
Evaluation of the Families Helping Families Program

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EVALUATION OF THE FAMILIES HELPING FAMILIES LITERACY PROGRAM

1.0 INTRODUCTION

There is substantial support in the literature that literacy acquisition occurs within the context of the family and efforts to enhance a child's literacy development are increasingly effective when both the child and his or her parents are involved (Jongsma, 1990; Purcell-Gates, 1993; Morrow, 1993; Nickse, 1990; Mulhern, 1994; Poulton, 1993). The research suggests that a child's literacy skills and educational achievement are directly linked with the value placed upon literacy in the home and the literacy practices modeled by parents. As expressed by Darling (1993):

"... excellence in education is an empty dream for youths who are in homes where literacy is neither practiced or valued. Literacy and the value of education are intergenerational and messages about education transmitted in the home are critical to the future success of children."

Acknowledging the intergenerational link affecting literacy development, an abundance of literacy programs that involve both adults and children have proliferated in recent years. It is estimated that there are more than 500 such programs in existence across the country (Nickse, 1991). These programs are commonly referred to as family literacy or intergenerational literacy programs, terms that are used in different ways by different people. Regardless of the names given to the programs, however, the intent of all of them is to treat literacy as a social activity to benefit younger and older learners. These programs are generally characterized by instruction for parents and children working either collaboratively, in parallel settings, or both.

The most commonly cited classification of family literacy programs was developed by Nickse (1990) who created a framework for categorizing programs by the target participant -- adults alone, children alone, adults and children together. What has been missing from the discussion of family literacy programs, however, is who *provides* instruction. This report presents the findings of an evaluation of a new type of family literacy intervention that goes beyond including families as recipients of instruction by also designating families as providers of instruction -- a family-learner, family-tutor approach identified as Families Helping Families (FHF).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out by the Professional Development Program of Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy. The study examined the processes of program implementation and relied primarily on qualitative data derived from the following sources:

- ♦ Review of project proposal and progress reports
- ♦ Review of key sources of family literacy literature
- ♦ On-site structured interviews with affiliate directors, program coordinators, program collaborators, tutors, and learners
- ♦ Interviews with State-level LVA staff
- ♦ Observation of program activities

Because the sites did not systematically collect data on outcome measures, an impact assessment of the changes in learner skills was not possible.

Since the FHF program sites were not chosen randomly, and only 3 of 52 affiliates were involved, they can not be considered truly representative of all LVA sites in New York State. However, the organizational arrangements the participants work within, and the relationships in the community they encounter, are not unique. Therefore, the findings from this analysis can be used, with some caution, to inform the development of similar efforts at other locations.

3.0 BACKGROUND

When the New York State Education Department issued *A New Compact for Learning*, Literacy Volunteers of America of New York State (LVA-NYS) observed that the document was child-focused and void of an adult literacy and adult learning component. This, in part, prompted LVA-NYS to stress the need to promote family-centered learning in its state planning process. At about the same time, LVA-NYS became aware of an anonymous donor's interest in supporting a literacy project and submitted a proposal to the funding source to offer a traditional family literacy program. The program was based upon the Reading with Children model that had been developed by the national LVA office. Reading with Children is a small group approach that teaches parents how to help their children develop literacy skills.

The proposal was rejected by the sponsor who expressed the desire to support a new approach to delivering literacy instruction within a family context -- linking family tutors with family learners. The LVA-NYS electronically communicated this idea to the local LVA affiliates to assess the interest in the field in this type of approach. LVA-NYS was assured by a number of the affiliates that they would like to try to implement this new model of service delivery.

The proposal was rewritten to incorporate the family-to-family model and the sponsor notified LVA-NYS that they would support the program. It seemed that the funder was most

interested in experimenting with the feasibility of a new approach to delivering family literacy rather than focusing on achieving a certain level of participation and attaining specified outcomes. They wanted to know, can the model work? This was a departure from standard contractual agreements since LVA-NYS receives most of its funding from the public sector which places a much greater emphasis on achieving "numbers."

