

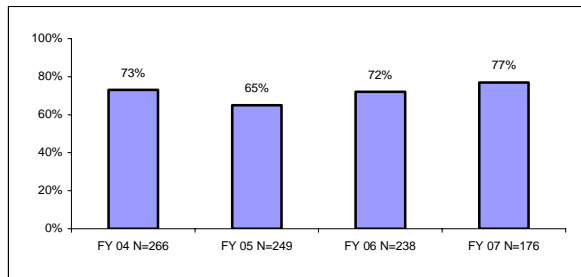
Connecticut Appropriations Committee RBA Template
Part II, Program/Agency/System Accountability Summary

Program/Agency/System: Connecticut Even Start Family Literacy Program (Title 1, Part II, federal initiative)/ State Department of Education

Quality of Life Result: Even Start contributes to the population goal of ensuring that all children are healthy and ready to learn by age 5 by simultaneously providing services for parents and young children to help parents improve their literacy or basic educational skills; to help parents become full partners in educating their children; to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners; and to assist families in moving toward self-sufficiency and out of poverty.

Program/Agency/System Purpose: Even Start helps break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of families most in need by combining early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program.

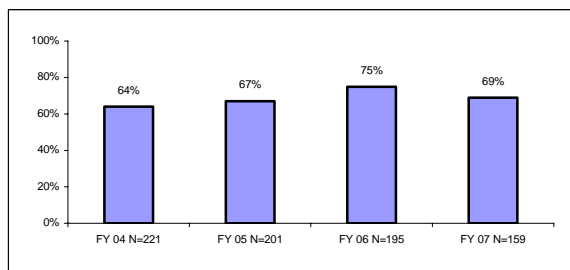
Performance Measure 1: Percent of Even Start Children Making Gains in Reading/ Reading Readiness Skills



Story Behind Measure 1

Even Start program performance data show that between 65 percent to 77 percent of the children met or exceeded standards in reading readiness for their age group (ages birth to 7). The trend in program performance is relatively stable. Although data are not available from Connecticut, research from other states indicates that children who receive Even Start services outperform children who do not participate in Even Start. These studies suggest that Even Start children score significantly higher on measures of reading readiness, and are twice as likely as non-Even Start children to be reading at or above grade level.ⁱ

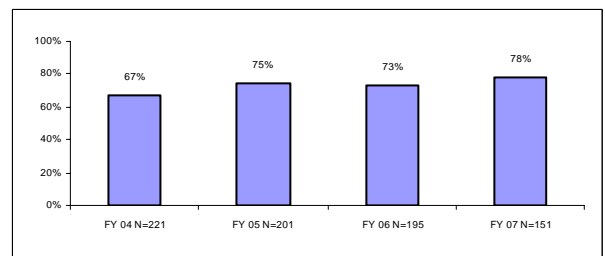
Performance Measure 2: Percent of Even Start Parents Showing Significant Learning Gains or Earning a High School Diploma



Story Behind Measure 2

Over the past four years, adults in Even Start have consistently made significant gains. Although the trend is stable, compared to the entire population of adult education students, Even Start participants make impressive gains. Over the past four years, the percent of Even Start parents attaining a measurable educational outcome has been significantly greater (about 25 percentage points annually) than that of all adult education participants statewide.ⁱⁱ

Performance Measure 3: Percent of Even Start Parents Demonstrating Gains in Family Literacy Skills



Story Behind Measure 3

Results show that in the past 4 years, two-thirds to three-quarters of the parents were observed to learn and apply parenting skills related to family literacy in all areas. The trend appears to be improving in that 67 percent met the standard in FY 2004 and 78 percent met the standard in 2007. Program staffs indicate that in the past few years they have improved their parenting classes and interactive literacy activities to focus more purposefully on literacy development.

Overall, Even Start provides a range of child and family support services that appear to assist adults and children in achieving educational gains at rates that may not otherwise be expected.

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Turning the Curves: What do you propose to do over the next two years and why?

