



# Good Practices

## **Literacy and Parenting Skills Good Practices**

The Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS) program is an innovative family literacy program created by Further Education Society of Alberta (FESA) founders Laureen MacKenzie and Elaine Cairns in partnership with Bow Valley College in Calgary. It is offered in partnership with community agencies that serve low-literate parents and/or their children. Sessions have been designed to strengthen parent relationships with their children, enhance learners own literacy skills, and provide skills to help them assist their children's language and literacy skill development. Our 20 trainers have trained 1700 facilitators representing 270 communities across Canada. Facilitators are given strategies for adapting the program to meet regional needs. This includes using a name other than LAPS if this would better serve a particular community and help attract parents.

Separate programs which accomplish the same objectives but which are culturally sensitive have been developed for new Canadians, Aboriginal and Francophone populations. In addition there are supplementary materials to be used with parents with minimal English skills, materials for parents of teens, and male parents, materials for parent/toddler interactive sessions, and materials for facilitators who work with parents who have lived in violent circumstances.

The following LAPS Good Practice statements reflect what FESA and Bow Valley College believe to be the elements of an effective, high-quality LAPS program. The statements are a

way of setting goals that can inform program planning, delivery, and evaluation. They are not definitive or meant to be used as measures, but rather should serve as guiding principles for practitioners, funders, and policy makers. These statements, therefore, should be seen as dynamic and needing to be redefined over time.

The LAPS statements have been developed to address ten themes in the practice of family literacy. We have also included several tips which may assist anyone considering offering a LAPS program.

### **Definitions of terms used in these statements:**

**Family literacy is defined as “the ways parents, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community.” (International Reading Association, n.d.)**

**Family literacy programs are defined as “the range of initiatives that recognize the influence of the family on the literacy development of family members, and that support families in literacy activity and in accessing literacy resources.” (Thomas, Skage, and Jackson, 1998)**

**Parent is defined as a significant adult and primary caretaker in a child's life. (The Illinois Family Education Institute, 1996)**

For more information on LAPS visit our website [www.nald.ca/laps](http://www.nald.ca/laps) or contact [lmackenzie@bowvalleycollege.ca](mailto:lmackenzie@bowvalleycollege.ca) or [ecairns@bowvalleycollege.ca](mailto:ecairns@bowvalleycollege.ca)



# Good Practices

## 1. Intergenerational

Successful family literacy programs work with parents and children, directly or indirectly, to establish an intergenerational cycle of literacy achievement.

LAPS	Yes	No	N/A	If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken
a) Parents/caregivers attend with their children if it is a parent-child interactive program				
b) Parents are encouraged to involve other family members in sharing books with the children.				
c) Caregivers other than parents – (i.e. grandparents, guardians) are welcome in program and are encouraged to work with young family members to develop language and literacy skills.				

## 2. Collaboration and Community Capacity Building

Successful family literacy programs recognize the importance of collaboration and are developed, delivered, and continually improved with participant and community input.

LAPS	Yes	No	N/A	If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken
<b>a)</b> LAPS is offered at community sites in collaboration with other agencies working with low-literate families.				
<b>b)</b> LAPS facilitators keep the literacy needs of parents in mind, referring them to other family and adult literacy programs as opportunities arise.				
<b>c)</b> Partnerships are an integral component of the success of a LAPS program.				
<b>d)</b> Program partners contribute their own expertise to a LAPS program (Public Health, library, agency, etc.).				
<b>e)</b> LAPS ensures that ongoing support and information about the program is provided to its partnering agencies.				
<b>f)</b> LAPS helps partners to build literacy development capacity within the community.				
<b>g)</b> Partnership agreements are completed for each program and are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that community needs are being met.				
<b>h)</b> Program coordinator is available to provide literacy support to partners.				

### 3. Build on Strengths

Successful family literacy programs build on literacy behaviors and strengths already present in families, and introduce additional strategies to help further enrich literacy activities in the home.

LAPS	Yes	No	N/A	If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken
<b>a)</b> Program coordinators, facilitators and partners deliver the program in an informal, open and accepting manner. All programs are competency-based.				
<b>b)</b> Program coordinators, facilitators and partners encourage parents to continue using the positive literacy strategies already present in their homes.				
<b>c)</b> Facilitators build on the strengths of parents to enhance their relationship with their children through effective parenting strategies.				
<b>d)</b> Facilitators build on the skills of parents through utilization of strategies that encourage them to explore their own literacy development in a safe environment.				
<b>e)</b> Facilitators help parents develop effective strategies for manipulating children's resources.				
<b>f)</b> Program coordinators, facilitators and partners share and model additional language and literacy development strategies and provide encouragement and appropriate resources for the parents to practice these strategies at home.				
<b>g)</b> Parents are encouraged to use book sharing strategies that best suit their family's interests.				
<b>h)</b> Parents are encouraged to involve other family members in the use of sound family literacy practices at home.				
<b>i)</b> Parents are encouraged to make greater use of available community resources.				

## 4. Responsive

Successful family literacy programs are flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of the families who participate in them.

