

PRIME TIME FAMILY READING TIME®

An Approach to the Issue of Intergenerational Literacy

PRIME TIME FAMILY READING TIME® is a unique intergenerational six- or eight- week program of reading, discussion and storytelling held in public libraries, community centers and other public venues. The program features award-winning children's books from around the world that stimulate discussion about themes and problems encountered in everyday life. PRIME TIME aims to assist parents with low literacy skills in order to build their confidence in helping their children learn to read.

"Our goals are to use the humanities-based content of the books to reinforce the role of the family; to encourage parents and children to bond around the act of reading and learning together; and to help parents and children learn how to select books and become active library users," explains Michael Sartisky, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities' President and Executive Director.

PRIME TIME has been commended by local citizens for its quality and publicly lauded as a national standard for excellence in humanities programming for children and youth at risk. In 2000, PRIME TIME was one of only ten arts and humanities programs nationwide to receive the prestigious Coming Up Taller Award from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. PRIME TIME was the only humanities project honored and was the only project that was state and nationwide in impact, not confined to a single community.

PRIME TIME's Humanities-Based Content

In each 90-minute session, a storyteller demonstrates effective reading techniques that are specifically designed to teach not only reading, but also the skill of reading out loud. Each story focuses on a specific humanities-based theme that both children and parents encounter daily (i.e. fairness, responsibility, beauty, courage).

After the storyteller presents the story, a humanities scholar serves as a discussion leader, introducing families to methods of talking about texts. The texts used in discussion are selected in consultation with scholars and experts in children's literature to ensure that the humanities-based content is substantive and accessible to both children and new adult readers. The discussion techniques taught in this segment seek to stimulate interest and knowledge of the books' content -skills that will foster a lifelong love of learning through reading.

Each session also includes a five-minute "library commercial." This is an opportunity for librarians to introduce families to library resources such as other books by PRIME TIME authors, homework aids, GED materials for parents, books on parenting and healthcare, computer access stations (where available), newspapers, magazines and other items families unfamiliar with libraries might not know about.

PRIME TIME Expands Nationwide

Begun in 1991 with a pilot at the East Baton Rouge Parish Library, PRIME TIME programs have dramatically helped over 6,000 people in 53 of Louisiana's 64 parishes. And PRIME TIME continues to expand nationwide, with pilot programs completed in 31 states and the Virgin Islands. Expansion is made possible through a partnership with the American Library Association and with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. PRIME TIME has been adopted as the official family literacy program of the Mississippi and Texas State Humanities Councils. Additional states officially affiliated with PRIME TIME include West Virginia, New Mexico, Wisconsin, Georgia, New York and Michigan. Over 200 sites have been implemented since the 1991 pilot.

Outcome Assessment

PRIME TIME staff are currently refining a sustainable evaluation system to track long-term program effectiveness in changing reading and library usage habits among PRIME TIME participants. Evaluation components include narrative reports from the librarians, scholars, and storytellers, as well as entry and completion surveys submitted by participating family members and collected at each site.

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