1. Continue to increase the percentage of Even Start children and adults meeting performance indicator standards. The Even Start Family Literacy program anticipates that 75 percent-85 percent of children, adults/ parents will meet performance indicator standards on an annual basis. This objective will be accomplished through: continued monitoring (compliance reviews, local evaluations, state performance indicator monitoring, etc.), professional development in the integration of early childhood education, adult education and parenting education. *
2. The program will continue to develop strong collaborations with other state agencies and local organizations to support families in health, mental health, economic development, housing, etc. so that families can stabilize their lives in order to achieve their educational goals. *
3. Seek state funding to continue or re-instate programs that have closed because of funding, and expand to new locations across the state. The Department of Education would like to substantially increase the funding level to include more families of the "most in need, hardest to serve" population. The increase of funding level will restore several programs, provide support to promote quality in the current programs and expand services to high-need areas and potentially across the state.

*No-cost/low-cost action steps.

Plan for Increasing Capacity			
Investment Strategies <i>(to fund programs at \$200,000 per year)</i>	Number of Programs	Federal Funding per year <i>(anticipated)</i>	State Cost per year **
Option A: Maintain current programs	6	\$500,000	\$700,000
Option B: Maintain current programs plus 6 Priority School Districts (on a competitive basis)	12	\$500,000	\$1,900,000
Option C: Maintain current programs plus all Priority School Districts	17	\$500,000	\$2,900,000
Option D: All DRG G, H and I districts	30	\$500,000	\$5,500,000
Option E: All Adult Education Service Areas (covers all districts)	47	\$500,000	\$8,900,000
** These amounts do not include SDE administrative costs.			

Key Budget Information	
Total Current Program Year Funding	\$648,837*
Funding as Percent of All Funding for Population Result	
Program Funding As Percent of Total Agency Budget	
Funding Distribution	
Total Federal Funds	\$648,837 *
Total State Funds	\$0
Capital Projects Subtotal	\$0
Other Funding	\$0
Percent of Total Current Funding Contracted to Third Parties	
* The budget for 2008-2009 has been cut by 19% to \$525,000 (approx.). See Appendix B for budget history.	

Connecticut Appropriations Committee RBA Template
Part II, Program/Agency/System Accountability

Program/Agency/System: Connecticut Even Start Family Literacy Program/ State Department of Education. The Connecticut Even Start Program is Title 1, Part II, Subpart 3 federal initiative.

Program/Agency/System Purpose Even Start helps break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of families most in need by combining early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program.	
Contribution to Population Result Even Start contributes to the population goal of ensuring that all children are healthy and ready to learn by age 5 by simultaneously providing services for parents and young children to help parents improve their literacy or basic educational skills; to help parents become full partners in educating their children; to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners; and to assist families in moving toward self-sufficiency and out of poverty.	
Key Budget Information (<i>Dollars reported in millions</i>)	
Total Current Program Year Budget	\$648,837 *
Funding as Percent of All Funding for Quality of Life Result	
Program Funding as Percent of Total Agency Budget	
Budget Distribution:	
Federal	\$648,837 *
State	\$0
General Fund	\$0
Capital Project Funds	\$0
Other State Funding	\$0
Other Funds (Not Federal or State)	\$0
Percent of Total Current Funding Spent on Direct Service	
Percent of Total Current Funding Contracted to Third parties	

* The budget for 2008-2009 has been cut by 19% to \$525,000 (approx.). See Appendix B for budget history.

Basic Program Facts

Program Design: Even Start is a unique *family* education program that serves the most at-risk families in a two-generation model. Mothers' literacy abilities are highly predictive of their children's language and literacy performance. Even Start programs provide a direct focus to enhance mother's basic education and high school diploma attainment. It is the only program in the state that requires parents and children to enroll together in all program components and measures learning gains for both the parents and children.

Even Start provides intensive family literacy services that involve parents and children in a cooperative effort to help parents become full partners in the education of their children and to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners. Even Start helps break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of families most in need (in terms of poverty and illiteracy) by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program.

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Even Start helps children and families achieve the academic standards set forth by the state and uses instructional programs that are based on scientifically-based reading research to

- enrich language development, extend learning, and support high levels of educational success for children birth to age seven and their parents;
- provide literacy services of sufficient hours and duration to make sustainable changes in a family
- provide integrated instructional services for families, where children and their parents learn together to develop habits of life-long learning; and
- support families committed to education and to economic independence.

Even Start is a 12 month/ 5 component program and participants must attend all components. These components are: early childhood education, adult education, parenting education, interactive literacy activities and home visits. Parents and children enroll together. Parents must be in need of high school education or ESL services, and children must be between the ages of birth through 7 years old. The average age of Even Start children is 3 years old, and the average age of parents is 29 years old. Local programs are implemented through cooperative projects that do not duplicate but build on high-quality existing community resources, creating a new range of services for low income children and parents.

