

Askov, E.N., Kassab, C., & Weirauch, D. (2005). *Women in Pennsylvania's family literacy programs: Effects of participant characteristics on extent of participation*. *Adult Basic Education*, 15(3), 131-149.

Data from Pennsylvania's statewide evaluation of family literacy programs were used to assess the effect of participant and family characteristics on duration and intensity of participation in family literacy programs. Duration was defined from two different perspectives – hours of participation in the different components of family literacy programs (adult education, parenting education, and parent-child interactive literacy) and time in the program. Intensity of participation was limited to the adult education component. The concept was approached from two perspectives as well – whether adults participated in at least 50 hours of adult education during the most recent program year and overall intensity of participation since entry (average hours per week). Analyses were limited to women in single-parent or dual-parent households who had participated in at least the 2001-2002 program year and had exited the program. Major findings are discussed below.

Results indicated that being employed hinders participation. Employed participants had fewer hours of instruction and participated with less intensity in the adult education component than unemployed participants. Employment status was not related to time in the program. Being a single-head of a household also appears to hinder participation. At the same time, women with a greater number of actively participating children participated for a shorter period of time and with less intensity. These results indicate that greater efforts are needed to increase the duration and intensity of participation for groups with competing demands, such as those who are employed or single parents. The importance of the adult education component for a mother's ability to improve the quality of life for her children may need to be highlighted for women with a greater number of children.

Women in ESL programs participated to a greater extent in family literacy programs than non-ESL students. Duration, particularly in the adult education component, and intensity of participation in adult education was greater for ESL participants. Women who lived in larger communities participated to a greater extent in the adult education component, both in terms of number of hours and intensity. Also, as age increased, participants were more likely to participate intensely during the most recent program year, and to a greater extent in the family literacy program, particularly in the parent-child interactive literacy component.

Caucasian women were more likely to participate in parenting education and parent-child interactive literacy while African-American women were less likely to participate in these two components. These results could be due to programs with large percentages of non-Caucasian participants offering fewer hours of parenting education and parent-child interactive literacy. Conversely, it could also indicate that these two components are overly oriented towards Anglo models of parenting.