

Navigating the World: Incorporating Multiple Literacies through Family Literacy

A Guide for Educators



Visit FamiliesLearning.org for more details about our work and the ways we inspire lifelong learning.

©2026 National Center for Families Learning

Table of Contents

Welcome 1

What is Literacy? What is Family Literacy? 2

Multiple Literacies..... 3

Incorporating Multiple Literacies into Family Literacy Programming 4

 Civic Literacy: 4

 Digital Literacy:..... 6

 Environmental Literacy 8

 Financial/Math Literacy..... 10

 Health Literacy 12

 Information Literacy 14

 Legal Literacy 16

 Storytelling/Auditory Literacy..... 18

 Workplace Literacy 20

Conclusion..... 22

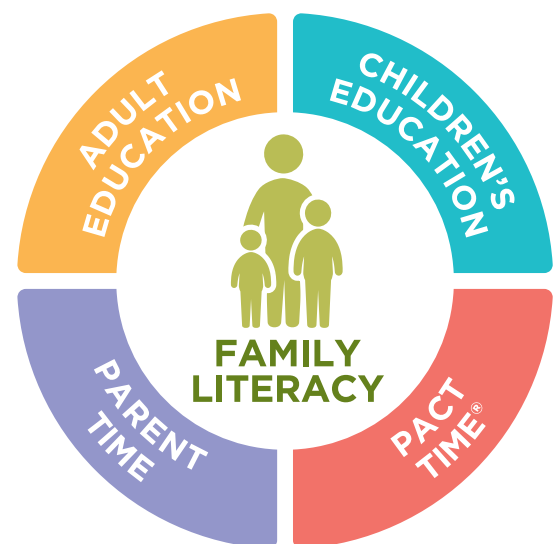
References 23

Welcome

This resource is designed to provide a foundational understanding of the evolving definition of literacy, introduce various forms of literacy relevant to today's learners, and offer practical strategies for incorporating multiple literacies into the National Center for Families Learning's (NCFL's) four-component model of family literacy.

The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that 59 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 74 have the lowest literacy, while 72 million have the lowest numeracy skills (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2024). The impacts of this are far-reaching. Employers report that low literacy contributes to challenges with productivity and retention, underscoring the direct connection between foundational skills and workforce success (The Adult Literacy and Learning Impact Network [ALL IN], 2023). At the same time, low literacy can persist across generations: children of parents with low literacy have a 72% likelihood of reaching the lowest literacy levels themselves in adulthood (Barbara Bush Foundation, 2021). These realities highlight the need for family literacy, an intergenerational educational approach designed to support both parents and children to build stronger literacy skills, educational outcomes, and long-term economic opportunity.

At NCFL, we view family literacy as a comprehensive, multigenerational approach to education. Our model includes four essential components—Adult Education, Children's Education, Parent Time, and Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®—which together provide rich opportunities to embed multiple literacies across learning contexts and age groups.



This guide will help you:

- Explain the concepts of literacy and family literacy
- Analyze the framework of multiple literacies
- Apply multiple literacies to each of the four family literacy components
- Implement tips, tools, and real-world examples into your programming

What is Literacy? What is Family Literacy?



Literacy

Historically, the word “literacy” has been understood as the ability to read and write. Over time, however, this definition has been adapted to address emerging societal needs and technological advancements. The rise of digital media, the increasing importance of visual communication, and the need to navigate information from diverse sources have all contributed to a broader understanding of what it means to be literate in the 21st century.

NCFL relies on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) more expansive definition of literacy as “a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world” (UNESCO, 2026). This definition highlights that literacy is not a single skill, but a collection of abilities that individuals need to effectively access, interpret, and create information across multiple formats.

In this context, literacy is understood to have multiple components—including civic literacy, digital literacy, environmental literacy, financial/math literacy, health literacy, information literacy, legal literacy, storytelling/auditory literacy, and workplace literacy. These forms of literacy help individuals construct knowledge from a variety of sources and modes of communication (UNESCO, 2026). As society continues to evolve, the concept of literacy has expanded to reflect the many ways people learn, communicate, and make meaning. This shift underscores the importance of multiple literacies in education and the workforce today and ensures families acquire the essential tools and skills needed to navigate and succeed in an increasingly complex world.