Program Population: In FY 2007 (**July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007**) about 160 families were served in 6 programs and over 900 in the past seven years in 10 programs. 92% of the families are at the federal poverty level, 63% working at minimum pay jobs and only source of income, 16% of adults had less than 9th grade education and 53% of the adults had some high school. The remaining have a high school degree from another country but do not pass the ESL basic literacy test. 62% of the families come from another country and 87% of the children are attending a preschool setting for the first time. Families must be “most in need, hardest to serve” to enroll. Individual programs identify the population they will serve through the needs of their community.

Program Performance: The Even Start program is effective. Measured results show that:

- Preschool children are getting the experience they need and are prepared for school when they enter kindergarten; children in grades K through 2 are promoted and reading at grade level.
- Adults are learning to read or read better and/or learning English. They complete the program, meet their goals, attain a high school diploma, and are entering college, training schools, and are getting better paying jobs. Many of the adult graduates have been selected as adult learner of the year and speaker at the Adult Education Graduation ceremonies.
- Adults as parents are learning how to teach their young children and prepare them for school. Parents understand the home-school connection, work with their child in the home, work with classroom teachers in understanding their child’s progress and support their child’s learning.
- Parents become active partners with schools participating as a parent advocate on school councils, members of advisory boards, and PTO’s.

Accountability Reviews of Services: Even Start is required to contract for local program evaluation. All programs must report on quality, attendance and outcomes as well as meet state standards or performance indicators of success in Early Childhood Education, adult education and parenting education. Outcomes, attendance and quality assurance standards are reviewed on an annual basis at the local and state level. Programs must also develop local objectives that are measurable and demonstrate the quality of their program and outcomes, monthly attendance of each child and adults. Local evaluation requires a visit 3-5 times per year to

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review Early Childhood Education records, lesson plans and observation of instruction, focus groups with staff and adults, etc.

A 2002 report by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) cited Even Start as being “ineffective.” Although there were serious flaws in this report, the federal Administration has used it to justify cutting the program’s budget. The OMB report is not reliable for several reasons: it was based on an evaluation that included only a small number of programs and was not representative of the national Even Start population (note: CT programs were not part of the study); there were methodological flaws in assessment instruments used; and the study predated the increased accountability standards that require programs to meet performance outcomes for adults and children.ⁱⁱⁱ The OMB report does not adequately represent the Even Start program’s performance in Connecticut. Connecticut’s programs continuously demonstrate that participating children are prepared for school and their parents are demonstrating stronger literacy skills.

Quality of Staff and Professional Development: Staff are qualified and participate in professional development activities an average of 30 hours per year, both in area of primary responsibility and other Even Start components.

Program Status: Even Start program federal budget was cut significantly. The original budget supported 10 programs, all of which were successful in meeting performance indicator standards. At the opening of FY 2007, only 6 programs remain and their budgets have been cut 51 percent from 2006, thereby cutting services and classes offered by the program. The communities that have/ had an Even Start program and their status are: Bridgeport (closed), Windham (open), Danbury (open), Middletown (open), Norwich (closed), New London (open), Stamford (open), Ansonia (open), Families Together in Windham (closed), and Greater Hartford (closed).

See Appendix D for more basic program facts.

Performance Measures and Story Behind the Baselines

Summary of Story Behind the Baselines:

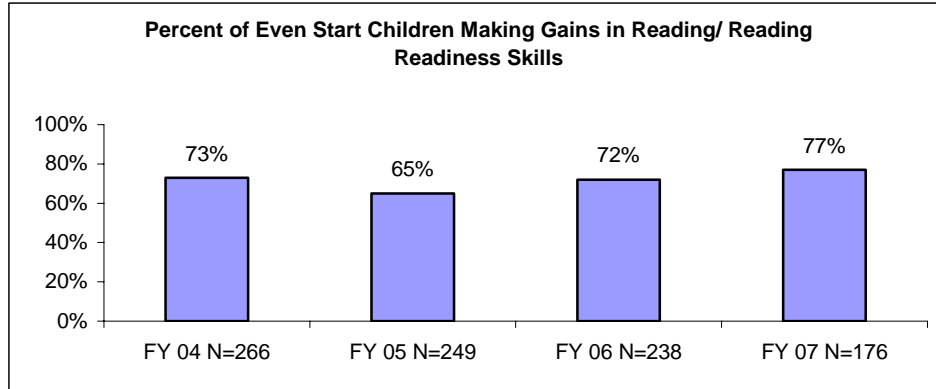
Even Start Family Literacy has an **accountability system** in place that includes performance indicator standards in early childhood education for children ages birth through 7 years, adult education, and parenting education. These standards are specific in measures of reading and reading readiness skills for children (differentiated by age group); adults’ reading, writing and mathematic skills; adults’ parenting knowledge and behaviors; and program attendance of both children and adults.

