

ED 368 875

CE 066 024

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 TITLE A Cooperative Family Literacy Project. Special Demonstration Project.
 INSTITUTION Fayette County Community Action Agency, Inc., Uniontown, PA.
 SPONS AGENCY Pennsylvania State Dept. of Education, Harrisburg. Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.
 PUB DATE 30 Jun 93
 CONTRACT 98-3014
 NOTE 15p.
 PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Basic Skills; Cooperative Programs; Demonstration Programs; Economically Disadvantaged; Educational Cooperation; *High Risk Students; Human Services; Junior High Schools; Junior High School Students; *Literacy Education; *Parent Education; *Parenting Skills; Workshops
 IDENTIFIERS 353 Project; *Family Literacy

ABSTRACT

The Fayette County Community Action Agency, Inc. developed the Family Literacy Project, an innovative cooperative family literacy project with the Uniontown (Pennsylvania) School District. The project's purpose was to provide economically and educationally disadvantaged parents of teenagers with the following: basic skills instruction, instruction in parenting using the Lee Canter Assertive Discipline and Homework without Tears curriculum, and information about other support services related to the needs of families with adolescents. Two 16-hour workshops provided basic academic instruction in reading and mathematics to the parents of the junior high students in Ben Franklin School. Presenters from different organizations provided information on how to best use the existing services of the health and human service organizations in the county. The methods used to evaluate the parents were pre- and posttests using the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and evaluation forms. Findings indicated that the parents felt the information was very helpful and they felt a sense of camaraderie in the support groups. The students who were TABE tested increased their grades an average of 2.3 grade levels. (YLB)

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SPECIAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT A COOPERATIVE FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT

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A SPECIAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT #98-3014
\$5,000
FUNDED BY THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
JULY 1, 1992 TO JUNE 30, 1993

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BUREAU OF ADULT BASIC
AND LITERACY EDUCATION

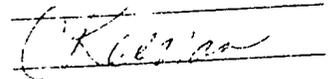
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ABSTRACT PAGE

Title A Cooperative Family Literacy Project

Project No.: 98-3014 Funding: Pennsylvania Department of Education

Project Director: Kim Hawk Phone No.: (412) 437-6050

Agency Address: Fayette County Community Action Agency Inc. 137 North Beeson Avenue, Uniontown, PA. 15401

Description: The purpose of the Family Literacy Project was to provide economically and educationally disadvantaged parents of teenagers with basic skills instruction, and instruction in parenting. While also providing other support services related to the needs of the families of adolescents.

Objectives:

1. To establish a cooperative linkage with the Uniontown School District in the development of a family literacy program for 30 undereducated parents of junior high school students.
2. To provide two 16-hour sessions providing basic skills instruction, parenting skills and information about available health and human services (i.e. family finances, housing pregnancy, drugs, nutrition.)
3. To facilitate monthly support groups for workshop participating parents.

Target Audience: Undereducated parents of at risk adolescents.

Product (s)--if applicable: The curriculum and final report were based on the findings of the project.

Method (s) of Evaluation: The methods used to evaluate the parents were pre and post TABE tests, and evaluation forms. Upon entrance they were given evaluation forms to express what they would expect to get out of the project, and upon exit they were given forms as to what they would take with them.

Findings: The information received was very helpful to the parents. Also the parents felt a sense of camaraderie in the support groups. The students who were TABE tested increased their grades on a average by 2.3 grade levels. All facets of the families social and emotional needs were attempted to be met.

Conclusions: The Uniontown School District has requested another collaborative effort between FCCAA and the district in the fall of 1993. The support groups and the human service personal gave the parents strength to cope with their at-risk teenagers on issues that they must face daily in and out of the home.

Descriptors: (To be completed only by Advance staff)

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I. ABSTRACT

Utilizing 1992/93 Pennsylvania Department of Education Section 353 Special Demonstration Project funding, the Fayette County Community Action Agency, Inc. (FCCAA) Education Center (CAEC) proposed to develop an innovative Cooperative family literacy project with the Uniontown School District. The purpose of the project was to provide economically and educationally disadvantaged parents of teenagers with basic skills instruction, instruction in parenting using the Lee Canter Assertive Discipline and Homework Without Tears curriculum and other support services related to the needs of families with adolescents.

It is crucial that parents take an active role in their children's educational careers to assure success and self esteem. Yet despite good intentions, most undereducated parents are ill-equipped to provide a positive and supportive learning environment for their children. This may be due in part to lack of basic skills, a negative attitude towards school or other social factors which may contribute to a disruptive and chaotic home life. FCCAA addressed these factors in the project with the Uniontown School District. The Cooperative Family Literacy Project curriculum focused on the study skills and social issues that the parents and teenagers could utilize to succeed in school. This project also incorporated guest speakers from different organizations to access information on existing services and resources. Upon completion of the Cooperative Family Literacy Project participants met monthly for peer support.