Family Literacy

Building on this broader understanding of literacy, NCFL defines family literacy as “a continuum of services that address the multigenerational nature of literacy.” In practice, the continuum of services consists of programming focused on the four components of (1) adult education: education and literacy focused on adults’ individual career and economic goals; (2) children’s education: age-appropriate education to prepare children for school success and lifelong learning; (3) Parent Time: literacy education for parents to support their family goals; and (4) PACT Time: interactive literacy activities between parents and children (NCFL, 2023).

This intergenerational approach creates meaningful learning opportunities for both adults and children across multiple settings and learning styles. By intentionally incorporating multiple literacies into each of these components, family literacy programs can more effectively meet the needs of today’s families and help them reach their educational, workforce, social, and personal goals.

Multiple Literacies

The term “multiliteracies” was introduced in 1996 by the New London Group, a collective of international literacy educators. It emerged in response to the rapid changes brought about by globalization and technological advancement. Today’s learners must also be able to:

- Interpret visuals such as graphs, charts, and photographs
- Navigate digital environments like websites, social media, and mobile apps
- Create multimedia content, such as recorded or edited videos, platform-specific content for presentations, and infographics or flyers
- Understand and engage with complex civic and social systems and institutions (e.g., schools, healthcare, and government services)



In short, literacy is no longer a single skill, but a set of interconnected abilities that help individuals make meaning, communicate, and function effectively in modern society.

This expanded view of literacy is especially relevant in family literacy programming, where learners of all ages and backgrounds come together. By recognizing and integrating multiple literacies, including digital, civic, cultural, and more, into the components of family literacy, programs can more effectively meet the needs of families and help them thrive.

While children’s education is one of the four core components, family literacy staff rarely shape or deliver the children’s education curriculum itself. For that reason, the next section, *Incorporating Multiple Literacies into Family Literacy Programming*, focuses on the three parent-facing components, where staff have the greatest influence on design, instruction, and engagement.

Incorporating Multiple Literacies into Family Literacy Programming

In this section, you'll find descriptions of different types of literacies along with tips, resources, and real-life examples of how to incorporate them into your family literacy programming.

Civic Literacy:

Civic Literacy encompasses the skills and knowledge necessary to fully participate in and impact change within a community. Recent findings from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Civic and Economic Literacy Survey (2025) highlight the depth of this need: 58% of participating adults failed a basic civics test, even as 74% of them reported confidence in their ability to explain how the U.S. government works.

This gap between perceived and actual understanding underscores why civic literacy is essential. It ensures all community members understand their rights and responsibilities, where and how to access common community services, and the basic functions of community governance. This literacy is also critical to obtaining U.S. citizenship, passing the GED Social Studies test, and participating meaningfully in civic life, including engaging in civil discourse and understanding the voting process.

Embedding Civic Literacy into Family Literacy:

Adult Education

- Create a class contract/compact with co-designed rules and agreements for class etiquette and expectations.
- Research the Bill of Rights and analyze how the adoption and interpretation of its amendments both shaped and were shaped by advocacy.
- Potential Partners:
 - A representative from the local county clerk's office to share the varying forms used at the courthouse—including deeds, liens, licenses, and registrations—and discuss the kinds of information needed to complete them.



PACT Time

- With younger children, together create a family contract/compact related to expected behaviors and actions within your home.
- With older children, create a chart to compare and contrast what good citizenship looks like in your family, religious community, city/neighborhood, and nation.
- Potential Partners:
 - City government representatives (City Council or Mayor's Office) for a tour or mock voting activity.
 - Local library to support families in researching reliable civic information, such as local services (parks and recreation, etc.).

Parent Time

- Local issues can be explored during Parent Time to build parents' understanding of how new laws or proposed legislation may affect families in the community.
- Potential Partners:
 - Cultural or Advocacy Organizations and Non-Profits to explore how communities organize around shared interests.

Civic Literacy in Practice:

Civic literacy has been implemented by guiding adult students through the voter registration process and helping them study for the driver's license exam. One program's staff even located driver's manuals in parents' native languages.

Representatives from the city's public works department were invited to share information regarding a proposed road project adjacent to the elementary school building that their children attended. Parents were given an opportunity to learn about the process from identifying the need through the completion of construction, including how potential projects are prioritized and the points at which the public is invited to comment.



