

## Even Start Family Literacy Program

### Family Profile at Enrollment

Currently, Even Start Family Literacy Program has 75 families enrolled at 5 programs in Windham, Danbury, Middletown, New London and Valley (Ansonia, Seymour, Shelton, Derby) Even Start Family Literacy serves families with children birth through 8.

All adults are enrolled in the Adult Education. Parents must participate in a parenting education class, interactive literacy activity with their child, and home visits. All children are enrolled in an early childhood program for infants/ toddlers, preschool, or compulsory school. Participation is required in all components to maintain enrollment in Even Start Family Literacy program.

Even Start Family Literacy programs have strong connections to community services and early childhood programs. Referrals to Even Start Family Literacy come from DCF, Birth to Three, Adult Education, and Head Start/ Early Head Start/ School Readiness.

#### *The Profile of Even Start Family Literacy families at enrollment include:*

##### **Education Needs are High**

- 90% of the adults have less than a High School education and have not received a diploma
- 71% of the children have never been enrolled in a prevention/ intervention program of any kind
- 27% of the children are enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, or School Readiness at the time of enrolling in the Even Start Family Literacy program

##### **Families are at Poverty Level**

- 83% of the families are at or below poverty
- 12% of the families are working poor

##### **Support Services are needed to keep families stable and allow them to progress on education goals**

- 56% of the families receive TANF
- 88% of the families receive WIC
- 68% of the children receive free/ reduced lunch at school / 100% of those who attend public schools
- 93% of the children are covered by HUSKY insurance Plan A

##### **Housing is dependent upon others and entitlements**

- 54% are in low rent housing and living with other family members or friends in crowded apartments
- 44% are in City Housing (section 8)
- 2% are living in Shelters or Homeless

##### **DCF Involvement**

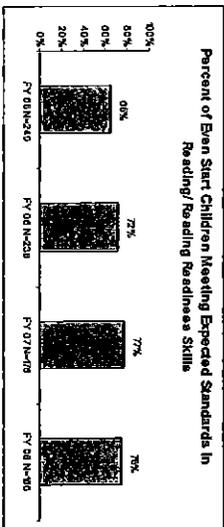
- 17% of the families have had or are currently involved with DCF

## Program Report Card: State Department of Education / Even Start Family Literacy Program

**Program Purpose:** Even Start (Title I, Part II, federal initiative) 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.

**Contributes to Population: 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.

**Performance Measure 1:** Percent of Even Start children making gains in reading/ reading readiness skills.



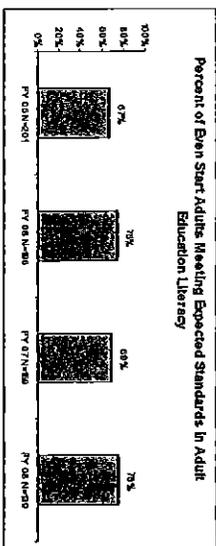
### Story behind the baseline:

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.<sup>1</sup>

### Proposed actions to turn the curve:

Through state technical assistance the early childhood classrooms have been reviewed using either the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale or Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, as appropriate. Results are used by the local programs to improve quality in this area.

**Performance Measure 2:** Percent of Even Start parents showing significant learning gains or earning a high school diploma.



### Story behind the baseline:

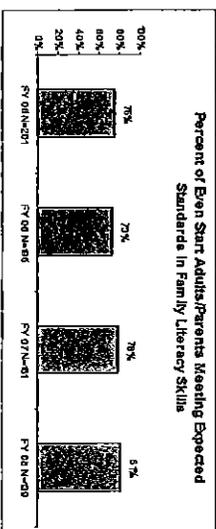
Over the past four years, adults in Even Start have consistently made significant gains. Compared to the entire population of adult education students, Even Start participants make impressive gains. The percent of Even Start parents attaining a measurable educational outcome has been significantly greater than that of all adult education participants statewide by about 25 percentage points annually.<sup>11</sup>

### Proposed actions to turn the curve:

SDE needs to continue to increase the percentage of Even Start children and adults meeting performance indicator standards. This objective is being accomplished through: reviewing and revising the program performance indicators to ensure that they are challenging; continued monitoring (compliance reviews, local evaluations, state performance indicator monitoring, etc.); and professional development.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Although we see impressive gains in Even Start, the number of participants continues to decrease due to federal budget cuts.

**Performance Measure 3:** Percent of Even Start parents demonstrating gains in family literacy skills.



### Story behind the baseline:

Results show that in the past 4 years, three-quarters or more 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 75 percent met the standard in FY 2005 and 81 percent met the standard in 2008. 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.

### Proposed actions to turn the curve:

The 2008-09 state evaluation is focusing on parenting education and interactive literacy activities in order to review and strengthen local practices in this area. Recommendations will be available to the programs for 2009-10.

<sup>1</sup> 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.  
<sup>11</sup> Source: Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS)