

Reading is Half the Battle

Arm Yourself: Grab a Book

Abstract

The pilot program for our family literacy project was developed to reach potential GED students in the community, but also to help families to build a literacy-rich environment at home. We worked to accomplish this task by creating a family literacy project called, "Reading is Half the Battle."

This series covered four topics:

- How to Get a Library Card
- Financial Literacy
- Nutrition and Wellness
- Positive Images

Introduction

Family literacy refers to a continuum of programs that addresses the intergenerational nature of literacy. Under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, family literacy programs integrate (1) interactive literacy activities between parent and child; (2) training in parenting activities; (3) Parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency (2014). (4) age appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences."

A few of the metrics commonly used to evaluate family literacy include:

- Attendance
- Persistence in educational goal attainment (for adults and children)
- Improved partnerships with schools
- Improved academic achievement in adults and children

We surveyed 30 current students participating in our ABE and ESL programs to determine what topics they found most important. The events were based on the findings of the surveys. The most popular topics were getting a library card, financial literacy, nutrition and personal wellness. We did not provide an evaluation form, but after each event students shared with us how much they enjoyed the session and activities. Success was measured by how many students would return for the next event.

We also collaborated with community partners, such as the library, local banks, and the new UK Extension Office in Graves County. The events were held in different location to allow students from the inner city and county to attend.

Product Description & Motivation

We held four Family Literacy events during the pilot project. Our first event was Hot Chocolate With the Grinch! Our first event brought in 32 adults and 22 kids!! All activities were held in-person. We served hot pizza and plenty of sweets. Individuals from the Graves County Library came out to show parents how to get a library card, along with the importance of literacy in the home, and benefits of having a library card. While parents were learning about the library card, children were decorating picture frames as a fun way to display their Grinch pictures. PACT did not disappoint! Parents and children worked together to decorate delicious cookies!

Our second event, Financial Literacy was another success with 30 adults and 28 kids attending. We partnered with Regions Bank in Mayfield, KY to explain the importance of budgeting, saving, and spending. Children time consisted of them making their own piggy banks. PACT was a literacy book sent home for parents to read with their child(ren).

The third event, Family Nutrition Education Night was held in-person at the new University of Kentucky Extension office in Mayfield, KY with 25 adults and 13 children. Ladies from this location were excited to teach our parents what good nutrition looks like and why it is important. PACT was super fun; parents and children worked together to create food pictures.

Our final Family Literacy event was Career Path, Resources and Positive Employability. We partnered once again with the UK Extension Office in Mayfield, KY for this event. This event drew in 28 adults and 18 children. Parents learned how to dress for an interview, along with soft skills. PACT time involved parents and children getting to explore a firetruck. They were also able to ask the fireman about his job. During Child Time, we had children to dress paper dolls, in the career of their choice. This was a huge hit!!

Baseline & Goal

This Family Literacy pilot project was designed to engage students and families and encourage them to create a literacy-rich home. There was no baseline to compare these events. The survey we gave students was used to determine the focus of the family literacy events. The topics most popular with students were used by our team to plan and host these events.

Results

Although this program was not created to increase enrollment in our program, we were hoping to gain potentially new students. Even though we did not achieve this goal, the pilot was a huge success. It allowed students to engage with family members, other students, and instructors in a nontraditional setting.

Discussion

By bringing ABE/ESL students together for these events, students were able to network with each other. Our students are no different from others across the state. Whether ABE or ESL, they all face similar challenges when trying to get to class.

Conclusions

The family literacy pilot was a huge success! Both ABE and ESL students were able to create stronger bonds through the events. In addition to building community, students gained skills to help them in everyday life and solve problems when situations arise.