Digital Literacy:

Digital Literacy is the ability to use technology, including computers, tablets, and smartphones, and includes the ability to navigate various digital tools and software programs such as word processing software, email, social media, online games, search engines, phone apps, and more. It also includes being able to communicate digital information responsibly.

There is a significant need for parents to increase their digital skills. In the *New Landscape of Digital Literacy* report, only 66% of workers represented in the data were parents, yet parents made up 75% of workers with no digital skills and 78% of workers with limited digital skills (National Skills Coalition, 2020). This gap underscores how essential it is for family literacy programs to support parents in building the digital confidence and competencies needed to navigate work, school, and daily life alongside their children.



Embedding Digital Literacy into Family Literacy:

Adult Education

- Utilize digital learning platforms, like Google Classroom, and apps with interactive elements in class lessons. Pear Deck for Google Slides, EdPuzzle for videos, and Kahoot are just a few of the free tools teachers can use to easily incorporate digital skill-building into learning activities.
- Potential Partners:
 - Local public library staff can share the digital tools available to library cardholders that help adults pursue their learning goals in the classroom and at the library.
 - Goodwill Education Services for supplemental digital literacy courses and certifications

PACT Time

- With younger children, utilize interactive apps, such as Unite Books and PBS Kids, to support both children's and parents' educational needs.
- With older children, work together to research family ancestry, create a multi-media family photo album, or a cooking vlog to share with relatives and friends.
- Potential Partners:
 - Public library, school library, or school media/technology specialist to lead workshops on digital skills or a multimedia family project.
 - Cultural organizations, non-profits, or local historians to support families in digital storytelling of family history, heritage, food, celebrations, and language.

Parent Time

- Digital literacy can be incorporated into Parent Time by focusing on topics such as how to keep families safe on the internet and social media.
- How to navigate online platforms that are utilized in school districts (like Student Information Systems/Parent Portals such as PowerSchool or Infinite Campus), to help parents stay informed and connected to their children's school and teachers.
- Potential Partners:
 - Local or state law enforcement to present about risky phone apps, online safety, and scams.
 - A district or school curriculum specialist can provide information on how children's education utilizes devices to support learning at different grade levels.

Digital Literacy in Practice:

Digital literacy classes have been offered during the school summer session. Parents have received training on Google LEO, learned the parts of a computer, practiced using the keyboard and mouse, become familiar with basic computer terms, navigated internet browsers, used email, created and saved documents, explored online learning tools, taken online practice tests, and learned how to stay safe online.



Environmental Literacy

Environmental literacy is understanding how environmental, weather, and climate systems function and recognizing the ways these systems impact our communities. It also includes awareness of the cultural, historical, and place-based knowledge that shapes how different communities relate to their local environments.

Environmental literacy matters because it helps individuals make informed choices, respond to environmental challenges that affect their health and safety, and participate in decisions that support the long-term resilience of their families, neighborhoods, and local ecosystems.



Embedding Environmental Literacy into Family Literacy:

Adult Education

- Connect environmental literacy to everyday situations: understanding utility bills and how they vary depending on season, learning ways to save energy (Atabek-Yiğit, E et al., 2014), and preparing for extreme weather that can affect their families.
- Potential Partners:
 - A local utility to discuss how to read a utility bill. Then practice reviewing and comparing utility bills.

PACT Time

- Parents and their children can plant a small family garden or plant, then track growth in a journal and discuss why plants need certain resources and how humans affect different ecosystems.
- Engage in a local clean-up activity at a park or river while discussing trash collection, wildlife observed, and water quality, and making connections to civic responsibility and engagement in the community.
- Potential Partners:
 - Parks and Recreation Department, county agencies, local nature centers, and science museums to lead experiences and education around environmental topics.

Parent Time

- Invite local elected officials to present about community environmental priorities and give parents the chance to share about local needs they see.
- During Parent Time, have someone from your local emergency management agency speak on emergency preparedness and recovery, including how to safeguard important documents and steps for recovering from a natural disaster.
- Potential Partners:
 - Utility companies, environmental non-profits, or public health departments can support building practical knowledge around environmental issues.