Three affiliates -- LVA of Rochester, LVA of Ontario County, and LVA of Broome/Tioga -- were identified to implement Families Helping Families based upon their experience with previous efforts in family literacy or their expressed interest in the model. There was no formal competitive process to apply for funding on the part of the local affiliates.

Other than the overall family to family model, no specific methodology or approach was prescribed by the sponsor. The sponsor did not define family and LVA-NYS originally envisioned matching nuclear families or single moms with children. This would later change.

Once the funding was approved, the directors of the three identified affiliates and LVA-NYS staff met in Geneva. The group reviewed the proposal, established a time line, and explored implementation issues. Within six weeks the affiliates were to hire coordinators for the program.

4.0 START UP

A three month planning period was built into the grant to provide time for the local affiliates to hire staff, develop job descriptions, and make program refinements. Although the sponsor imposed no specific approach outside the family-to-family model, certain decisions regarding implementation had been made by LVA-NYS.

In LVA of Rochester, the emphasis was to be on reaching Rochester's large Hispanic community, an underserved population that the local affiliate had limited contact.

In Broome/Tioga, the focus was to build on already-existing programs being offered by the affiliate. Computer labs operating in Owego and at the Binghamton High School would be open to the families of enrolled learners. In addition, plans were made to expand the affiliate's program with the Broome County Head Start.

For LVA of Ontario County, it was decided that the affiliate would partner with Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS) which had a well-established presence in Geneva through its Student Literacy Corps. The Student Literacy Corps, established in 1988, is a federally funded program that trains students to work as tutors with children and adults in a variety of settings. The collaboration was based on HWS's experience in the field of literacy and ties to the Geneva community. Prior to FHF, Ontario County LVA had limited involvement in Geneva and had not previously collaborated with the college.

Once the affiliate coordinators and a state-wide coordinator were hired, a meeting was conducted in Ithaca to clarify the administrative procedures and program issues. The group spent considerable time discussing the definition of "family." They settled on a rather vague notion of family. As described in the FHF Year One Report:

"The concept of family in the 90's is more amorphous than realized. With the resources of library systems, reflection on personal experience, and brainstorming with people across the country as well as neighbors, it seems safe to say that in families the most common and positive characteristics exhibited include adaptability, trust, humor, love, cohesion, and a sense of support of members; mindful that those members are not necessarily all related to one another. Consequently what appears to define family is a group of loving, caring, supportive people with some shared experience or interest; Kurdish immigrants in an apartment house, a Head Start parent's group, as well as two and three generation clusters."

This definition of family resulted in a lack of clarity regarding the FHF target population. Since groups that were already involved in LVA programs could presumably fit into the broad definition of family, the original intent of testing a new model of service delivery was somewhat undermined. However, program developers need to be cautious not to utilize an overly narrow definition that would undermine culturally-defined conceptions of family.¹

5.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 The "Experimental Method" Goal

There seemed to be consensus among the state and local staff involved in FHF that the primary goal of the program was to test the feasibility and effectiveness of a new delivery method of family literacy instruction -- matching tutor families with learner families -- to impact on the whole family. The program was perceived of as an experiment and achieving a certain level of participation was not as important as testing the viability of a new approach to tutoring. However, as some of the programs experienced difficulties in implementing the family-to-family model, they departed from this goal, developed secondary goals, and used the broadened definition of family. Only one affiliate -- LVA of Rochester -- persisted in trying to match family-tutors with family-learners throughout the duration of the grant.

5.2 The "ESL Family" Goal

Two of the programs -- LVA of Rochester and LVA of Broome/Tioga -- were designed to serve ESL populations. The participants in these programs seemed to emphasize goals related to assisting recent immigrants adapt to life in America. Goals expressed by participants in these programs included:

¹ For example, the Kurdish women's group perceived themselves as a family unit.

