



## GOOD PRACTICES



## Rhymes that Bind



### Introduction

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

The Rhymes That Bind program offered through the Centre for Family Literacy is an oral family literacy program that helps parents and their infants and toddlers learn rhymes and songs in a group setting. It is a drop-in program facilitated by trained staff and runs one hour per week for 10 sessions.

The following Rhymes That Bind Good Practices statements reflect what the Centre for Family Literacy believes to be the elements of an effective, high-quality Rhymes That Bind 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 good practice in family literacy will also change. These statements, therefore, should be seen as dynamic and needing to be redefined over time.

The Rhymes That Bind Good Practice statements have been developed to address ten themes in the practice of family literacy.

**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)

Sincere thanks to the members of the Centre for Family Literacy Rhymes That Bind Good Practices Committee for development of the following statements: Theone Adachi, Pat Halewich, June Hughes, Wendy Peverett, and Maureen Sanders.



# Rhymes that Bind



## GOOD PRACTICES

### 1. Intergenerational

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

Rhymes That Bind	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 (birth to 3 years).				
b) All family members may attend with the children.				
c) Parents are encouraged to share rhymes, songs and lullabies they remember from their childhood.				
d) Parents are encouraged to share in English and/or mother tongue.				
e) Parents are encouraged to involve other family members in sharing rhymes, songs and lullabies with the children.				

### 2. Collaborative

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

a) Rhymes That Bind is offered at community sites in collaboration with other agencies working with families that have children (birth to 3 years).				
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<b>Rhymes That Bind</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken</b>
<b>b)</b> 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 Rhymes That Bind program.				
<b>d)</b> Program partners contribute their own expertise to a Rhymes That Bind program (Public Health, library, agency etc.).				
<b>e)</b> Rhymes That Bind ensures that ongoing support and information about the program is provided to its partnering agencies.				
<b>f)</b> Rhymes That Bind 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.

<b>a)</b> Program coordinators, facilitators and partners deliver the program in an informal, open and accepting manner.				
<b>b)</b> Program coordinators, facilitators and partners share and model additional sound oral language strategies and provide encouragement and appropriate resources for the parents to practice these strategies at home.				
<b>c)</b> Program coordinators, facilitators and partners encourage parents to increase the use of oral language strategies in their daily life.				
<b>d)</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.

Rhymes That Bind	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) Post-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) Coordinators and facilitators collaborate with community leaders for culturally specific materials, appropriate content and acceptability.				
b) Dual language rhymes, songs and lullabies are used when available.				
c) Parents are invited to share a rhyme, song or lullaby in their first language.				
d) Members of the ethnic community translate some of the materials.				
e) Participants from diverse cultural/language groups are encouraged to become facilitators in those specific groups.				

## 6. Essence

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

Rhymes That Bind	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, rhymes, songs, lullabies and stories.				
c) Facilitators encourage a positive attitude towards learning.				
d) Facilitators acknowledge and reinforce the positive oral language strategies being used by parents in their daily life.				
e) The learning and growth of parents and their children is celebrated.				

## 7. Sound Methods

Successful family literacy 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) Rhymes That Bind is an oral language program that uses repetition of rhymes, songs and lullabies.				
b) Print materials are available at the end of the program.				
c) Program coordinators review research-based information at regular intervals and share this information with facilitators.				
d) A participatory approach is used which actively engages participants in their learning through exploration/experience, critical reflection and action.				
e) A family strengths model or empowerment model of family literacy is used based on collaboration, encouragement and shared decision-making.				
f) Program partners are encouraged to contact the coordinator with any questions/concerns that may arise before/during or after a program is complete.				
g) The Rhymes That Bind program is based on research in emergent literacy, adult literacy, family literacy and other related areas.				

## 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.

<b>Rhymes That Bind</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>If no, identify need for further assistance to achieve this indicator and any action to be taken</b>
<b>a)</b> Program coordinators and facilitators have taken Rhymes That Bind training.				
<b>b)</b> Program coordinators and facilitators have taken Foundational Training in Family Literacy or Introduction to Family Literacy.				
<b>c)</b> A minimum of one trained facilitator is present at each program session.				
<b>d)</b> Annual facilitator meetings are held to allow for sharing of experiences, challenges and successes.				
<b>e)</b> Program facilitators have a basic understanding of child development.				
<b>f)</b> Program facilitators have an understanding of the cultural and language backgrounds of the families they work with.				
<b>g)</b> Program facilitators enjoy working with families with 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 child care.

<b>a)</b> Rhymes That Bind may be a drop-in program.				
<b>b)</b> Rhymes That Bind is offered at community sites that families are able to access easily.				
<b>c)</b> Parents can be referred to a Rhymes That Bind program by partnering agencies that already have contact with vulnerable families.				
<b>d)</b> Particular efforts are made to attract and support multi-barriered families.				
<b>e)</b> Parents feel safe and welcome.				
<b>f)</b> Older siblings may attend.				
<b>g)</b> Nutritious snacks/light meals are provided.				
<b>h)</b> If available, transportation support is offered to families.				

## 10. Evaluation

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

Rhymes That Bind	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.				
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.				



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Play **Learn**  
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