Environmental Literacy in Practice

Conservation Officers from the state game and parks department have been invited to speak during Parent Time on entry permits, hunting and fishing licenses, and the use of state park facilities, as well as recreational opportunities for families in the area. Some have even brought animals native to the area as part of the presentation. During PACT Time, families are encouraged to join free Family Fishing Nights, where officers provide instruction and answer questions. Poles and bait are supplied, ensuring everyone can take part.

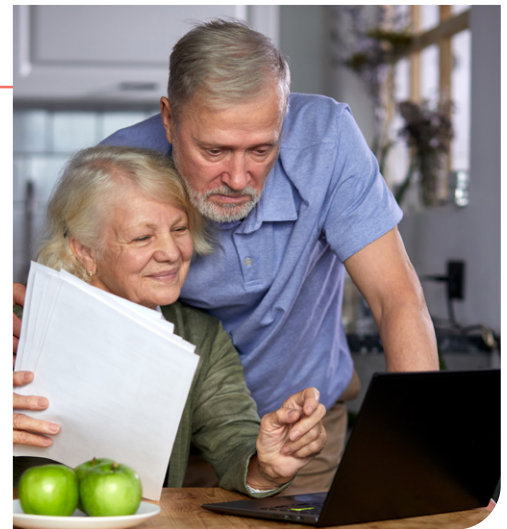


Financial/Math Literacy

Financial/Math Literacy is understanding money topics and other numeracy skills. This could include how to open a bank account, understand bank charges and fees, reconcile an account, use credit cards and interest rates, budgets, and more. It could also include everyday math, like calculating percentages, running totals, and tax rates while shopping.

The number of Americans who understand basic financial principles has hovered at around 50% for eight straight years (Meineke, 2024), while approximately 34% of U.S. adults have numeracy skills below a first-grade level (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

These statistics highlight the importance of strengthening financial and math literacy skills to help individuals make informed financial decisions and navigate everyday math successfully.



Embedding Financial/Math Literacy into Family Literacy:

Adult Education

- Incorporate authentic word problems across adult education classes. They are often more difficult for learners who struggle with reading. Problems like balancing bank accounts, determining how much food will be needed to feed a certain number of people, or how much paint will be needed to paint a room will be easily accessible and allow for expanded learning.
- Career pathway math mapping activity where adult learners research a career of their choice to explore the required training, certification costs, and expected wages or salaries. They can compare different careers to complete a cost-benefit analysis and determine how it compares to their financial and employment goals.
- Potential Partners:
 - Local banks, community colleges, or financial counseling agencies can guide workshops and support adults in making connections to financial and economic systems.

PACT Time

- NCFL's Financial Fitness: A Guide to Everyday Money (2023) is a wonderful PACT Time resource for families.
 - With younger children, section 1 activities are a great way to start family conversations around finances and budgeting.
 - With older children, section 2 activities further develop concepts introduced in section 1 for more advanced and robust discussions.

- Potential Partners:
 - Local banks, small businesses, grocery stores, and farmers' markets can help families explore hands-on learning simulations of budgeting, price comparison, and cost analysis.

Parent Time

- Create a budget with your family during Parent Time. Talk about what bills the household has each month, how much is spent on groceries, and how much spending money is left over. Talk about what to do in emergencies - are there savings for unexpected expenses?
- Potential Partners:
 - Invite a local tax preparer to discuss free or low-cost tax filing options and where they can be accessed.

Financial/Math Literacy in Practice

Community action agencies and financial institutions can provide families with access to capital, technical assistance, and financial education. A personal finance coach visits the adult education classrooms to support parents with personal finances, including basic budgeting and saving, home and car buying, and investing. Parents have also learned about starting and growing small businesses. The finance coach uses a curriculum to teach the children about saving money and using it wisely.

Adult English Language Acquisition classes integrate math skills for everyday life, making learning practical and relevant. For example, learners calculate the area of a room to buy a rug, use a measuring tape or a ruler to measure in feet and inches (conversion), use measurements when cooking and administering liquid medicine (cup, teaspoon, milliliter), read simple graphs and charts, and calculate tips at restaurants. More advanced students build on these skills by calculating gross pay versus net pay, considering payroll deductions, and online shopping.