- ♦ to encourage non-English speaking participants to read to their children more often in English
- ♦ to expose recent immigrants to American culture
- ♦ to provide the learner family with a good experience with American family

5.3 The "Family Literacy" Goal

The three sites were also committed to advancing the goals of intergenerational learning. These included:

- ♦ to help families create the atmosphere of literacy in their homes
- ♦ to instill a sense that education and learning has value in an intergenerational setting.
- ♦ to increase the amount of reading materials in the home

5.4 The "Local Affiliate" Goal

Some affiliates viewed their involvement in FHF as way to enhance and expand their programs. Some of these goals included:

- ♦ to establish a presence in a new community
- ♦ to develop further family literacy approaches in the affiliate
- ♦ to reach a new population of learners

6.0 RECRUITMENT

The three local affiliates are not usually involved in active recruitment efforts to attract tutors or learners; the majority of participants typically come to LVA through "word of mouth." The FHF Coordinators needed to develop new procedures to recruit both tutors and learners. A variety of recruitment methods were adapted. There was not one technique that can be identified as the most successful; the best recruitment strategy seemed to involve adopting a variety of approaches.

Some of the coordinators attempted to recruit both tutor-families and learner-families through the affiliate's regular pool of applicants. This seemed to be a logical approach, since these individuals already expressed an interest in tutoring or being tutored. However, the coordinators found that some of the LVA staff and volunteers resisted incorporating a family-oriented approach in current organizational practices. These workers, many of whom had been affiliated with LVA for a long time, maintained a traditional view of LVA as an adult-centered program and had established methods in performing their jobs. Some of the Coordinators expressed frustration in the entrenched habits of staff:

"The LVA interviewers never seem to remember FHF."

"In January I watched an Asian woman come to our office with two children. The interviewer never mentioned FHF."

"The affiliate has traditionally viewed children as a nuisance. Intake forms often listed children as a barrier for participation."

"The mission of LVA had always been to help adults. However, adults were never seen as parents of children and the role they play in helping the next generation become more competent was ignored."

To overcome this adult-centered perspective required modifications in procedures. At two sites the intake form was changed to include questions about children in the applicant's family and interest in FHF. One Coordinator reviewed intake forms before they were sent to the person responsible for tutor/student matches to alert her of potential FHF candidates. The office in Rochester was rearranged to be more "child friendly" by setting up a seating area with children's books. The programs are still struggling with this, but major changes have occurred.

Besides relying on inquiries initiated by potential participants, a number of other recruitment methods were explored. The most successful practices included press releases, announcements in church bulletins, flyers displayed in libraries, and inserts in paychecks of large employers.

6.1 Recruiting Tutors

Recruiting tutors was probably the biggest challenge encountered by the sites. The sites found that families, particularly those with younger children, have many time constraints.² LVA tutors who responded to a survey sent by one affiliate indicated that it was too difficult to get two people from the same family available at the same time. According to one affiliate director:

"Families who are a part of our tutor base are working people who are overextended and their kids involved in a lot of activities."

Another director felt it was difficult to interest an entire family. According to her:

"Tutoring is an individually driven interest. As impassioned as you may be, it is hard to get the entire family impassioned."

One Coordinator delivered presentations about the FHF program at LVA functions such as tutor training and special LVA events. This was partially successful. A few of the FHF tutors were former LVA tutors.

All the tutor families that participated in FHF worked with ESL learner families. LVA of Rochester and Broome/Tioga were primarily targeted to ESL learner-families. In addition, LVA of Ontario County, which was not targeted to ESL families, had the only family pairing with an ESL family.

² Although the design did not dictate any specific age for child participants, the assumption was to involve families with children in their early teens or younger.

In Rochester, the coordinator originally sought tutor-families with teenage children, but subsequently decided that children who were emerging readers were better suited for the program.

Of the tutors who were interviewed, one read about FHF in the affiliate's newsletter; another heard about FHF at a church function, and a third through a refugee resettlement organization. These tutors were attracted to the program because it was a way for them to make a contribution in their community without having to leave their children at home. The moms of the tutor families were involved in several social causes. They were especially interested in participating in the ESL program because they found meeting people from other cultures "intriguing," and they wanted to combat what they described as an "anti-immigrant mentality" perpetuating this country. They also felt that the ESL program provided an important learning experience for their children:

"I wanted my kids to see how lucky they are and what other families go through in other countries."

"I wanted to expose my children to other cultures; show my children in a safe context that strangers are not evil and you can learn things from others."