LAPS	Yes	No	N/A	If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken
a) Program coordinators, and facilitators deliver the program at the request of the partners and the expressed interest of parents.				
b) Programs are run at times that best meet the needs of participants and are determined through collaboration with partners.				
c) Program is participatory and parental in-put helps shape each session.				
d) Materials used are selected based on the ages and literacy development stages of the children as well as the preferences and needs of the parents who attend.				
e) Material is presented in a variety of ways so as to appeal to all types of learners.				
f) Formative and summative evaluation measures are used to determine the efficacy of the program and future programs incorporate learnings from previous programs.				

## 5. Cultural Sensitivity

Successful family literacy programs are culturally sensitive, and use resources that are appropriate for specific participant groups.

a) Dual language books and wordless books are used when available.				
b) Coordinator and facilitators collaborate with community leaders for culturally specific materials and appropriate content.				
c) The special needs of each cultural group in community are addressed by working with members of that group.				
d) Coordinators and facilitators ensure that programs are culturally sensitive and cross-cultural in nature.				
e) Where possible people from highly represented cultural/language groups are facilitators in those programs.				

## 6. Essence

Successful family literacy programs offer activities that celebrate and emphasize the joy of learning.

LAPS	Yes	No	N/A	If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken
a) Facilitators, through their words and actions, model that learning is fun and enjoyable.				
b) Parents are given the opportunity to play with words, books, songs and stories.				
c) Facilitators encourage a positive attitude towards learning.				
d) Facilitators acknowledge and reinforce the positive literacy practices that are already taking place in the home.				
e) The learning and growth of parents and their children is celebrated.				

## 7. Sound Methods

Successful family literacy programs follow sound educational practices, appropriate for the literacy development of children and adults. Practitioners select from a variety of research-based approaches according to the needs of each group.

a) Program coordinators review research-based information at regular intervals and share this information with facilitators.				
b) A participatory approach is used which actively engages participants in their learning through exploration, experience, critical reflection and action.				
c) A family competency-based strengths model or empowerment model of family literacy is used based on collaboration, encouragement and shared decision-making.				
d) Program partners are encouraged to contact the coordinator with any questions/concerns that may arise before, during or after a program is complete.				
e) The LAPS program is based on research in emergent literacy, adult literacy, parent education, cultural awareness, community development and family literacy.				

## 8. Staff Qualifications

Successful family literacy programs have qualified and trained staff appropriate to the educational needs of children and adults and appropriate to specific roles and responsibilities within a particular delivery model.

LAPS	Yes	No	N/A	If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken
<b>a)</b> Facilitators and Program Coordinators, where possible, have taken LAPS training.				
<b>b)</b> Program coordinators and facilitators have taken Foundational Training in Family Literacy or Introduction to Family Literacy or have established competency in comparable training.				
<b>c)</b> Program facilitators have taken training in parent education and adult literacy in addition to emergent language and literacy development.				
<b>d)</b> Program coordinators ensure that new LAPS facilitators have access to appropriate mentoring opportunities and support to build on initial training.				
<b>e)</b> A minimum of one trained facilitator is present at each program session				
<b>f)</b> Semi-annual facilitator meetings are held to allow for sharing of experiences, challenges and successes.				
<b>g)</b> Program facilitators have a comprehensive understanding of child development.				
<b>h)</b> Program facilitators have an understanding of the cultural and language backgrounds of the families they work with.				
<b>i)</b> Program facilitators enjoy working with families, which include young children.				

## 9. Access

Successful family literacy programs are held in accessible, welcoming locations. Support is given to overcome barriers to participation, such as lack of childcare.

LAPS	Yes	No	N/A	If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken
a) Parents are referred to a LAPS program by partnering agencies that already have contact with vulnerable families.				
b) Efforts are made to attract and support multi-barriered families.				
c) LAPS is offered at community sites that families are able to access easily.				
d) Parents feel safe and welcome and their experience is valued.				
e) Older siblings are welcome.				
f) Nutritious snacks/light meals are provided.				
g) If available, transportation and childcare support is offered to families.				
h) Coordinator works with all on-site staff to create awareness of the program and to encourage all to contribute to a welcoming environment.				

## 10. Evaluation

Successful family literacy programs include an on-going, manageable evaluation process that produces information useful for program development and accountability.

a) A logic model of outcome-based evaluation is used.				
b) Evaluations are collected from community partners, facilitators and parents.				
c) Evaluation information is shared with partners, funders, and researchers.				
d) The program is accountable to partners and funders.				
e) Evaluation information is used to further develop programs to ensure that the needs of families and communities are addressed.				

**Good practice** tells us that:

- Every facilitator of a LAPS program should have a set of children's resources representing cited resources to be used in the sessions.
- All facilitators should have information about other learning opportunities available in the community for the learners who wish to carry on in their learning journey.
- Criminal Record Checks and Child Intervention Checks should be conducted on new facilitators, particularly those working with Parent/Child Interactive LAPS sessions.
- Organizations are encouraged to access funding to provide an honorarium for facilitators to attend in-services where appropriate. This honors the part-time, contracted nature of the LAPS facilitator.
- Adequate funds must be available to ensure that program co-ordination, outreach, and program facilitation support (mentoring, in-servicing on a continuous basis) is not compromised.

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