

Atlas Valley Unified School District
Family Literacy Grant Narrative

1. Describe a plan for providing family literacy services to the adult family members of the students proposed to be served in the 21st CCLC program.

This proposal will provide comprehensive family literacy services in two schools, Yuma Loma Elementary and Atlas Valley Middle School, both of which are eligible to participate as Title I School wide programs. Children enrolled at these two schools come from a high poverty neighborhood called Vista Loma where there are many homes and apartment rentals that qualify for Section 8 housing subsidies.

This CCLC proposal will expand and enrich family literacy services at Yuma Loma Elementary School which hosts the Peter Smith Family Center. The Family Center is funded primarily through community grants and Title I contributions. The Family Center is one of the only family literacy programs available to families within the Atlas Valley Unified School District. The Family Center's Director has developed solid partnerships within the community however funding limits the scope of services being provided.

The Family Center provides high quality services such as English As a Second Language and General Equivalency Diploma classes. In addition, the Family Center provides Love and Logic Parent training, a Clothing Closet, and training for classroom teachers about how to make safe and effective home visits.

It is the goal of the Family Center to expand the existing excellent programs to include a four component family Literacy program in alignment with the federal Even Start Family Literacy model. The center recognizes the power of the four component model to improve literacy of both adults and their children. The components include 1) adult education, 2) early childhood education, 3) parenting education and 4) parent and child interactive literacy.

It is the purpose of this proposal to accomplish key objectives within each of the four components: 1) to expand adult literacy programs by increasing from one class two days per week to two classes three days per week thereby doubling enrollment at the center and extending learning time. Also recruiting parents from Atlas Valley Middle School to participate in Family Literacy Services; 2) Offer enriched literacy-based childcare while parents are in adult education, upgrading existing babysitting, 3) Increase the number of Love and Logic parenting classes from one per year to two sessions per year and, 4) Implement Parent and Child Interactive Literacy (PCILA) by implementing a home visiting component utilizing the research-based Parents As Teachers (PAT) model and monthly Center-based PCILA events. .

A. Document the need for family literacy services among the adult family members of the students proposed to be served in the 21st CCLC program.

The Vista Loma neighborhood is a high poverty area characterized by high numbers of recent immigrants, primarily from Mexico. School records of parental education levels have been maintained through the Family Center and demonstrate that among the recent immigrant population, over 80% of the adults have progressed no further than the sixth grade in school and many did not progress even that far. A vital factor related to a child's success in school is the educational level of their parents (BEING UNREADY FOR SCHOOL: FACTORS AFFECTING RISK AND RESILIENCE; G. Farkas, J. Hibel, Penn State University, retrieved on 3/8/07 from <http://www.pop.psu.edu/~gfarkas/FamilySymposium.pdf>), which in light of the low educational level of the parents highlights the importance of providing expanded adult literacy programs. Over eighteen percent, (150), of children at Yuma Loma are identified as English Learners coming from families who have recently immigrated and this represents triple the percentage of English Learners present at Yuma Loma just three years ago. At Atlas Valley

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Middle school there are 110 English Learners representing nearly 11% of the student population and more than double the percentage present at the school three years ago.

Poverty limits the educational success of our students and the low literacy levels of the adults threatens to keep our families in poverty. 86.5% of children at Yuma Loma and 73% of students at AVMS participate in the federal free and reduced price lunch program according to federal poverty guidelines. While the participation in Cal-Works is traditionally low among the working class immigrant families of the Vista Loma neighborhood, parents are commonly underemployed meaning that they are working full time yet still earning wages that are well under the federal poverty benchmarks. The homeless rate is approximately 15% for families of students that reside in the Yuma Loma and Atlas Valley Middle School boundaries. This statistic represents families living in motels and addresses that have multiple families, the homeless families that are easy to identify. It does not represent the true picture of families who are truly homeless, but who move from family, to friends, back to family, living with whomever has a room to spare. There are no firm numbers for these families that should be counted as homeless and who, if counted, would certainly push the percentages much higher.