"This was a novelty to our kids. I wanted them to understand, not everyone lives a life of privilege. The program is rewarding at both ends."

"[Participating in FHF] had an effect on my own family. We learned about Columbia. The kids developed skills in an odd way. They learned about honoring a commitment."

The parents of tutor families were very excited about the program and the stories of their work with the learner families were very moving.

6.2 Recruiting Learners

Learner recruitment, outside of approaching those individuals who came on their own initiative to LVA, was primarily done through arrangements with other agencies. The ESL programs cooperated with a variety of agencies that deal with newly-arrived immigrants -- churches that sponsor refugee families, refugee placement centers, the World Relief Organization. The coordinators encountered some resistance by some of these agencies to collaborate with LVA and refer clients. The coordinators found that agencies serving recent refugees are "territorial" and their workers believe they know what is "best for their clients." Besides agencies serving newly-arrived immigrants, the affiliates commonly collaborated with Head Start programs.

One site found it helpful to broaden the eligibility criteria for learners from Hispanic families to any ESL family. The affiliate director further recommended expanding the program to serve any family who expressed an interest.

As was the case in recruiting tutor-families, recruiting learner-families was most successful with ESL families. Several explanations were offered.

For one, many newly arrived immigrant families experience extreme social isolation. The ESL families benefit from FHF in other ways besides enhancing literacy skills. The program provides a needed socialization experience for the whole family. The learner families were able to develop meaningful relationships with American families who, in many cases, helped the learner family negotiate systems and deal with complicated situations (i.e., moving, acquiring health insurance, registering the children in school). According to one coordinator, the FHF program provided these benefits:

"For some of the adults, especially mothers who were recently resettled refugees, the FHF experience was one of the only contacts they had with American culture. For the kids, it allows them to have contact with American kids, and discover the norms of society."

The focus of literacy instruction is different for newly-arrived immigrant families than for American families. With American families, one of the primary goals of family literacy efforts has been to train parents as teachers of their children. However, in many of the ESL families that participated in FHF, the children possess more advanced literacy skills (i.e., in English) than their parents. One coordinator commented:

"While the children attend school, the parents languish. This causes a change in the structure of the family for the many participants who are from cultures where adults are respected. America is a youth culture and further deteriorates the family. FHF was successful in giving parents and their children an even start."

The emphasis in ESL programs was to train parents to become better readers themselves and thus better literacy models for their children.

7.0 PROGRAM DESIGN

Figure 2
Overview of
Families Helping Families Programs

LVA of Rochester	
Learners	ESL families (usually mother and children)
Tutors	Families (usually mother and at least one child)
Major Features	Tutor families, after completing a three-hour family literacy training and optional ESL training, provide ESL instruction in the homes of learner families. The adults and children participate separately and toward the end of the session, come together for a joint activity.
Primary Goal	"Experimental method" goal
LVA of Broome/Tioga	
Learners	ESL families (usually mother and children)
Tutors	Adults and student interns
Major Features	Learner families are tutored in small groups or one-on-one at a computer lab. Their children are involved in separate activities, including computer-assisted instruction, supervised by student interns. Tutoring in the learners home sometimes followed. Some family-to-family tutoring has naturally transpired.
Primary Goal	"ESL family" goal
LVA of Ontario County	
Learners	Moms and their children attending Head Start
Tutors	FHF Coordinator, student interns
Major Features	Moms receive group instruction in promoting literacy development with children at the Head Start site. Children are involved in separate activities by students from the HWS Student Literacy Corps. (At a second site, an adult tutor offers instruction to a mom while her children are involved in activities by the Student Literacy Corps)
Primary Goal	"Family literacy" goal

7.1 LVA of Rochester

The LVA of Rochester was the only participating affiliate in FHF that persisted in matching tutor families with learner families.³ The affiliate was committed to testing this new model of literacy instruction. According to the coordinator:

"I would rather fail following the FHF model, than succeed in recruiting large numbers and not follow the model."

