



Magic Carpet Ride

GOOD PRACTICES



Introduction

(Adapted from Statement of Good Practice for Family Literacy Programs in Alberta, May 2002)

Magic Carpet Ride Program, developed and offered through the Calgary Learning Centre, is a family literacy program for parents and their preschool-aged children. Families learn together in sessions that include stories, songs and various hands-on learning activities. Children are encouraged to direct their own learning by choosing activities from several learning stations that include books, fine motor activities, art, pre-writing activities, puzzles and imaginative play. Parents are given suggestions on providing rich learning experiences at home and incorporating literacy and learning into everyday activities. In addition, parents have opportunities to share their parenting experiences and gain important peer support. Specific topics such as discipline, nutrition and child development are discussed in informative workshops with professionals from our partnering agencies. What is unique about Magic Carpet Ride is the fact that the Program is facilitated by community volunteers who are mentored and supported by the Calgary Learning Centre's staff.

The following Magic Carpet Ride Good Practices statements reflect what Calgary Learning Centre believes to be the elements of an effective, high-quality Magic Carpet Ride 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.

As the field of family literacy continues to grow and change, what is considered to be a good practice in family literacy will also change. These statements, therefore, should be seen as dynamic and needing to be redefined over time.

The Magic Carpet Ride Good Practice Statements address ten themes in the practice of family literacy adopted from Statement of Good Practice for Family Literacy Programs in Alberta (2002). Based on the fact that trained volunteers are vital to Magic Carpet Ride Program and that volunteer support has proven to be a successful and effective way of increasing the capacity to provide service and meet community needs for family literacy programs, Calgary Learning Centre has added volunteer support as another promising practice for successful family literacy programs.

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 child's life. (The Illinois Family Education Institute, 1996).

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GOOD PRACTICES



1. Intergenerational

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

| Magic Carpet Ride | 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 preschool children (ages 3-6). | | | | |
| b) Younger siblings are welcome to attend the program. | | | | |
| c) All family members may attend with the children. | | | | |
| d) Parents are encouraged to involve other family members in family learning activities. | | | | |

2. Collaborative

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

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|--|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) Program is offered at schools and or community sites in collaboration with other agencies working with families that have preschool children. | | | | |

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|--|--|--|--|--|
| b) Establishing strong, meaningful and long-term relationship with schools, organizations and communities is acknowledged as an integral component of the Program's success. | | | | |
| c) A written partnership agreement exists that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each partner. | | | | |
| d) Partnership agreements are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that community needs are being met. | | | | |
| e) Program ensures that ongoing feedback and information about the program is provided to its partnering schools, agencies and organizations. | | | | |
| f) Program actively networks with organizations and agencies that serve similar target families. | | | | |
| g) 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 the families, and introduce additional strategies to help further enrich literacy activities in the home.

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|---|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) Program acknowledges that each family comes to the program with a set of experiences unique to them. | | | | |
| b) Program strives to create informal, inclusive and relaxed atmosphere where families can enjoy sharing learning experiences together. | | | | |
| c) Program reassures parents that each child learns and develops at his / her own rate and that all children have a great potential for learning. | | | | |

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|--|--|--|--|--|
| d) Program highlights how everyday family activities provide opportunities for learning and gives parents confidence that they are doing a good job when reading, talking, singing, cooking or shopping with their children. | | | | |
| e) Positive parent-child interactions and children's interest in literacy materials are acknowledged and celebrated. | | | | |
| f) Parents are encouraged to access services and resources available in their community. | | | | |

4. Responsive

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

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|---|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) Program is provided at the request of the partners and expressed interest in the community. | | | | |
| b) Program runs at times that best meet the needs of participants and that are determined through collaboration with partners. | | | | |
| c) Program provides developmentally appropriate activities for various ages and developmental levels. | | | | |
| d) Program strives to meet each child at their level of development and help them achieve their learning potential. | | | | |
| e) Program links families with needed services (e.g. housing, child care, educational programs) by providing information about available resources. | | | | |

5. Cultural Sensitivity

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

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|--|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) Program welcomes families of various cultural and language backgrounds. | | | | |
| b) Staff and volunteers are aware of relevant cultural interests of the participants. | | | | |
| c) Staff and volunteers are expected to learn about new cultures and respect their beliefs. | | | | |
| d) Cultural traditions of participating families are acknowledged and celebrated. | | | | |
| e) Families are encouraged to share books, stories, rhymes in their first language. | | | | |
| f) When possible, translation of some of the program materials is provided. | | | | |
| g) People from highly represented cultural/language groups are encouraged to become volunteer facilitators in the program. | | | | |