Health Literacy

Health Literacy involves the ability to navigate the healthcare system and understand the information and skills needed to manage personal and family health.

Research shows that adults with lower literacy levels are 1.5 to 3 times more likely to experience adverse health outcomes compared to those with higher literacy skills (DeWalt et al., 2004). In response, both the American Medical Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that health information for the public be written at no higher than an 8th-grade reading level. However, much of the available material still contains specialized medical terminology and is often written at a 10th-grade level or above (Mishra & Dexter, 2020), making it difficult for many individuals to fully understand and use. Family literacy programs can help ensure parents are better equipped to find reliable sources and understand, interpret, and act on health information.



Embedding Health Literacy into Family Literacy:

Adult Education

- Use trustworthy online sources, like Medline Plus (MedlinePlus.gov) or the Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.org), for easy-to-understand definitions of terms and explanations of diseases commonly used by health care providers.
- As a class, create a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast health clinic offerings or insurance plan coverage. Once completed, the class can determine which clinic or insurance plan would align with a particular family's needs.
- Potential Partners:
 - Community health clinics and local health departments may offer various workshops that provide multilingual health education materials or offer classes like First Aid, CPR, and other safety certifications that may be of interest to potential employers.

PACT Time

- With younger children, create a fruit and vegetable color wheel or rainbow with drawings or magazine cutouts. Discuss the importance of healthy eating, including a variety of fruits and vegetables of all colors.
- With older children, discuss the importance of stress regulation on our health. Together, create a routine you can do in the evening, like writing in a gratitude journal, listening to relaxing nature sounds, or writing down your worries to leave in a “worry jar.”

- Potential Partners:
 - School nurses and school counselors help families to practice healthy habits together.
 - Nutritionists, dieticians, or local agriculture programs to lead cooking and tasting workshops.

Parent Time

- Health literacy encompasses nutrition and food literacy, defined as “the ability to make informed choices about food that support one’s health, community, and the environment” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2024). Reading labels, discussing how food choices affect your health, and identifying ingredients and potential allergens are all potential Parent Time topics.
- Talking about safe storage of medication and reading over-the-counter and prescription medicine labels for appropriate dosing and frequency are also beneficial health literacy topics for Parent Time.
- Potential Partners:
 - Invite a county extension agent to discuss which fruit and vegetables grow well in backyard or container gardens in your climate.
 - Before cold and flu season, invite a representative from a local health clinic to discuss tips on avoiding colds/flu viruses and how to treat them at home

Health Literacy in Practice:

Local hospital system and clinic staff have served as presenters in several family literacy programs. Health literacy classes focus on learning English through health-related topics. Some of the key outcomes from the class are the increased ability of adult learners to identify parts of the body, make appointments, fill out medical history forms, describe symptoms and other health issues to doctors, communicate with pharmacists, and read medication instructions and warning labels.



Information Literacy

Information Literacy—often used interchangeably with the term media literacy— involves the ability to locate, access, and engage with information across a wide range of sources and formats. Being information literate means being able to identify, access, evaluate, and communicate information clearly and ethically (College of Staten Island Library, 2026). Teaching information literacy includes helping learners recognize an author’s purpose, detect potential bias, and verify the



accuracy of the information presented. This is especially important given a May 2025 survey of U.S. residents 18 years of age and older found that only 19% were very confident in their ability to distinguish real news from false information (Watson, 2025).

Embedding Information Literacy into Family Literacy:

Adult Education

- Critical thinking exercises help participants consider an author’s purpose and evaluate media for credibility, biases, and perspective. The mnemonic device SIFT—which stands for Stop, Investigate the source, Find better coverage, and Trace claims, quotes, and media—can help learners more effectively evaluate the reliability of the information they encounter (Clark College Libraries, 2026). Classroom graphics and lesson plans to support learner understanding can be found from numerous online sources.
- Teaching effective and ethical use of AI in the classroom that includes understanding the different types of AI, practice in crafting and refining generative AI prompts to see how shifts in language shape results, and critically reviewing AI-generated content for accuracy and reliability. This approach ensures that learners engage with AI as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for their own thinking.
- Potential Partners:
 - Invite a journalist from a local news outlet to discuss how information is gathered, verified, and shaped into a news article. They could also share information about the process an article goes through from first draft to editing, approval, and publishing.

