

GREATER HARTFORD LITERACY COUNCIL
Child, Youth, Adult & Family Literacy Task Force
Final Recommendations

Overall Service Delivery

- Quality literacy services, which are free or low-cost, are needed with the following enhancements:
 - Provision of support services, such as having social workers available to work with students
 - Utilization of a holistic approach
 - Service locations that are convenient and located in the community
 - Flexible service hours, such as in the evenings and on weekends
- Services are needed within the school system to help all parents negotiate the system and advocate for their children, especially those who are non-native speakers with limited English.
- Cultural diversity, cultural sensitivity and a broader awareness of learning styles needs to be enhanced with the staff, curricula and policies of educational programming, kindergarten through adult.
- Access to services for parents/students/families should be streamlined.
- An “Education Center” should be created; a place where people are available to answer questions, and which offers case management, assessment/screening, and information about services.
- Greater promotion of and access to professional development opportunities.

Identifying Those In Need of Services

- Develop informal programming (such as the Family Place at libraries) that is a precursor to formal programming to support literacy for those who may not be ready to enter or engage in assessment and commit to a program because of fear, time restraints, etc.
- Utilize places where individuals naturally go, such as health care facilities, Family Resource Centers, and schools, to identify those who are in need of services.
- Utilize assessment tools to identify the literacy needs of families, including adults and children.

Referral System

- Implementation of services that would enhance the current referral system, such as:
 - Incorporating follow-up capabilities to the current referral system
 - Raising awareness of need and outreach for literacy services
- The creation of a literacy tool kit to enhance referrals, which would include information about:
 - Initial screening procedures
 - Literacy services
 - Literacy statistics and research
- Increase the role of health care institutions, particularly physicians and medical personnel, as a referral source.
- Identification of multiple entry points in the community where individuals can receive referrals to services.

Funding and Accountability

- Funding is needed for a clearinghouse that would coordinate and keep track of literacy services. It could provide general information to the public, in addition to specific information for agencies/programs regarding:
 - What are the service needs
 - Where are the gaps in services
 - Which services are being provided and by whom
 - What funding is available for which services
 - In what areas could collaborations be encouraged
- Additional funding opportunities are needed, linking services for children with services for adults and vice versa.
- In order to maximize funding, programs should:
 - Merge resources for specific purposes
 - Reprioritize their functions in order to see services maintained in an economic climate where expansion may not be possible
- Increase funding to Family Resource Center programs to expand services offered and enhance their response to different cultures, languages and related needs/issues.

Collaboration and Communication

- Increased communication and collaboration to improve the system and enhance the success of students is needed among literacy providers, other agencies and:
 - Faith-based communities
 - Family Resource Centers
 - Health care providers
 - Job training programs
 - Social workers
- Increased collaborations resulting in a three-pronged approach would enhance the success of all. A three-pronged approach would include:
 - Case management services
 - Literacy/education services
 - Job training/career development services

Advocacy and Awareness

- In order to create a community that values learning:
 - Identify a national spokesperson that appeals to a diverse audience, such as a music personality
 - Create a message that will empower people and encourage them to come forward for services
 - Promote the message that literacy equals power
 - Highlight the economic impact of low literacy
 - Utilize public service announcements on TV, radio and newspapers as a way to promote message
- Raise awareness of the close relationship between services for adults and services/success for children among professionals, funders, and the general public.
- Publicize evidence that literacy services for adults have higher student retention and more success when they are tied to real-life experiences (i.e. grocery shopping, job-training, job-seeking, etc.).
- Articulate the importance of literacy to both those who need services and to those who fund services.
- Increase the knowledge of professionals who are in regular contact with young children, such as health care and child care providers, regarding the importance of pre-literacy skills.
- Reduce the stigma of low literacy and accessing services.
- Disseminate best practice information that includes concrete examples of successful programming.

School System

- Teacher training needs to be enhanced to incorporate the social issues that students face and the changing attitudes and values of students.
- Increased recruitment of minority teachers is needed.
- Development of community schools which are available 24 hours a day with full resources.
- Children need to be aware of and exposed to what is available to them early on to develop goals and visualize success.
- Integration of holistic models, which focus on the family, into school systems.
- Provide opportunities for successful students to be role models.

Family Literacy

- Encourage families to build upon their strengths as they build a literate home environment.
- Literacy services need to incorporate a holistic approach, understanding the impact a parent's literacy skills have on their child and vice versa.
- Increased networking among literacy providers (which can be enhanced through the creation of an Education Center and a Literacy Clearinghouse, as mentioned above).
- Increased awareness of the role one's emotional and physical health plays in the learning process and how it impacts readiness or ability to learn.
- Increased mentoring programs.
- Increased grassroots mobilization around the issue of literacy.
- Encourage Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) to work to enhance family literacy and success in schools.