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II. Introduction

FCCAA conducted a special demonstration project to enhance a Family Literacy Project through a collaborative effort between FCCAA and the Uniontown School District. The project provided economically and educationally disadvantaged parents of teenagers with basic skills instruction, instruction in parenting using the Lee Canter assertive discipline and homework without tears curriculum and other support services related to the needs of families with adolescents.

The first 16 hour Cooperative Family Literacy Project was held at Ben Franklin School on October 27,28, November 3, 4, 10, 11, 1992. The second 16 hour workshop was held on January 29, February 5,12,19,26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, and April 2, 1993, at the Progressive Readiness Employment Program held at the Private Industry Council. The workshops provided basic academic instruction in reading and mathematics to the parents of the junior high students at Ben Franklin School. Instruction was also received in parenting skills, study skills, homework, and assertive behavior and nutrition. Presenters from different organizations provided information on how to best utilize the existing services of the health and human service organizations in the county.

The following educators and related human service personal contributed greatly to the success of the Cooperative Family Literacy Project by providing input into curriculum development and acting as guest lecturers: Dr. Dorothy Grier, Supervisor of

Reading and Literature Pittsburgh Public Schools; Carol Nesser, Counselor for Uniontown School District; Lugene Rossini, Director of Family Planning; Rick Pritts, Counselor for the Fayette County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Program; and Cara Dragan, WIC Coordinator; Debbie Thomas, Penn State Extension Educational Family Nutrition Program.

The final report of the Cooperative Family Literacy Project will be available at the following locations:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126-0333

Advance
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126-0333

III. BODY

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

FCCAA conducted a similar successful, collaborative project with Cities and Schools of Fayette County using 353 Funds in 1990-91. The 1990 Family Study Skills Program, however, targeted parents of elementary school children and focused primarily on study skills and parenting of young children. The 1992 program targeted parents of junior high school students and provided an intensive basic skills component and parenting skills for the adolescent including a section on how to address some of the negative social influences facing adolescents today.

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- (1) To establish a cooperative linkage with the Uniontown School District in the development of a family literacy program for 30 undereducated parents of junior high school students.
- (2) To provide two 16-hour training sessions providing basic skills instruction, parenting skills and information about available health and human services (i.e. family finances, housing pregnancy, drugs, nutrition.)
- (3) To facilitate monthly support groups for workshop participating parents.

C. PROJECT PROCEDURES

1. To provide 2 sixteen hour training courses consisting of "How To Help Your Child With Homework;" "Assertive Behavior;" "Sex and Your Teenager;" "The Discouraged Learner;" "Gimmicks To Help Your Child Succeed With Homework;" "Stress Management;" "Nutrition;" "Educational Food and Nutrition Program."
2. The first workshop was held at Ben Franklin School.
Session 1. Presentation of Lee Cantors "Homework Without Tears" Video and discussion.
Session 2. Presentation of Lee Cantors "Assertive Behavior" Video and discussion.

Session 3. Lugene Rossini, Director of Fayette County Family Planning, "Sex and Your Teenager" Presentation and Discussion.

Session 4. Dr. Dorothy Grier, Supervisor of Reading and Literature Pittsburgh Public Schools, "The Discouraged learner."

Session 5. Carol Nesser, Counselor, Uniontown School District, Understanding Your Teenager.

Session 6. Make It, Take It, Parents participate in activities they can use at home to motivate their child to study. Games were made using the concepts of sports and M&M's, race cars, etc. Games were made by parents to take home.

During the last workshop the parent participants were invited to attend a monthly support group which was to be held at the Community Service Center in Uniontown. 15 parents attended the workshop and 7 chose to attend the support group. The support group met on the following dates: December 9, 1992, January 13, 1993, February 11, 1993, March 11, 1993, and April 8, 1993. Attendance average was 5. The support group discussed any problems that the parents were having with their children. The most prevalent issues addressed were discipline and peer pressures. Carol Nesser, counselor for Uniontown School District discussed these topics and gave suggestions to parents.

3. The Second workshop was held at the Private Industry Council with the parents of the Progressive Readiness For Employment Program. The parents attended basic skills classes in Math, reading, computer, and job readiness courses Monday through Thursday. On Friday the parents would bring their children to work together.
- Session 1. Presentation of Lee Cantors "Homework Without Tears" Video and discussion. Other topics for reading and discussion "Parents must be happy" and "Talking with Children."
- Session 2. Presentation of Lee Cantors "Assertive Discipline" Video and Discussion. Other topics for reading and discussion "Teaching right from wrong" and "Dealing with discipline."
- Session 3. Lugene Rossini, Director of Fayette County Family Planning, "Sex and Your Teenager."
- Session 4. Rick Pritts , Counselor Mental Health/Mental Retardation, "Stress management."
- Session 5. Topics for reading and discussion, "Helping with learning," "Supporting schoolwork," "Dealing with drug use."
- Session 6. Cara Dragan, Director of W.I.C., "Proper nutrition."
- Session 7. Topics for reading and discussion, "Teenagers and sex," "Children and their friends," "Working with other adults," "Television decisions."