PACT Time

- With younger children, read *The Three Little Pigs* (Jacobs) alongside *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Scieszka), then use the differences in the versions to have a conversation about how bias, point of view, and personal experiences can shape the way a story is told.
- With older children, research social media statements. Use credible online sources to categorize them as fact, opinion, or misleading information.

- Potential Partners:
 - School librarians and media specialists can facilitate activities such as comparing news stories or evaluating websites and reliable online sources.

Parent Time

- How to use online parental controls, age-appropriate media content and supervision, understanding cyberbullying, and social media for youth are all examples of potential Parent Time topics related to media and information literacy.
- Potential Partners:
 - A local tech company to discuss search algorithms, data privacy, and safe browsing.
 - Public libraries and school media/technology specialists can also support parent workshops on parental controls for televisions, phones, and computers.

Information Literacy in Practice:

School district library staff have presented during Parent Time, introducing parents to the trusted apps and online databases used by students from kindergarten through high school. Parents were also given support on how to help their children access those trusted school library services at home.



Free online courses for spotting misinformation and scams have been used during adult education to aid learners in identifying misleading headlines or social media posts, recognizing phishing attempts, and evaluating the credibility of information sources. Some staff have also connected it to parent time content on protecting personal information and social media citizenship.

Legal Literacy

Legal Literacy is the ability to understand, interpret, and apply legal information, especially as it relates to individual rights and family needs. This includes knowing how to handle everyday legal situations, such as receiving a traffic ticket, reporting a crime, or understanding a lease or contract. It also involves familiarity with family law topics like wills, inheritance, name changes, and divorce, as well as basic knowledge of how the court system works and knowledge of available legal support services within the community, such as legal aid organizations and pro bono resources.



The importance of legal literacy is underscored by findings from the Legal Services Corporation's 2022 Justice Gap Measurement Survey, which reported that 3 in 4 low-income households experienced at least one civil legal problem in the past year (Legal Services Corporation, n.d.). The most common issues involved consumer matters, health care, housing, and income maintenance. Additionally, 55% of low-income Americans who experienced a civil legal problem stated that these issues substantially impacted their lives, affecting their finances, mental and physical health, personal safety, and relationships. Family literacy programming can help families build the confidence needed to navigate these legal challenges, gain a better understanding of their rights, seek appropriate support, and make informed decisions that protect their well-being.

Embedding Legal Literacy into Family Literacy:

Adult Education

- Adult educators can utilize real-world resources, like credit card agreements, job applications, and lease agreements, to introduce legal terms and help learners practice interpreting documents they are likely to encounter in everyday life.
- Adults research credible online resources to understand employment rights related to wages, leave, overtime, or discrimination. Using various state department of labor and legal websites, they can build practical knowledge to advocate for themselves in their workplace.
- Potential Partners:
 - Legal aid, the local community action agency, or an area leasing agency could come and speak to the class about renters' rights and responsibilities and standard lease terminology.

PACT Time

- With younger children, discuss the rights and responsibilities individual family members have to keep your home clean and safe. Create a family chore chart to track “jobs” to be done daily and/or weekly.
- With older children, discuss the difference between what is legal and what is moral. Share with them the things that inform your worldview and actions, and ask what they think.
- Potential Partners:
 - School counselors, school resource officers, and media specialists can support activities and workshops on rules and safety in school, such as modeling problem-solving scenarios in the classroom or on the playground.

Parent Time

- Public libraries often host “Know Your Rights” workshops, providing access to legal self-help resources and offering space for legal aid clinics or informational sessions by legal professionals.
- During Parent Time, a police officer or sheriff’s deputy can talk about a driver’s rights and responsibilities, including when being pulled over for a traffic stop. Also, a local attorney or legal non-profit could join the class to speak about the laws and regulations around debt collection and debt relief programs.
- Potential Partners:
 - Public libraries, law enforcement agencies, and legal aid organizations can support parents in legal topics that build their confidence in navigating legal systems.