The program started "frustratingly slow." At first there were trained tutor-families waiting for learners. The tutors went through LVA ESL classes and were disappointed when they could not be matched upon completion of the training, especially when the other trainees who were not part of FHF were assigned learners. It took about two months to make the first matches. Later there were learners but no tutors, which the coordinator found easier to handle.

Originally the plans were to have tutors (i.e., at least one adult in the family) go through the affiliate's ESL training (21 hours) which was followed by a three-hour family literacy training for the entire family. However, the ESL training was subsequently made optional and usually followed the family literacy training. Some indicated that the traditional LVA ESL training was too structured for a family-to-family model.

The Coordinator was an experienced trainer and developed a comprehensive family literacy training. It consisted of reacquainting the trainees with childhood literacy experiences, defining literacy, presenting effective reading approaches, brainstorming potential activities, exploring cultural diversity, and using the portfolio assessment. Participants were provided with a large number of handouts including: job descriptions, ideas for children's book projects, effective reading approaches, reading lists, and reading-related activities. No specific curriculum or lesson plans were given. Rather, the training enabled the participants to work within the context of the tutoring situation and develop projects that would be appropriate and beneficial to the learner-family. The tutor who was interviewed felt the training prepared her and her sons well. When the training is completed, tutors are provided with a backpack filled with children's books and craft supplies.

The tutoring took place in the learner-family's home. This is a departure from standard LVA practices which usually consists of arranging tutoring in public places, such as a library. However, the participants indicated that they preferred this arrangement and it worked out well.⁴ Generally, adults tutored the adults, the children played together, and then they would participate

³ The definition of family used here, is in a more traditional context -- parents or other primary caregiver and their children.

⁴ There is support in the literature, that home tutoring is effective. In a recent article on literacy programs for immigrant families (Lee and Patel) it was recommended that tutors work with family members in their homes "in order to build on the strengths of families and their culture."

in an activity together such as reading a book or do a craft activity. The families also went on field trips.

7. 2 LVA of Broome/Tioga

The FHF program organized by LVA Broome/Tioga was originally designed to build upon programs operating at established computer labs at two locations -- one in Owego that served primarily rural, white, Americans; and the other in Binghamton that primarily served recently resettled refugees.⁵ Most of the participants in the computer lab in Owego were single moms who were not that interested in family tutoring. According to the coordinator:

"Their response was 'this is my time and I don't want my kids around.' It seems that they did not have a sense of self anywhere else. They did not have a job, did not have an education. Once I figured that out, I wasn't going to impose this on them."

The lab in Binghamton became the chief site for FHF. The lab was well attended and very popular among the participating families.⁶ When the program began, the learners were primarily from Iraq; at the time of the site visit, the learners were from Laos, Mexico, and Iran. A few American families also come to the lab. The lab mostly serves mothers and their children.

The mothers initially met as a group with a group of tutors and subsequently paired off. A student intern worked with the children. There has been some collaborative family activities. Tutoring in the learner's homes occurred approximately 6 weeks after starting in the lab. There was some concern expressed by the affiliate about the liability involved in home tutoring. However, the tutor who was interviewed said she felt comfortable in entering the home since she had the opportunity to become acquainted with the learner family in the lab. A few family matches naturally transpired when the home tutoring started.

In addition to implementing a variety of instructional activities in the computer lab, several special events were coordinated including a field trip to the library, an international dinner, and videotaping parents and children reading together.

The tutors received regular LVA training. There was no special training in family literacy. The Binghamton coordinator concurred with the Rochester coordinator that LVA literacy training may be too structured and working with families requires tutors to be more spontaneous.

⁵ About three to four years ago, Binghamton was designated as a refugee resettlement area. Binghamton now has a large immigrant population from such countries as Vietnam, Iraq, Somalia, and Russia.

⁶ Research indicates that the use of computers provides low literate adults with a "socially acceptable" way to learn beginning reading skills. Little stigma seems to be associated with coming to school to learn to use computers (Jongsma, 1990).

The staff were allowed to participate in a number of conferences and workshops that they found very worthwhile. The coordinators and affiliate directors found LVA-NYS generally helpful in operating the program. The three coordinators and state-level staff met quarterly. The coordinators found these meetings useful.