6. Essence

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

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|---|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) Program offers a variety of activities that are developmentally appropriate for different ages of children and accommodate different learning styles as well as various adult reading levels, which increases the opportunity for each participant to achieve success. | | | | |

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|--|--|--|--|--|
| b) Program acknowledges family as a child's first teacher and emphasizes how literacy activities at home help children develop a life long love of reading and learning. | | | | |
| c) Staff and volunteers model learning as a fun and enjoyable activity. | | | | |
| d) Based on research evidence, parents are strongly encouraged to participate in all activities with their children – if parents enjoy the program, the children will too. | | | | |

7. Sound Methods

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

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|--|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) Program is based on current research in family literacy, early childhood education and adult literacy. | | | | |
| b) Children's program materials are age-appropriate and strive to accommodate various developmental levels, learning styles and interests. | | | | |
| c) Adult program materials are written in plain language and strive to accommodate various adult reading levels. | | | | |
| d) Participatory approach and strength based model of family literacy are used to encourage families to guide their own learning. | | | | |
| e) Program participants, volunteer facilitators and partners are encouraged to contact the coordinator with any questions / concerns that may arise before / during or after the program is completed. | | | | |

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.

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|---|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) Program coordinator and assistant coordinator have taken Foundational Training in Family Literacy or Introduction to Family Literacy. | | | | |
| b) Staff has experience and / or training in early childhood education, parent education and adult literacy. | | | | |
| c) Staff is available to facilitate Magic Carpet Ride Facilitator Training and provide on-going and on-site volunteer training and mentoring. | | | | |
| d) Staff is knowledgeable and experienced in working with families of different cultural and language backgrounds. | | | | |
| e) Staff has opportunities for professional development workshops. | | | | |
| f) Staff is encouraged to be up-to-date on current research in Family Literacy. | | | | |
| g) Staff is encouraged to recruit potential volunteer facilitators from past program participants and community. | | | | |

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.

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|---|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) Program is offered at schools, family and community resource centres or other community sites. | | | | |

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|---|--|--|--|--|
| b) Particular efforts are made to have the program located within walking distance for the majority of target families. | | | | |
| c) Particular efforts are made to attract and support families who face barriers to participation. | | | | |
| d) Parents feel safe and welcome. | | | | |
| e) Younger and older siblings are welcome to attend the program. | | | | |
| f) Program can be offered to a minimum of 5 participants to a maximum of 20 participants depending on the available space and the community response. | | | | |

10. Evaluation

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

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|---|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) A logic model of outcome-based evaluation is used. | | | | |
| b) Evaluations are collected from partners, volunteer facilitators and parents. | | | | |
| c) Children's developmental progress is documented. | | | | |
| d) Evaluation is shared with funding sources, partners and researchers. | | | | |
| e) Program is accountable to partners and funders. | | | | |
| f) Regular reports are provided to funding sources. | | | | |
| g) Confidentiality is ensured regarding participants' records. | | | | |

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|--|--|--|--|--|
| h) Evaluation information is used to further develop the program to ensure that the needs of families and communities are addressed. | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

***Volunteer Support - Promising Practice**

Capacity and effectiveness of family literacy programs can significantly be increased through volunteer support.

| Magic Carpet Ride | Yes | No | N/A | If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken |
|---|-----|----|-----|--|
| a) Volunteer facilitators are recruited, trained and mentored to support the literacy needs of families and communities. | | | | |
| b) Former program participants are encouraged to become volunteers. | | | | |
| c) Volunteers undergo police and child welfare check. | | | | |
| d) Volunteers complete Magic Carpet Ride Facilitator Training. | | | | |
| e) Volunteers receive extensive and on-going training, support and mentoring from coordinator and assistant coordinator. | | | | |
| f) Volunteers are expected to attend internal professional development workshops and work cooperatively with coordinator and assistant coordinator. | | | | |
| g) Volunteers are provided with necessary supplies and materials to facilitate the program. | | | | |
| h) The number of hours that volunteers contribute to the program is recorded. | | | | |
| i) Volunteers are recognized for their contribution to the program. | | | | |



For more information, contact:



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