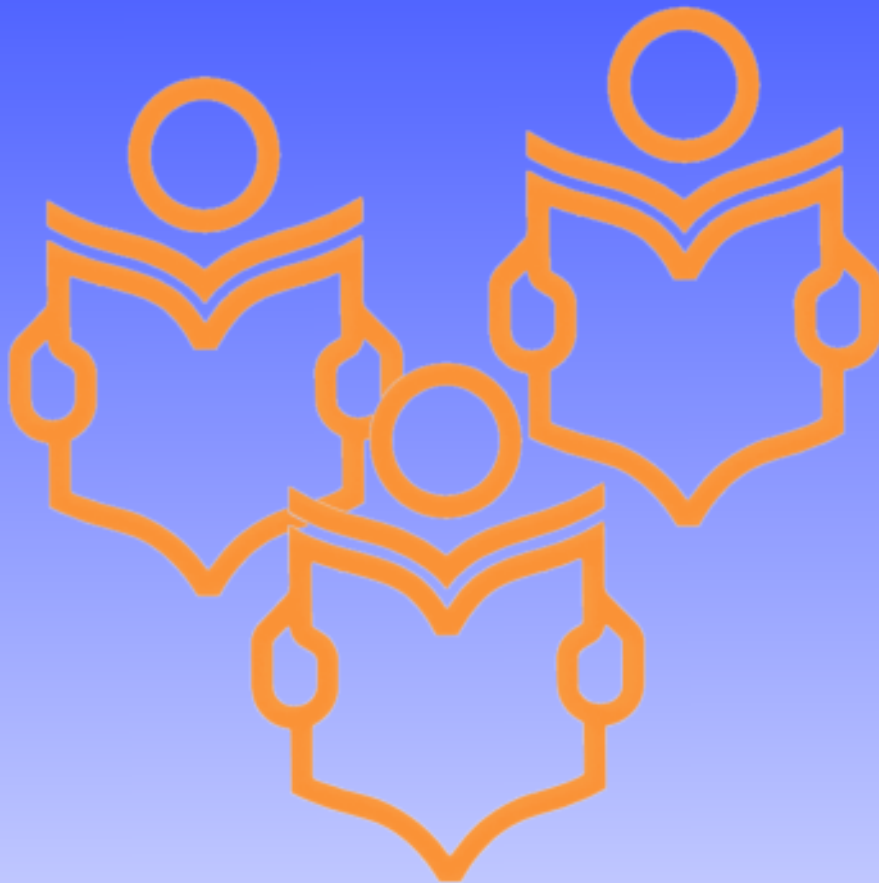
c) What steps could be taken to improve in the area of resources?

p) Language Diversity

A quality family literacy program is sensitive to the different ways that individuals use language, gestures and the written word.

It is aware that the following may influence a person's understanding of communication:

- gender
- family background
- familiarity with print
- cultural background
- regional background
- education levels
- learning styles
- disabilities
- past experiences
- school experiences



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