The relationship between the FHF coordinators and state-level staff was somewhat confusing. This might be a result of the new type of subcontracting arrangement. Typically, the local affiliates are managed very independently with local staff reporting to a local board of directors. The FHF program had a new intermediary between the state and the local office -- a statewide FHF coordinator. Some the local staff were unsure who they should report to -- the affiliate director, the statewide FHF coordinator, or both. The locals felt they needed more direction from above. The statewide staff wanted to preserve the integrity of local decision making and control.

Besides the quarterly meetings, there was frequent communication between the state and local levels. However, some of the sites found on-line computer communication to be awkward.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Assessment

There was little or no standardized testing of FHF participants. Most of the assessment of participant progress was based on anecdotal evidence such as narratives from tutors and informal contact with learners.

Overall, the first two years of FHF have provided numerous lessons that should be useful in planning and implementing similar efforts in the future. The availability of funding promoted useful program innovations at the local level, providing more families with the opportunity to participate in family literacy efforts. The learners we spoke with were very enthusiastic about their experiences in FHF and feel that they made improvements in their own literacy development and in the achievement of their children. In addition, the grant enabled the LVA sites to experiment with different models of family literacy that could be most effective in their localities.

The programs were partially successful in implementing the FHF initiative as originally designed. LVA of Rochester was particularly successful in achieving the "experimental model" goal -- the program limited participation to family tutors matched with family learners. In Broome/Tioga, although the emphasis was not on family matching, a few family pairs naturally transpired from outreach to newly-resettled immigrant families. Ontario County was unable to recruit family tutors.

For secondary goals -- the "ESL family" goal, the "family literacy" goal, and the "local affiliate" goal -- many accomplishments were noted.

For programs that tutored ESL families, many benefits were described by tutors, learners, and coordinators. These included advantages to the learner-family as well as to the tutor-family:

"There was improved English, family bonding and literacy awareness in the [learner-family] home."

"For [the learner], she has someone to talk to who understands her who is American. It has helped her negotiate the system."

"In the culture of the family we tutored, women are have a low status. The program help to set an example of what women in America expect from their children, it set a model of respectful behavior for moms."

"It helped my children to understand that families from different cultures have a lot in common. We both value children and education."

FHF had some direct effects on enhancing literacy practices and behaviors in the homes of participating learner families. According to some of the learners:

"Participation in FHF led to self improvement and the ability of the moms to better help their kids."

"I do more activities with my kids at home. We read together and talk about the book. The kids read stories, I now read to all my children."

"I learned ways to help my kid speak properly. She had speech problems and [the coordinator] provided me with ways to work on sounds."

Finally, FHF also helped to firmly establish family literacy in the participating affiliate, test new models of service delivery, and form ties with new providers:

"FHF raised the level of awareness that literacy is a family activity -- before this, we did not do much in the way of family literacy."

"We were able to reach an immigrant population in a different way."

"Interaction with other agencies has been positive and a basis for further work."

"A whole lot of family literacy came to fruition because of grant. Now our affiliate is very involved with family literacy."

Indeed, the involvement in family literacy affected the practices and culture of the affiliates.

9.2 The Planning Process

Although three months was built in for planning, it did not seem too adequate, especially because the local affiliates did not have the advantage of going through a planning stage that is typically part of a competitive grant application process. It may be beneficial to develop a two-phase process in which a time-limited planning grant is followed by an operational grant, *if* the former results in an acceptable plan. This would allow local agency staff to develop a common vision and resolve fundamental operational issues such as recruitment, intakes, matches, and tutoring locations.

It would also be beneficial to involve as many staff and volunteers as possible in the planning process to obtain their "buy in" and contribute ideas for implementation. Of particular importance are staff who conduct intakes and those who perform matches between tutors and learners. Two coordinators suggested conducting a group meeting of everyone working in office when the program is about to begin. In addition, it would probably be useful to include collaborating agencies in the planning process to work out some of the more difficult arrangements prior to implementation. The sites experienced difficulty in maintaining strong linkages with other community providers.