Legal Literacy in Practice:

Lawyers have served as presenters for family literacy programs on topics like renters’ rights, bill disputes, discriminatory practices, and more. For one site, questions that arose following the unexpected death of a young, single mother prompted staff to invite a lawyer to speak on the importance of having a will, not just for the distribution of property but also for guardianship of minor children. She explained the state requirements for a will to be valid, and families received information about free or sliding fee scale legal services, as well as free, online legal document forms valid in their state.



Storytelling/Auditory Literacy

Storytelling and auditory literacy center on the power of spoken communication to build meaning and connection. Storytelling creates bonds between people and connects them to ideas, carrying the shared experiences and values that help communities and families stay connected. In this way, storytelling is more than simply sharing information; it is a leadership practice that embodies empathy, emotional intelligence, and the ability to motivate others. Auditory literacy complements this skill by emphasizing active listening, thoughtful interpretation, and responsiveness to what is being shared. Together, these literacies strengthen individuals' capacity to communicate with purpose, foster understanding, and build meaningful relationships within groups and communities. Family literacy can support this by giving families shared opportunities to practice storytelling and active listening across the four components.



Embedding Storytelling/Auditory Literacy into Family Literacy:

Adult Education

- During adult education, utilize podcasts and audio tracks of articles as critical listening exercises to help students identify main ideas, recognize supporting details, and check their comprehension.
- The retelling of stories and verbally summarizing lessons or concepts during adult education can enhance communication skills, strengthen comprehension and recall, build vocabulary, and support learners who struggle with reading and writing.
- Potential Partner:
 - Invite a local librarian to discuss the library's audiobook holdings and introduce the role of audiobooks in supporting emerging literacy skills. This can also be discussed during Parent and PACT Time to legitimize the role that audiobooks can play in literacy development.

PACT Time

- With younger children, tell stories with them, recalling things you did together. Using starters like, "Do you remember when we went to the park, and it rained?" Ask questions, like "What happened next?", "Where were we when the rain started?", and "Who else was at the park?". It is important for both you and your child to describe sights, sounds, smells, and feelings.
- With older children, conversationally tell stories about extended family, culture, and heritage. Share stories about the strength and rich traditions of your family. It is equally important to share stories about mistakes that have been made and be realistic about the consequences. Leave space for the story to wander as children ask questions, and encourage them to share stories they remember as you go. Try to end the conversation by highlighting how good has followed the bad your family has overcome.

- During PACT Time®, have children practice reading or retelling stories to their parents or teachers. Encourage families to share cultural, family, or community stories with their children. Talk about the importance of oral storytelling traditions and how stories are passed down through generations. Use activities like acting out scenes from favorite books or movies to build engagement. Support storytelling with props, visuals, and hands-on materials.
- Potential Partners:
 - Public Libraries, local theatre groups, performing arts centers, and museums may support family workshops on storytelling, expression, voice, movement, and pictures, where parents and children can create their own stories together.

Parent Time

- During Parent Time, encourage parents to read aloud with their children daily. Model how to ask children questions during or after a read-aloud (e.g., “What do you think will happen next?”). Emphasize expressive reading using facial expressions, different voices, and gestures to make stories come alive. Discuss how audiobooks can support literacy at home, especially for busy families or multilingual households.
- Potential Partners:
 - School librarian, public librarian, or school-based literacy instructional coach to guide parents through reading strategies and techniques to practice at home with their children.

Storytelling/Auditory Literacy in Practice:

Storytelling Painting is a process that begins with painting a figure that represents the parent or caregiver, then adding child figures to symbolize family bonds, while sharing stories that reflect the meaning behind the artwork. Students then research their family clans and kinships through conversations with relatives, community members, and online resources, deepening their understanding of cultural identity. This research informs a written story on self-identity, which is paired with the painting and later presented orally in class to peers, children, and families. The final project serves not only as an educational assessment but also as a lasting family keepsake, reinforcing cultural traditions and strengthening community ties.

“Telling Family Stories” is another Parent Time topic that can be shared with families. Parents learn why storytelling matters and how to tell engaging stories, then explore the different types of stories appropriate to share with children of different ages. Discussion includes the family stories that parents were told as children and the stories they want to share with their children. At the conclusion of the class, parents pair up to practice telling their own story, using gestures and voice to create interest, and asking predictive and feeling-based questions.

