



Hosting Local Policymakers and Key Stakeholders

Family literacy programs offer a unique opportunity to develop partnerships with elected officials, policymakers, businesses, and community organizations. Getting the message out regarding the benefits of family literacy is critical to your program's sustainability and the continued success and expansion of family literacy throughout Los Angeles County. What better way to see what family literacy is all about than to invite visitors to see your program in action? Their firsthand contact with parents during Parent Education or watching parents and children engage in intergenerational literacy activities during Parent and Child Interactive Literacy Activities (PCILA) time will be invaluable to your efforts to educate them about your agency and family literacy.

Before the Site Visit – Recommendations and Tips

Before a local policymaker, their staff, potential funders, and/or key stakeholders visit your site, there are a few things to keep in mind in order to be prepared. Remember, this is not an exhaustive list, but rather a starting point. Keep your agency and program in mind as you consider the following:

- ☆ Schedule the site visit during Parent Education or PCILA time so that your visitors get a complete picture of family literacy – that it goes further than just ESL, GED/High School Diploma preparation, or job training – that it is about strengthening the family and helping the child enter kindergarten ready to learn.
- ☆ Be prepared to provide information about your program, the families you serve, and family literacy in general.
- ☆ Be sure that all program staff are knowledgeable about the site visit, knowledgeable about who the visitors are, and their purpose for visiting your site. It may be helpful that all staff are familiar with and can answer the questions in the following section.
- ☆ Use brochures, videotapes, and pamphlets and make sure that visitors leave with this information. General conversation is also important, so keep the dialogue flowing with points of interest. Allow the adults and children to have access to the visitors. Their natural abilities to relate will create a great environment for participation.
- ☆ Designate staff to answer questions, address issues and take care of the guests during the entire visit. Designate a staff or parent photographer.
- ☆ Send a letter of confirmation with the date, time, and the program's address. Include any specifics in regards to the visit, i.e. scheduled chat with the parents and/or staff, reading to the children, eating lunch with the families, etc.
- ☆ If your visitor is a public official, it's your chance to show them the human side of family literacy. Invite the media and make sure that the guest knows that the media has been invited.

Questions, Questions, and More Questions – Preparation is the Key

After you have worked out the details for your site visit, you and your staff should be able to answer the following questions. Make sure that everyone has the answers, preferably available in printed form at least three days prior to the visit.

- ☆ How many families does the program serve? How many parents are enrolled and how many children are enrolled in the program?
- ☆ How many years has the program existed?
- ☆ What are days and hours of program operation?
- ☆ If multiple site program, where are the sites and what services are being offered at each site?
- ☆ What are the key characteristics of the population and neighborhood your program serves?
- ☆ What services does the program offer?
- ☆ What agencies are partners with the program? What services do they provide?
- ☆ Why is it important to offer comprehensive services? What kinds of problems do the families face?
- ☆ How is success measured in the program?
- ☆ What are the specific outcomes anticipated for families in the program?
- ☆ Tell a story about an individual family and parent / teachers challenges and successes.
- ☆ Why does the program need significant funding increases?
- ☆ Describe how you feel about the impact of the program on the families you serve.
- ☆ How can both the public and private sectors support family literacy?
- ☆ How many families in your community are in need but are not receiving family literacy services?
- ☆ What features of the program are unique and innovative?
- ☆ How has your program and families benefited from their participation in the First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative?

Sharing Family Successes – Making it Personal and Real

Parents are the best examples of the success of your family literacy program. Let them tell their stories and have their children be a part of it (as in PCILA time). Think about choosing the right student (a current and/or program graduate) for the visit because their particular story can have the greatest impact on the guest(s). Allowing students to speak bring out the human side of program delivery – visitors see the direct impact of their decisions and funding on the communities that they are interested in serving. The following questions will help students to prepare:

Family Literacy Students

- ☆ What type of Adult Education are you receiving in the program?
- ☆ How long have you been participating in the program?
- ☆ What difference has the family literacy program made for you and your family?
- ☆ What changes have you seen in yourself and in your child(ren)?
- ☆ What would your child(ren) be doing during the day without this service?
- ☆ How have your goals changed as a result of participating in this program?
- ☆ Are you working? If yes, how does family literacy impact your work experience?
- ☆ What is your favorite part of family literacy and why?

Family Literacy Graduates

- ☆ How long did you participate in the family literacy program?
- ☆ What do you remember most about your time in the program?
- ☆ How do you feel that the program has made a difference in your life and the lives of your family members?
- ☆ Do you think other families should have the same opportunity that you had?
- ☆ What would you recommend / say to parents considering enrolling themselves and their child(ren) in a family literacy program?
- ☆ What do you do now differently as a result of your participation in family literacy?
- ☆ What are your biggest accomplishments as a result of participating in family literacy?

After the Site Visit – The Work is Just Beginning

Following the site visit, the first thing that should be done is to send a thank you card or letter to all visitors. Be sure the cards or letters are personalized and include pictures of the visit if possible (a digital camera comes in handy). You may also want to consider a few other follow-up activities that focus on the following:

- ☆ Send thank you notes or cards and / or drawings from the families.
- ☆ Conduct an in-house debriefing session with staff to discuss the visit and make suggestions for possible changes in preparation for the next site visit.
- ☆ If appropriate, conduct follow-up with the media to ensure that all questions have been answered and ask when an article or news story might appear so you can obtain copies. Articles are wonderful resources for staff, families, other potential funders, key stakeholders, board members, etc.
- ☆ Create an action plan for future visitors to invite – advocacy leads to program sustainability and expansion of family literacy programs.

For additional information, contact:

Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN)
Division for School Improvement, LACOE

(562)922-6560

KEY SITE VISIT INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH STAFF	
Date and Time of Event	
Hosting Agency	
Visitor #1 Name and Title	
Visitor #2 Name and Title	
Visitor #3 Name and Title	
Purpose of Site Visit	

Sample of Core Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff assists parents as their child's first and most important teacher. • The program has an intergenerational service delivery system that addresses the education and health needs of children and families. • The program collaborates with partnering agencies to leverage community resources in preparing children for school and meeting the needs of families. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program focuses on continuous quality improvement to enhance outcomes for families with young children. • The program has documented outcomes for children and parents.
Core Message #1	
Core Message #2	
Staff or Parent Photographer	
Staff or Parents Greeting Team	
Staff Receiving Team	
Locations/Classrooms to Visit	
Book(s) for Reading	
Refreshments	
Documents for Packets	
Other	
FLSN Assistance	