



Stern Center for Language and Learning

African Family Literacy Project (AFLP)

Description

Since 1999, over 1,500 African refugees have resettled in the Burlington area. These target families come from a culture where there is no written language. In order to meet the literacy needs of the adults, the African Family Literacy Project (AFLP) was pioneered. The program was designed by the Stern Center for Language and Learning in collaboration with the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program (VRRP) and Vermont Adult Learning (VAL). The goal of the AFLP was to provide literacy skills training to adult refugees via a three-pronged approach:

- Develop/implement a curriculum for teaching literacy skills to these families.
- Provide literacy training to 13 VAL and VRRP professionals,
- Deliver multi-sensory, structured language training to 29 refugee mothers and grandmothers, who had been in the country on average 2.5 years.

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Program

- VAL and Stern Center instructors co-taught up to 90-minute classes to adult learners, which were offered several times a week at various locations so that the mothers and grandmothers could conveniently attend meetings of their choice.
- During each class, the Stern Center instructor focused on reading and writing skills, while the VAL instructor focused on listening and speaking skills.
- As mothers and grandmothers developed early literacy skills, they participated in literacy activities with their children and grandchildren.



Results

Professionals

- VAL and VRRP professionals made significant gains in their knowledge of early literacy concepts, rising from 54% on the pre-test to 87% on the post-test.
- 100% found the presentation of the information “very good” to “excellent.”
- Participants appreciated learning practical, hands-on strategies for teaching reading through modeling.

Mothers and Grandmothers

- Demonstrated 6-month gains on average in early literacy specific to word meaning.
- Achieved statistically significant growth on sound-symbol relationships.
- Advanced in their global knowledge from low to high-beginning and intermediate levels within the 9-month period.
- 92% felt the program helped them with pre-reading skills and wanted to continue to learn how to read.
- 93% now read to their children/grandchildren.
- Demonstrated gains in 9 months that VAL professionals thought would have taken 18-24.

This program successfully helped support the integration of non-literate adult refugees into our literacy-dominated culture.

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