Session 8. Debbie Thomas, Penn State Extension Office, Education Food Nutrition Program.

Session 9. Topics for reading and discussion, "The two job tight-rope" "The blended family," "What the kids say," and "The writing team."

Session 10. The class participated in a culminating activity at the Pittsburgh children's museum.

The Progressive Readiness Employment Program had a mandatory attendance of twenty hours a week. The Cooperative Family Literacy Project added a voluntary six hours a week to this program. The parents and their children had 12 one hour weekly sessions with Kim Osborne, a caseworker from Fayette County Community Action. The support group consisted of 19 adults and 12 children. The children's ages ranged from 4 through 6 years of age. Family inter-personal skills were implemented to the parents and their younger children to help them become more skilled in dealing with family situations that involve teenage issues. 17 participants from this group live in families with children between the ages of 4 through 18 years of age. An effort was made to make the issues of the teenagers a point to review with the parents and young children who have problems dealing with the attitudes, pressures and lifestyles of their older siblings.

D. POSITIVE RESULTS

The positive results in this project were very apparent in the working relationships we have developed with the Uniontown School District and the Private Industry Council. The parents of the students from the Uniontown School District felt they had taken a great deal of information with them to use with their children. The evidence was more apparent in the situations with the PREP students from the Private Industry Council site. We could see the progress being made during the class. We saw fathers who were not the primary care giver of the child taking a greater part in the child's behavior. Parents learned to open the lines of communication with their children. They also did not have to worry about where their children were or what they were doing while they were in class. The parents commented on the quality of time they were spending in class with their child. The time was not spent on arguments that cloud their relationship such as cleaning rooms, curfews, or friends. They were able to put aside their emotions and focus on discussing issues in a calm manner rather than demanding things be done the parents way. The case manager also held individual one on one sessions with the parents and was able to chart progress and make referrals to different organizations to take advantage of helpful resources.

E. NEGATIVE RESULTS

The negative results of this program would have to be that the parents of the workshop at Uniontown did not have the same advantage as the parents at the Private Industry Council. They did

not have the opportunity to have their children in the workshop with them. This seemed to bring a sense of reality to the workshops and it helped the parents put the information to use immediately. Also the parents at the Private Industry Council were given the opportunity to brush-up on basic skills so they were less apprehensive about working with their children on homework.

Originally the Cooperative Family Literacy Workshop was to be held at the Laurel Highlands School District, but after several discussions Laurel Highlands decided not to participate in the workshops. Contact was then made with Carol Nesser, counselor from Uniontown School District to discuss the Cooperative Family Literacy Program. Ms. Nesser was interested in the program and we were able to begin the project in October.

F. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

FCCAA evaluated this program using two methods. First in the Uniontown School District workshops we gave the parents a pre-evaluation as to what they expected to get out of the workshops and to assess their current parenting skills. A post evaluation was administered at the end of the first session to evaluate the success of the workshop. A summary of the questionnaires revealed that most participants were able to implement the information received into their family lives. It was also stated on several questionnaires that the parents felt comfort in being with other parents that are dealing with the same teenager issues. The Progressive Readiness Employment Program students at the Private

Industry Council were given Pre-and Post TABE tests. The average student Pre-TABE score on entry into PREP was an 8.1 grade level. The average student POST-TABE score on exit from PREP was a 10.4 grade level. The scores are based on a twelve week remediation and family literacy program designed to provide PREP participants and their children with individualized case management and individual/group/peer counseling to address all facets of the families social and emotional needs.

G. DISTRIBUTION OF THE FINDINGS

This final report will be provided to the following organizations for use by their affiliations: Advance (717) 783-9192, the Pennsylvania Directors Association for Community Action (717) 233-1075 and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (717) 787-5532. Fayette County Community Action (412) 437-6050 and Uniontown School District (412)438-4501, will also maintain copies of this report.

IV. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The most positive indicator of this project's success is that Uniontown School District has requested another collaborative effort between FCCAA and the District in the fall of 1993. The monthly support groups helped people gain camaraderie and strength to cope with their at-risk teenager on issues that they must face daily in and out of the home.

The Cooperative family literacy component of the PREP program proved to be more intensive in helping parents to cope with their high-risk teenagers. Cooperative Family Literacy enhanced the P.R.E.P. program, a basic skills and prevocational program. FCCAA was able to implement the Cooperative Family Literacy Project into the PREP program when it became apparent that the students were also having family problems dealing with teenage children and the relationships that existed at home. The Cooperative Family Literacy Project was offered to the students as a voluntary part of their education. The class accepted the program with enthusiasm. The monthly support groups and the individual counseling helped these predominately dysfunctional families see conflict resolution within their homes.