Performance across all six local programs in Connecticut is relatively similar; there are no significant variations between programs in the percentages shown in the graphs. With a small sample size, the performance of each program makes a significant contribution to the overall percentages shown. The measures, therefore, are an accurate representation of the overall Even Start program in Connecticut.

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Performance Measure 1

Percent of Even Start children birth through age 7 making gains in reading/reading readiness skills.



Story Behind Measure 1

Even Start children are ready for school, entering kindergarten with knowledge of the alphabet, better vocabularies, increased language skills, and increased skills in reading/ reading readiness.

Federal funding requires states to develop standards for reading/ readiness for each age group served by the program. The approved standards for Connecticut and measures are listed below:

Age Group	Measure	Standard
Infants and toddlers	Ages and Stages Questionnaire	12 points or more above cutoff
Pre-K (3 year olds)	CT Preschool Assessment Framework	Progress on 50% or more items
Pre-K (4 year olds)	CT Preschool Assessment Framework	Progress on 50% or more items
	Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) Pre-K Upper Case Letter Naming *	Identification of 10 or more letters
	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) *	4 or more point gain
Kindergarten	Grade promotion	Promoted to next grade
	Concepts About Print	Proficient on 50% or more items
1 st and 2 nd grade	Grade promotion	Promoted to next grade
	Developmental Reading Assessment	At or above "end-of-year standard" for grade level

* Measure required by USDE

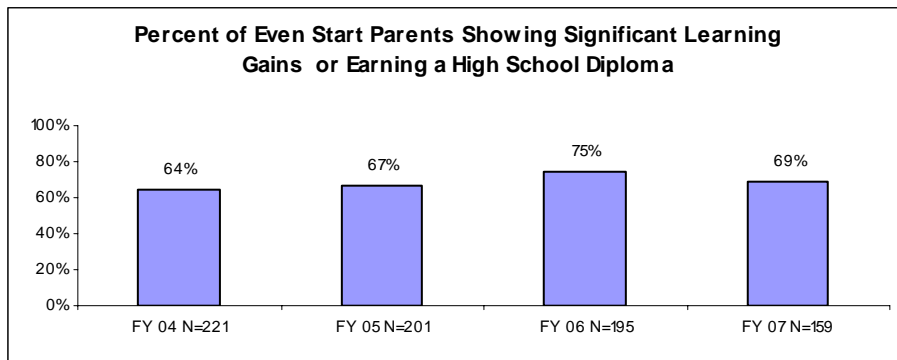
Even Start program performance data show that between 65 percent and 77 percent of the children met or exceeded standards in reading readiness for their age group (ages birth to 7). The trend in program performance is relatively stable. Although data are not available from Connecticut, research from other states indicates that children who receive Even Start services

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outperform children who do not participate in Even Start. These studies suggest that Even Start children score significantly higher on measures of reading readiness, and are twice as likely as non-Even Start children to be reading at or above grade level. ^{iv} Even Start provides a range of child and family support services that appear to assist children in achieving educational gains at rates that may not otherwise be expected. The Connecticut program's challenge is to strengthen and intensify services so that even more children reach these high standards (see Policy Recommendations below).

Performance Measure 2

Percent of Even Start parents showing significant learning gains or earning a high school diploma (in Adult Basic Education, high school completion or English as a second language).



Story Behind Measure 2

Parents in the program succeed. Results show that in the past 4 years, Even Start Family Literacy Program adults all made progress and that two-thirds to three-quarters of the adults meet adult education standards in ABE, GED, CDP, or EDP programs.