The Peter Smith Family Center is the only providers of a family literacy program within the schools' boundaries. There are very few grants or agencies that provide these services within the High Desert area. Over 50% of the families served do not have adequate transportation to access these services outside of the Vista Loma community. The Family Center exists on space that is provided by the school district on the Yuma Loma campus and through collaborative arrangements, grants and contributions from various partners. The center currently serves 30-40 families per year with English Language classes, adult education and parenting programs. Using the estimated 80% of families with low literacy levels there are nearly 200 families among the English Learner population between the two schools in need of adult literacy classes. Certainly low literacy among adults does not apply only to one language or ethnic group and poverty is pervasive among the families at both schools. The Vista Loma neighborhood is home to families in need of family literacy from a diverse cultural and ethnic composition.

B. Describe how the needs, strengths, and resources of the community were assessed.

The Peter Smith Family Center was established ten years ago and represents a solid commitment by the district to providing family literacy services. The Family Center Director helped found the program and provides high quality leadership. The Director is supported by 2 part time staff members and 5 volunteers who assist in providing the existing programs.

The Family Center has identified the lack of family literacy resources available in the community and the difficulty that parents have in accessing adult education resources outside the community. For this reason, The Family Center is focused on providing Family Literacy services. The Family Center brings needed adult education and parenting programs into the Vista Loma neighborhood where children are welcome and where parents do not need transportation to participate.

The Family Center has an established group of partners that provide substantial annual commitments to support the program. The Vista Loma Neighborhood Network (VLNN) Advisory Board organized by the Family Center Director serves as an advisory committee for the Family Center programs and helps the Director stay connected with the neighborhood and the Family Center partners. The Advisory Board meets bi-monthly to review needs, to help plan programs, and to help the Director access resources. The Advisory Board will also oversee implementation of the CCLC Family Literacy grant that enriches and expands services provided by this proposal.

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C. Identify the resources that are currently available and discuss why there may be a need for additional resources.

In order to implement a four component family literacy program the Family Center needs additional funding. Current programs are effective but limited in scope and will be made more effective through additional funding through addition of staff and acquisition of research-based materials.

Adult education classes are offered three days per week for two hours per day. The ESL and the GED classes are offered concurrently by a single teacher which makes effective instruction difficult. GED is partially offered using computers which are outdated and need upgrading. This proposal provides funds to update the computers and connect them to Nova Net an high quality online service for supplementing adult education. The teacher meets with each group separately and works with a teacher's aide and a volunteer who team with the group that the teacher is not instructing while the teacher provides direct instruction to the other group. We seek to expand the classes by offering three days per week of both ESL and GED offering a separate teacher for each classroom.

Early Childhood Education has been a weakness of the program and parents desire a better experience for their children. The Family Center has been able to offer childcare for young children; however, it is a babysitting program and is not instructional in nature. School-aged children are attending the current after school program. We seek to enrich the childcare program through addition of another staff member, training for staff, and purchase of instructional materials such as books and age-appropriate manipulative materials for creative play. The Family Center is also working with a preschool directly across the street to secure placement of preschool-aged children in their program while the parents are in class.

Parenting education is offered through the Family Center. Most of the families served during the year have attended the Love and Logic Parenting program. Parent training this year has been limited due to a lack of funding. The Director seeks to extend the parenting program through this CCLC grant proposal to implement the framework of 40 Developmental Assets, which are positive experiences and personal qualities that young people need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. The 40 Developmental Assets program is published by the Search Institute. This proposal would provide staff time to deliver the program and pay for parent materials.

The Family Center currently has one employee that is already qualified as a trainer for the Parents As Teachers program. Parent and Child Interactive Literacy will be strengthened through establishment of the Parents As Teachers program that will serve 20 of the highest need families (10 from each school) with regular home visits according to the PAT program guidelines. The grant funds will provide an additional part time Family Liaison position that will implement the PAT program. The Family Liaison will also offer on site weekly parent and child activities available to all families.

The new services proposed by this narrative were identified by the Advisory Board and the Director as the most appropriate program enhancements to raise the levels of literacy for families in Vista Loma. While these funds will represent a substantial increase in funding for Family Literacy, the Director and the Advisory Board recognize that there will still be unmet needs due to the large numbers of families in need of services. The Advisory Board is committed to continuing its work to seek and obtain additional funding to further expand and enrich the services provided by the Family Center.