

## MEFLI Lessons Learned 2004-2008

- Whenever possible, recruit MEFLI families from among those already participating in a partner program e.g. Adult Ed, Head Start, community-based organization.
- To recruit and retain families, it's most effective to schedule program activities at consistent days, times, and locations. Frequent changes in schedule compound the existing challenges of recruitment and retention.
- A strong connection to and affiliation with an adult education provider is critical to establishing a solid adult literacy component.
- True collaborations require a significant amount of time and energy to establish and maintain.
- MOU (memorandum of understanding) or similar written document is an essential tool to ensure that all partners and collaborators are clear on their responsibilities.
- Personality and ability of staff to relate to families is a key to success.
- Recruiting families during school open houses, kindergarten registration, and similar school events, is an effective recruitment strategy.
- Be visible – go where potential clients are: grocery store, Laundromat, WIC.
- Look to community agencies as a source of referrals. Get buy-in from the administration as well as from the front-line staff.
- “Recruitment events” frequently turn out to be fun community events but rarely attract families eligible for family literacy programs. Time and energy is better spent working with representatives of agencies who serve the same families you're looking to recruit.
- Providing childcare and transportation are often critical factors in determining the success or failure of a program.
- Developing a logo that is used on all promotional material can help with the visibility and identity of a program. Keep in mind, however, that print is probably the least effective recruitment tool. If you're going to develop a brochure, develop it as an information tool for providers serving the population you're trying to recruit.

- Being clear about the expectation of participating in all three components of the program is important (adult literacy, early literacy, PACT-Parents and Children Together).
- Including families in PACT activities, who are from the community but not enrolled in the MEFLI program, can increase the visibility, support, and acceptance of family literacy.
- If families who are ineligible for the family literacy program want to be involved, support them to volunteer for your program.
- If grant activities and strategies, as written in the grant, are not working, develop new strategies and ask to implement them.
- New Books, New Readers, a program of the Maine Humanities Council, provides many MEFLI programs with a popular, as well as effective, piece of their adult education component.
- Marti Stevens Interactive Improvisational Theatre is an effective tool to convey concepts of family literacy and issues pertinent to the implementation of family literacy programs.
- Several programs observed that it takes much longer to recruit families and to hire staff than they had anticipated. “We have learned that recruiting families has taken more time, energy and effort than we originally anticipated. Establishing a relationship with each parent has been a crucial but very time consuming part of getting and keeping parents in the program.” And, from another program: “The fact is, in non-immigrant families virtually all parents who meet eligibility requirements (i.e. don’t have a high school diploma or have ABE-level skills) have either major learning issues or major life issues, or both. Thus, it requires abundant attention, support, and persistence to engage them initially and to foster sustained participation.” So, consider the amount of time and money you allocate for the coordinator position.
- In a large geographic area, conference calls, meetings with small groups of potential partners in different areas within the region, and/or videoconferencing, can help overcome barriers of time and distance.
- Offer food, whenever feasible, when holding meetings with collaborators or with families.

- MEFLI Coordinators benefit from meeting as a group to share strategies, ask questions, and solve problems.
- Think about “what’s in it for them?” when talking with potential collaborators.
- Plan to recruit at least twice as many potential families as you plan to serve.
- If you want to know what interests parents, ask them!