Federal funding requires states to develop standards for adult learning for parents served by the program. The standards and measures are listed below:

Group	Measure	Standard
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	CASAS	Advance one level or make 4 point gain
English-as-a-Second Language (ESL)	CASAS	Advance one level or make 4 point gain
High School Completion	Credit Diploma Program (CDP) Documentation	Acquire 1 or more HS credits in the semester, or attain HS diploma
	GED Test	Pass a practice or sub test of the GED in the semester, or attain HS equivalency
	External Diploma Program (EDP) Documentation	Complete one task during the semester, or attain HS diploma

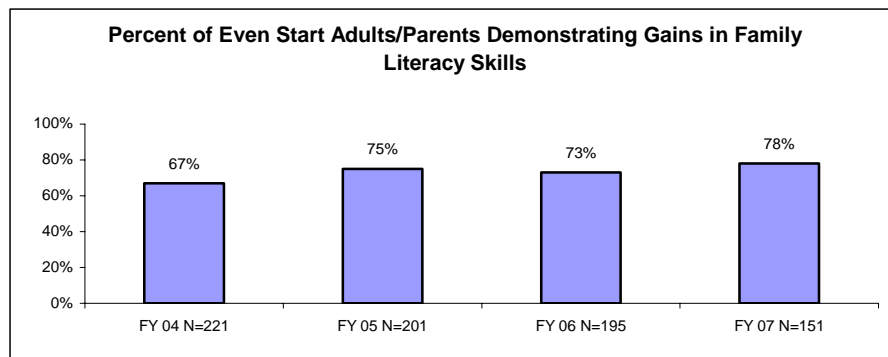
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Over the past four years, adults in Even Start have consistently made significant gains. For example, 127 diplomas have been awarded to Even Start adults in the past 5 years, and many of the adults who have exited the program have gone on to community college, continuing education and trade schools, have gotten better jobs, and even opened businesses.

Although the trend is stable, compared to the entire population of adult education students, Even Start participants make impressive gains. Over the past four years, the percent of Even Start parents attaining a measurable educational outcome has been significantly greater (about 25 percentage points annually) than that of all adult education participants statewide.^y Even Start provides a range of child and family support services that appears to assist adults in achieving educational gains at rates that may not otherwise be expected. The Connecticut program’s challenge is to strengthen and intensify services so that even more adults reach these high standards (see Policy Recommendations below).

Performance Measure 3

Percent of Even Start parents who demonstrate gains in skill development in family literacy (such as reading to child, borrowing books from the library or other sources, encouraging children to read with them at home, etc.)



Story Behind Measure 3

Parents improve parenting skills that promote literacy. Parents who participate in Even Start show increases in parenting knowledge and behavior related to providing a literacy-rich home environment, engaging children in creative and problem-solving experiences, and interacting with their child’s teachers on a regular basis.

Federal funding recommended that parenting standards be developed and reported in the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR) each year. In FY 2001, the Even Start Family Literacy program developed standards for parenting using an observation tool, *The Connecticut Even Start Parenting toward Family Literacy Rating Scale*.

Group	Measure	Standard
Parents	CT Even Start Parenting toward Family Literacy Rating Scale	Parents at the “knowledge” or “understanding” levels will advance one level during the semester; Parents at the “application” level will maintain that level

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Results show that in the past 4 years, two-thirds to three-quarters of the parents were observed to learn and apply parenting skills related to family literacy in all areas. The trend appears to be improving in that 67 percent met the standard in FY 2004 and 78 percent met the standard in 2007. Program staffs indicate that in the past few years they have become more comfortable using the Scale, and have also improved their parenting classes and interactive literacy activities to focus more purposefully on literacy development. However, the Connecticut program would like to strengthen and intensify services so that even more parents reach these high standards (see Policy Recommendations below).

Partners and Their Roles

The Even Start Family Literacy Program requires that the local program partner with various state and local agencies for specific services. All programs partner with one or more of the following agencies:

- Adult Education Services of the region for teachers, classrooms, and/ or student slots.
- Early Childhood Education Services such as Head Start and/or School Readiness to provide teachers, classrooms, and/ or student slots.
- Social Service agency to provide classroom space, mental health services, referrals.
- Over the past several years, each program has identified young children with developmental delays and referred parents to appropriate services such as the Connecticut Birth to Three early intervention program.

What do you propose to do to improve performance in the next two years and why?