A competitive RFP process might have fostered better planning and commitment on the part of the participating affiliates. It might have also involved selecting those affiliates who seemed to best suited to trying innovative approaches.

9.3 Recruitment

It seems that the ESL population is particularly suited for the model of having a family as a tutor. As already noted, FHF provided a much desired socialization experience for newly-arrived immigrant families. The participating tutor parents also felt that they and their children received numerous benefits from participating in FHF. Some of these ideas provide the basis for a marketing campaign to attract family tutors. Some of the parents in tutor families were attracted to FHF because it allowed them to make a volunteer commitment and contribution in their community without leaving their children. They also felt it was beneficial to expose the children to different cultures. The stories of family sharing and support were very moving and should be communicated to build interest in others. Two coordinators also felt that another possible source of tutors are parents who are home-schooling their children, since these parents may be looking for additional socialization experiences for their children.

As LVA becomes more active in offering family literacy programs, certain changes at the local affiliate level need to occur. The steps taken by some of the FHF affiliates such as revising the LVA intake form and creating physical space that is more "child-friendly" are two small but meaningful ways that have assisted the agency in moving closer to a more family-oriented approach.

9.4 Training

The sites found that there was a need to be flexible in the type of training offered and that consideration should be given to the backgrounds of tutors and the tutoring situation they will encounter. Some of the FHF participants felt they could not make the commitment to 18 hours of LVA training -- one tutor was attending graduate school for an MA degree in reading and simply did not have the time; the HWS Student Literacy Corps volunteers couldn't sacrifice 18 hours of their one semester internship on training. Perhaps shorter training modules could be delivered in special circumstances.

A specially-designed family literacy tutor training that involved children was well received. Rochester has a well-developed family training that should be explored for replication.

9.5 Operations

The ambiguous definition of family might have contributed to a lack of focus in implementing the model. Perhaps limiting involvement to parents or other primary caregivers and their children might have provided more direction for the sites to implement the model as originally designed.

The FHF experience indicated that attempts to implement a new model might be easier when they are approached as a totally new program rather than adapting present activities to incorporate the model. In LVA of Broome/Tioga and Ontario County, current programs were expanded to include families; in Rochester FHF began as a totally new program. It seems that it

is better to target recruitment to new participants, rather than to fit present participants into a new process.

In general, however, it was difficult to get FHF "off the ground." The best approach might be to incorporate FHF one family literacy option among many.

The home was well suited for the ESL family matches. However, some sites were reluctant to engage in home tutoring. Perhaps LVA-NYS could establish some protocol for instituting home tutoring. The tutors in Binghamton felt comfortable going to learner homes after they had the opportunity to be acquainted with the learner in the lab.

9.6 Administration

The relationship between a central supervising agency and local programs is often problematic. There is a need to compromise between two conflicting positions: (1) the necessity to provide direction and supervision from above and (2) the desire to maintain local autonomy and control. In general, LVA-NYS affiliates operate fairly independently through a local Board of Directors. However, this relationship may need to be reexamined for implementing a pilot project, especially one that is experimenting with a new type of service delivery. It may have been helpful if some standard practices were instituted across all sites, especially a uniform assessment procedure, that could be used to compare the strengths and weaknesses among the three programs. In general, the local affiliates would have liked more direction from above, but did enjoy the freedom to implement the program in the way they perceived as most appropriate in their locality.

On the local level, two coordinators felt that it would have been useful to arrange tutor "get togethers," a common practice that LVA-NYS affiliates conduct in standard programs. One coordinator felt that she may have been too reluctant to impose outside time lines on tutors that would have included such things as designated dates for assessment and periodic face-to-face visits with learners and tutors.

9.7 Summary of Recommendations

To implement other pilot projects, the following approaches should be considered:

- ♦ Develop an RFP competitive application process and/or a two-phase grant process in which a time-limited planning grant is followed by an operational grant.
- ♦ Involve as many stakeholders as possible in the planning process. This would include LVA staff and volunteers, as well as collaborating agencies, to obtain their "buy in," contribute ideas for implementation, and work out some of the more difficult arrangements before implementation.

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