



Pathways to Family Success

Lawrence Family Literacy and Family Support Initiative

PROPOSAL FOR FY 09 – PATHWAYS TO FAMILY SUCCESS II

I. CAPACITY:

A. There are a limited amount of family literacy services in the City of Lawrence. Most promote parent/child inter-active literacy activities but do not provide all four components of family literacy. Some of the organizations that integrate parent child learning in their services are: GLCAC Head Start, GLCAC Parent Child Home Program, Lawrence/Methuen Family Network, MSPCC, Lawrence Public Library and a new private initiative, “Raising a Reader”.

In the winter/spring of FY 05, the Pathway’s Partnership in collaboration with the Lawrence Adult Learning Center and the Leahy School created an after school co-enrolled family literacy in-depth model at the Leahy Elementary School serving 15 immigrant families two evenings a week. Parents and children attended the in-depth together. While the parents participated in ESOL classes, the children received academic support. Once a week, a one hour inter-active family literacy activity was held for the parents and children. The parents received support services through the Leahy guidance counselor and Lawrence/Methuen Community Coalition, a pro-active neighborhood social service organization in the Leahy School district. The in-depth outcomes were promising: parents improved their English language skills, parental school involvement increased and the children made positive academic gains. These outcomes led to the continuation of the in-depth, and in each subsequent year, the in-depth has been held.

Developing a collaborative and integrative in-depth has not been easy. Some of the “lessons” learned which led to program improvements are:

- Direct service staff need weekly one hour team meetings to develop and integrate curriculum across the components in order to meet the literacy needs and support needs of enrolled families
- Parent workshops (1-1½ hours in length) and support services should be driven by the parents’ interests and/or needs
- A certified teacher should manage the children’s component
- School administration “buy in” is key to in-depth success
- End of the year focus groups with parents, staff and collaborators help assess program structure, curriculum and service delivery and builds a more effective delivery system

In FY 08, the Leahy program achieved the following outcomes:

- Full enrollment (30+ families)
- 60% retention (of the original 30 families enrolled, 18 of them attended the program from September - June) according to SMART data
- 70.5% attendance average for the year according to SMART data
- 81% of the parents improved their English skills according to SMART data
- 70% of the children made significant literacy gains according to standardized testing and class grades
- All enrolled parents achieved at least one short term goal according to SMART data. Some achieved multiple goals. The goals included reading with their children, getting a library card, assisting children with homework, technology skills, citizenship, better employment and a higher awareness of community resources
- 77% of the participants (23) filled out a pre and post family literacy questionnaire. The results showed a positive movement in parent/child literacy interactions. *The most significant change was in how often parents read to their child and the parent’s usage of books as a teaching tool.*

Building upon the Leahy School success, Pathways is working with the Director of Lawrence Adult Learning Center and the Principal of the Hennessey School to design a family literacy program at the Hennessey School in the fall of 2008. The school serves students in Pre-K through first grade. Initial plans include ESOL instruction for the parents, family support services (parent workshops & referrals) and inter-active family literacy activities based on the “Mother Goose” (Mother Goose Asks Why and Mother

Goose Can Count) and WGBH's "Postcards from Buster" curricula.

Pathways to Family Success received private funding in FY 08 to establish a family literacy program serving newly arrived immigrant families who have an adolescent enrolled in the Lawrence High School. Over this past year, Pathways provided academic support services to thirty immigrant adolescents, ESOL to their parents, monthly family workshops and referral support services. Pathways has received partial funding for this program to continue into FY 09 and is awaiting approval for complete funding.

B. There are numerous benefits for families, schools and communities when parents and children are co-enrolled in collaborative and integrated family literacy and support services within a neighborhood school setting. Some of them include:

- Integrated ESOL curricula is meaningful to adult immigrants, helping them assimilate into American culture
- Improved English skills in immigrant parents leads to increased job opportunities, a higher level of income, self-sufficiency and a more stable environment for their family
- Parent workshops and inter-active family literacy activities help immigrant parents to develop more effective parenting skills which ultimately benefit the child
- Utilizing school buildings for family programs utilizes a valuable community resource and promotes parental involvement in the schools and children's educations
- Services located in neighborhood schools minimizes transportation barriers for families
- Co-enrolling parent and child/ren, minimizes childcare needs
- The higher the parent's literacy, the better able the parent is to help the child with homework and academic skills
- Schools win because parents become more invested in their child's education
- Communities win because improved literacy skills improves the workforce which strengthens the economics and social fiber of the community

C. Starting in 1965 as part of the federal "War on Poverty", the GLCAC, Inc. has a long history of serving as the administrative fiscal agent for such programs as Child Care, Consumer Protection, Community Partnerships for Children, Head Start, Early Head Start, Fuel Assistance/Weatherization, Family Support Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, Parent-Child Home Program, Community Service Center, Women-Infants-Children (WIC) Nutrition Program, in addition to various education/training youth/adult employment programs.

The GLCAC, Inc. has served as the administrative and lead agency for the Lawrence Pathways to Family Success Program since its inception in 2003. In fact, prior to any RFR being issued, GLCAC, Inc. convened several meetings with the Mayor, the Lawrence Public Schools and representatives of several early education and care programs to discuss implementing a family literacy program in the City. The GLCAC, Inc. Planning & Program Development Director has been an active member of the Pathways Partnership since 2003. The GLCAC, Inc. has supported the Pathway initiative by waiving the Indirect Cost Rate, paying one third of the Coordinator's salary/fringe, providing the Coordinator with office space and supervision.

In FY 09, Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) will become the lead agent of the initiative and subsequently will sub-contract with GLCAC for the administration of Pathway initiative. The GLCAC will continue to provide the Coordinator with in-kind operational support and LPS will waive the Indirect Cost Rate.

II. COMMITMENT:

A. Lawrence Pathways has been funded by the Department of Education since 2003. Over the years, Pathways has grown into a diverse Partnership, composed of 25 organizations. The Partnership meets bi-monthly, with an average attendance of 12-14 Partners per meeting. All Partners are involved in some aspect of the Pathway initiative. Some Partners provide direct literacy and support services to the in-depth, like ESOL classes or parent workshops. Others provide professional cross development workshops, like a "51 A" workshop facilitated Department of Social Services and an "Immigration" workshop facilitated by the International Institute. Almost all the Partners support the annual Family Fun Literacy Day held at the Lawrence Public Library, including the Mayor who opens the event up by reading to the children. On the over all, the Lawrence Partners understand the implications of generational literacy issues and are committed to building capacity for collaborative and integrated family literacy and support services in Lawrence.

B. The Lawrence Adult Learning Center has contributed the ESOL services to the in-depth project over the past four years and has committed 3 ESOL instructors to the FY 09 project. The Leahy School has also agreed to continue to support the project in FY 09 with program space, janitorial services, materials, snacks and supervision. Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc, (GLCAC) will continue to support the project by providing the Coordinator with an office, supplies, supervision and support in requesting grants. Valley Works, WIC, Lead Prevention Program, YWCA and other community organizations have agreed to facilitate parent workshops for the in-depth project.

III. GOALS:

Increase co-location of literacy & support services:

According to 2005 American Community Survey census data 34.9% of Lawrence residents are foreign born. The number of residents over age 5 that do not speak English well is 36.8%. English is not the first language spoken at home for 88.8% of the families. Roughly 21.4% of the adult population has less than a ninth grade education. The high school graduation rate at Lawrence High School in 2007 was 41%, the lowest in the state. The drop out rate is 14.5% compared to the state's average of 3.3%. The latest Lawrence Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scores were almost 50% below the state average. Adding to the literacy issues is the long ESOL/ABE wait lists.

In lieu of the success that the Leahy Family Literacy Pilot has achieved in providing comprehensive family literacy and support services, Pathways has been actively expanding that model to other Lawrence schools. In FY 08, through private funding, a family literacy project serving adolescents and their parents was implemented within the High School's North and South Campus'. The project has funding to continue through FY 09. Pathways is also working with the Director of the LALC and the Principal of the Hennessey School to create in FY 09 a day time family literacy program at the Hennessey School, which serves Pre-K through first graders. Plans are in the preliminary stages and involve ESOL for parents, support services and interactive family literacy activities.

Develop curriculum models that integrate family, health and work related themes:

Over the past few years, the Leahy Pilot staff has had to creatively modify a variety of curricula to meet the needs and literacy levels of enrolled families. The key reason for modification is most family literacy curriculum is written for fluent English speaking families and is geared toward families with preschoolers and/or early elementary age children. All of the Leahy School families are non-English speaking Hispanic families with a broad range of children's ages. Some of the parents have poor literacy skills in their language of origin. The Lawrence Pathway initiative would like to develop curricula that is sensitive to these issues.

IV. Access:

A. Lawrence Partners (including the following key partners: Coordinator of Lawrence Pathways, Principal of Leahy School & the Director of Lawrence Adult Learning Center) propose to continue with the Leahy Pilot because of the success of the pilot over the past several years in assisting immigrant families achieve a higher level of literacy skills. The program has helped improve the academic standing of participating children, improve the parents' English language skills and their involvement in the education of their children.

B. The population to be served would be at-risk immigrant Hispanic families with poor English skills who live in the Leahy School district.

C. The project will provide families with the four components of family literacy in a co-enrolled and co-located school setting. While the parents are attending ESOL classes, the children will receive academic support services. Parents and children will be brought together every other week for a 45 minute family literacy activity centered on a children's book. Once a month, a parent workshop will be held on a community resources and/or issue that the parents have expressed an interest in learning more about.

D. Lawrence Partners will support the in-depth through their individual expertise and organizational resources. The key Partners of the project (Coordinator of Pathways, Principal of Leahy School & the Director of Lawrence Adult Learning Center) will develop and sign an MOA which will delineate each one's roles and responsibilities toward the in-depth project, including program implementation, staffing, supervision, meetings, data collection, reports and evaluation of in-depth services.

The agenda of the bi-monthly Pathway meetings will include a report on the in-depth so that the larger Partnership is kept abreast of the status of the project. Specific programmatic needs and issues will be raised to the larger membership so that Partner resources can be utilized.

E. Partner expertise and resources will be accessed, depending upon the curriculum topic and/or in-depth need. For example, if the curriculum is addressing health issues, the Lawrence WIC program can provide a workshop on nutrition for the parents. Latino 2010 Health initiative provides workshops on diabetes and heart related conditions. The Department of Transitional Assistance would like to provide a workshop on their food stamp services. If the curriculum involves workforce development themes, Valley Works offers a wide array of workshops: ie, writing resumes, interview process, how to search for a job, etc. Northern Essex Community College could facilitate a workshop on their certificate programs.

F. The in-depth Outreach Coordinator who works closely with enrolled families will discuss individual family needs with the Pathway Coordinator who will in turn seek support services and/or information from either the appropriate Partner or at the bi-monthly meeting. All discussion will respect the confidentiality of the family.

G. The anticipated outcomes for the in-depth located at Leahy School are:

- Enrollment (30 families)
- 70% family retention
- 70% attendance
- 70% adult language skill growth based on pre & post standardized Best Plus testing
- 70% children's literacy growth based on standardized language tests: DIBBLES & Lexile and/or report card grades
- 70% parent goal attainment
- Positive improvement in family literacy inter-actions based on pre & post interactive family literacy questionnaires

V. Success:

Lawrence Pathway Partnership meets on a bi-monthly basis. If funded for FY '09, the Partners will collaboratively continue to develop a work plan that will align with the Indicators of Success. Plans will include:

- Usage of guiding documents for Partnership development & in-depth (ie: Mission Statement, family literacy & support definition, short & long term goals, MOAs, etc)
- Develop strategies to build capacity within the community for collaborative & integrated family literacy & support services
- Document in-depth structure, services & outcomes through minutes, curricula, data, reports, etc.
- Promote the Pathway initiative and family literacy concepts through Family Fun Literacy Day, other community events, media coverage, relationships with community leaders and participation in community meetings, summits and/or conferences that are pertinent to building capacity within the community for family literacy & support services
- Sponsor free professional cross trainings that support & promote family literacy
- Develop family literacy curricula that is sensitive to low literacy levels & social needs of participating immigrant families

VI. Budget:

- 1) The salary of a full time coordinator who will be responsible for the Pathway II project. Responsibilities will include:
 - Building family literacy capacity in Lawrence
 - Facilitating bi-monthly Partnership meetings
 - Developing & implementing FY 09 Pathway work plan in collaboration with Pathway Partners
 - Overseeing of in-depth pilots
 - Supervising Family Fun Literacy Day
 - Hiring an outside evaluator for Pathway initiative
- 2) "To glue" together in-depth family literacy and support services
- 3) Evaluation of in-depth
- 4) Family literacy curricula development & documentation
- 5) Miscellaneous costs related to outreach, trainings, travel & operating expenses