Low cost action steps:

1. Continue to increase the percentage of Even Start children and adults meeting performance indicator standards. The Even Start Family Literacy program anticipates that 75 percent-85 percent of children, adults/parents will meet performance indicator standards on an annual basis. This objective will be accomplished through: continued monitoring (compliance reviews, local evaluations, state performance indicator monitoring, etc.), professional development in the integration of early childhood education, adult education and parenting education.
2. The program will continue to develop strong collaborations with other state agencies and local organizations to support families in health, mental health, economic development, housing, etc. so that families can stabilize their lives in order to achieve their educational goals.

With appropriate funding and staffing, SDE proposes to do the following:

3. Seek state funding to continue or re-instate programs that have closed because of funding, and expand to new locations across the state. The Department of Education would like to substantially increase the funding level to include more families of the "most in need, hardest to serve" population. The increase of funding level will restore several programs, provide support to promote quality in the current programs and expand services to high-need areas and potentially across the state.

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Investment Strategies (to fund programs at \$200,000 per year)	Number of Programs	Federal Funding per year (anticipated)	State Cost per year *
Option A: Maintain current programs	6	\$500,000	\$700,000
Option B: Maintain current programs plus 6 Priority School Districts (on a competitive basis)	12	\$500,000	\$1,900,000
Option C: Maintain current programs plus Priority School Districts not currently funded	17	\$500,000	\$2,900,000
Option D: All DRG G, H and I districts	30	\$500,000	\$5,500,000
Option E: All Adult Education Service Areas (covering all school districts)	47	\$500,000	\$8,900,000

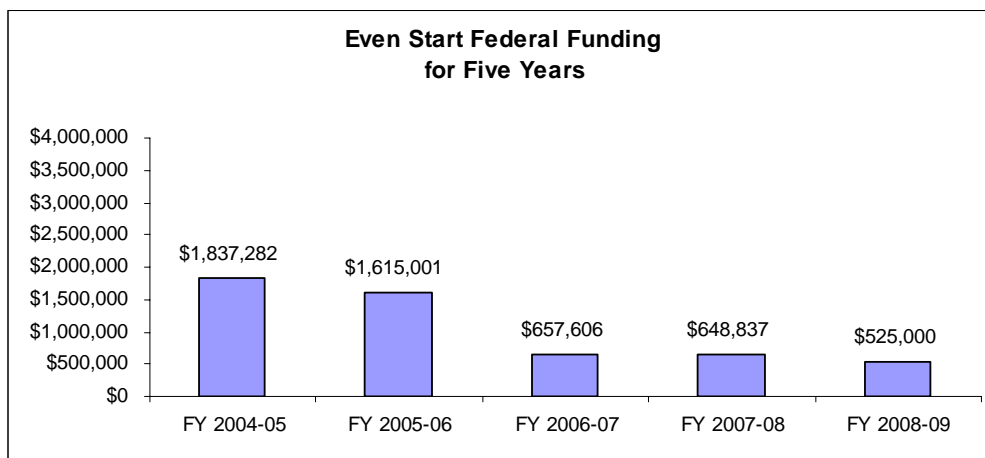
* These amounts do not include SDE administrative costs.

Appendix A, Data Development Agenda

In order to understand adults' employment experiences after they leave the program, SDE will seek to match data from the Even Start program with employment records collected by the Department of Labor.

Appendix B, Funding Details

Budget in FY 2004-05: \$1,837,282
 Budget in FY 2005-06: \$1,615,001
 Budget in FY 2006-07: \$ 657,606
 Budget in FY 2007-08: \$ 648,837
 Budget in FY 2008-09: \$ 525,000 (Anticipated)



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Federal budget cuts in Even Start over the past several years have affected the following service delivery levels and functions:

- Reduction in programs from ten in FY 2004-05 to six in FY 2006-07; further reduction in the number of programs anticipated for FY 2008-09
- Number of days per week/hours per day offered in each component.
- Transportation in getting families to the sites for participation.
- Staffing hours.
- Evaluation costs for monitoring program performance.
- Purchase of materials.

Programs are currently under-funded at \$102,000 each and are struggling to maintain high quality and comprehensive services. The recommended funding level to meet all program requirements and continue to deliver quality services with the enhancements needed to turn the curve is about \$200,000 per program per year. If there are no state resources allocated, it is anticipated that Connecticut will have only four programs, still under-funded, with the FY 2008-09 federal appropriation.

Appendix C, Information and Research Agenda

Several research questions are raised by the Even Start Family Literacy data. Results from these research questions would help identify the important and best strategies that lead to closing the achievement gap with more children ready to learn.

New data collection and analyses will be required to address these questions:

Research Question: How are collaborators used to support families? What are the differences in program operation design and the effects on the participants? Is one type of design better than another or do program designs need to have basic requirements but allowed to configure according to the program population served?

Research Question: What has happened to the families that have left the Even Start Family Literacy Program? How are the children faring in classrooms? Did the parents continue on with education, participation in school advocacy programs, etc.? How do the families who left the program prematurely do in comparison to families who reached their individual goals?

Appendix D, Expansion of Basic Facts

The Even Start program is effective as seen in measures 1-3 and it addresses the state challenges outlined in Ready by 5 & Fine by 9. The Even Start Family Literacy Program has been building a successful and exemplary structure in serving families most in need and hardest to serve. By investing in the education of both the adult and the child, Even Start Family Literacy participants have made progress in their own educational achievements and contribute positively to the community.

- Even Start Family Literacy program has contributed substantially to the readiness of children for academic work.
- Children who have developmental delays are identified earlier and intervention services are in place before the child enrolls in kindergarten, thereby giving these children more

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of an opportunity to be ready for school and relieving the burden to the schools/ classroom teacher to identify, refer, evaluate, and develop an educational plan.

- Adults become true partners in their child's education, by learning to work with classroom teachers, initiate progress report discussions, developing an awareness of school readiness skills and reinforcing these skills, volunteering in classrooms and participating on advisory and review boards. Ninety-five percent of all the Even Start Family Literacy families whose children will attend kindergarten in the fall attend all orientation activities.
- Adults become life long learners, enjoying their new status of holding a high school diploma and moving forward on other goals such as opening businesses, buying homes, attending college, etc. The ESL adults take steps to become U.S. citizens and many have done so while in the program.
- Programs are held accountable for program attendance, a unique standard that is not seen in other similar state programs. The attendance standard for children and adults encourages intensity of learning and immersion in literacy skills. Because of attendance standards, the programs and their **participants have met or exceeded the performance indicators** for reading, reading readiness, diploma attainment, learning English, etc. and have gone on to increase family learning, stabilize the family, and become economically independent.
- Even Start Family Literacy program coordinators and staff are dedicated to the programs and are active in the educational and mental health community. All sit on one or more committees such as School Readiness Councils, Mental Health Collaboratives, Head Start Advisory Boards, etc.
- Even Start Family Literacy program staff attends training in their own primary areas of teaching (Early Childhood Education, adult education, etc.) as well as the other areas to better integrate and coordinate instruction.
- In the document, Ready by 5 & Fine by 9 (October 2006), Even Start Family Literacy programs already address the service challenges (page 21) specifically in the areas of Interagency Coordination and Early Intervention (through collaboration); Parental Access to Services (through coordination of Interactive Literacy, Home Visits and Parenting Education); Accountability of Reviews of Services (through extensive standards, local evaluation activities, and research based evidence of success); Implementation of Successful Programs (through demonstration of annual reports of outcomes, attendance, and quality assurance); and, Integration of Data Collection (through an integrated data collection and management system that links all assessments and results).

ⁱ Link, D. E. and Weirauch, D. M. (2005). Questioning the validity of the evidence against family literacy programming: A critical analysis of the National Even Start Evaluations. Literacy Harvest/Family Literacy Forum, 12, 33-38. Literacy Assistance Center, New York, NY.

ⁱⁱ Source: Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS)

ⁱⁱⁱ Sources: Link, D. E. and Weirauch, D. M. (2005). Questioning the validity of the evidence against family literacy programming: A critical analysis of the National Even Start Evaluations. Literacy Harvest/Family Literacy Forum, 12, 33-38. Literacy Assistance Center, New York, NY.

National Even Start Association, et. al. The Third National Even Start Evaluation: Data that Distort Reality. Available at: www.evenstart.org/pdfs/Backgrounder-DRFT2.pdf

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Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy, et. al. (2006). Response to OMB's "PART" Report on Federal Administration of the Even Start Family Literacy Program. Available at:
www.ed.psu.edu/goodlinginstitute/pdf/ES_PART_analysis_2page.pdf

^{iv} Link, D. E. and Weirauch, D. M. (2005). Questioning the validity of the evidence against family literacy programming: A critical analysis of the National Even Start Evaluations. Literacy Harvest/Family Literacy Forum, 12, 33-38. Literacy Assistance Center, New York, NY.

^v Source: Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS)