

**Kassab, C., Askov, E. N., Weirauch, D., Grinder, E., & Van Horn, B. (2004, spring).
Adult participation related to outcomes in family literacy programs. *Family Literacy Forum*, 3(1), 23-29.**

Analyses of the statewide evaluation data indicate that adult learners who accumulate between 50 and 99 hours of adult education within a single 12-month period perform better on the TABE reading, while at least 75 hours are needed in order to perform better on the TABE mathematics post-test. A minimum of 50 hours of adult education instruction appears to be needed for ESL participants, particularly for those who are continuing their participation into the next program year.

Continuing ABE participants who finish their program in a shorter period of time perform better on the TABE post-tests, controlling for initial reading and mathematics scores (pre-tests) on the TABE. Furthermore, ABE women who stay in the program for long periods of time without exiting (or moving to adult secondary education programs) do not make the same progress as ABE women who are able to concentrate their participation. However, the effect of duration in the program was different for continuing women who were developing their English literacy skills. Women who were working on their English literacy skills and were in the program for longer periods of time did better on the BEST post-test than women who were not in the program for as long. This finding suggests that English language learners require a longer duration in the instructional program than native speakers. Nevertheless, intensity of participation is also needed for these adults.

Finally, hours of parenting education were not related to TABE post-test scores, and they were negatively related to BEST Literacy Skills post-test scores among continuing ESL participants. If parenting education classes reinforced what was learned in ESL classes, then one would expect parenting education to be positively related to adult literacy skills as measured by the BEST. Results obtained in this study may have been influenced by intensity of participation in parenting education relative to ESL instruction and by whether parenting education was conducted in English or the student's native language. This research has practical implications for policymakers, administrators and teachers. While research is needed to confirm these results in programs outside Pennsylvania and in stand-alone adult education programs, one implication is clear. Programs must be designed and funded with consideration for factors that influence intensity of participation, not merely persistence of participation. Priority in funding could be given to programs that offer increased hours of instruction per week. Policy could also expand the definition of teaching to include the structuring, supervising, and debriefing involved with out-of-class instructional and practice time.

Administrators and teachers may want to think about participation of adults in adult and family literacy programs in a way that considers the factors that affect the intensity of participation in the local family literacy program. Intensity might be increased by augmenting classroom time with learning outside class. These opportunities outside of class time could include teacher-prepared guided study using print materials, computer materials, or Internet-based distance education. By using email available in libraries,

students can correspond with the teacher and other class members in a project such as planning a family fun night. Additionally, students can engage in various self-study projects that use literacy skills, such as finding new recipes and learning how to cook nutritious meals. They also can keep a daily journal, which may or may not be submitted to the teacher, to record their thoughts and experiences. As a structured out-of-class activity, parents can participate in book reading and other literacy activities with their children on a daily basis at home. These practical suggestions employ literacy skills and can expand the intensity participation.

Duration of the participation, in addition to intensity, is important to non-native speakers of English as they need time to practice their emerging English skills. They, too, can benefit from engaging in learning opportunities outside the adult education class. For example, they can practice speaking English in a variety of settings including shopping, trips to the doctor, and meetings with their children's teachers or caregivers. If these opportunities are planned in the classroom so that students intentionally practice the literacy and language skills being taught, then student participation is enhanced. Moreover, debriefing after an independent self-study activity is an important opportunity for the teacher to supply corrective feedback and encourage further development. The goal of achievement as a result of participation is one shared by all constituencies – policymakers, administrators, teachers, and program participants. Greater awareness of the importance of intensity of participation and provision for it can contribute to attainment of this goal.