Workplace Literacy

Workplace Literacy refers to the foundational skills training that workers need to gain new employment, retain their current job, advance in their careers, or increase their income. It encompasses core academic skills such as reading, writing, and math, as well as essential soft skills including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, professionalism, and the ability to navigate workplace systems and processes. Family literacy can support the strengthening of workplace literacy skills during adult education and soft skills during Parent Time, helping families create a pathway to greater economic stability and long-term opportunity.



Embedding Workplace Literacy into Family Literacy:

Adult Education

- Integrated Education and Training (IET) is an instructional strategy that combines adult basic education with job skills training and can be the adult education component of the four-component model. IET is designed to equip adult learners with the skills needed to enter a career pathway that leads to sustainable employment.
- Incorporate reading local newspapers, Chamber of Commerce newsletters, and local and regional business periodicals to learn more about your local business community.
- Potential Partner:
 - Local library or career center staff can support families by offering mock job interviews and resources for writing or improving resumes.

PACT Time

- With younger children, talk about what job they might want to do when they grow up. They can draw pictures of themselves doing the job, pick out and wear clothes they think they would wear, and read books about people who do that job.
- With older children, discuss the kinds of careers they are interested in. Research together the education needed, what the average day might look like, as well as the pay and benefits. Help your child create a list of questions they would want to ask someone working in the field.
- Potential Partners:
 - For older children, visits to educational institutions, like community colleges and technical schools, where they can explore the educational and training programs that align with their interests.
 - For younger children, libraries or museums for career exploration and read-alouds.

Parent Time

- Survey the adult learners you are working with to discover their workplace goals and needs. Goal-setting is a common topic in Parent Time and should be done at the beginning of every programming year.
- When a community partner visits the family literacy class to discuss their services and resources, ask them to share the varying roles of their employees and the education and workplace skills required for employment at their company.
- Potential Partner:
 - A representative from the local workforce or economic development board can share about incoming industries and developing workforce needs.
 - The local chamber of commerce or other business association can provide information about current job needs in the community and the education or certifications required for those roles.

Workplace Literacy in Practice:

Workplace literacy can be supported by helping students with the language skills they need to succeed in their jobs. For example, a group of newly-hired hotel housekeeping staff in the class needed help learning essential job-related vocabulary such as vacuum, trash, mop, towels, and sheets. The students were also guided in practicing useful phrases like: “Hi, I am with housekeeping,” and “Would you like me to freshen up your room?”

District human resource representatives have been invited to speak during Parent Time about the employment requirements for a range of certified and non-certified positions in the district, like teacher, administrative support, food services worker, custodian, classroom paraprofessional, security monitor, and bus driver. Parents have learned where to find open job postings and the information they need to have collected to complete an application, like job history and contact information for references. Additionally, HR representatives have shown parents step-by-step how the online application process works.



Conclusion

This guide demonstrates that a more comprehensive understanding of literacy is essential for developing the diverse skills needed to navigate an evolving, complex, information-rich world. The rise of digital media, global interconnectedness, and an increased emphasis on critical thinking have led to the recognition of multiple literacies. Within this broader landscape, family literacy offers a powerful model for integrating multiple literacies into the lives of both adults and children.

It is important to recognize that the literacies highlighted here represent only some of the many forms that continue to emerge, reminding us that the concept of multiple literacies itself is dynamic, evolving, and shaped by new challenges and opportunities. By providing practical examples and resources for family literacy programming, this guide empowers educators and community practitioners to foster crucial skills, ultimately leading to more competent, healthy, and engaged communities. Investing in multiple literacies is not merely an academic exercise; it is a vital step toward equipping individuals and families with the tools they need to succeed in an ever-changing society.

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) offers comprehensive support for family literacy programs, including planning, implementation, training, coaching, and access to high-quality resources. Visit FamiliesLearning.org/Family-Literacy to learn more about NCFL's 4-component model of family literacy. Or contact us at info@FamiliesLearning.org.



References

- Atabek Yiğit, E., Köklükaya, N., Yavuz, M., & Demirhan, E. (2014). Development and validation of environmental literacy scale for adults (ELSA). *Journal of Baltic Science Education*, 13(3), 425-435. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264088514_Development_and_validation_of_environmental_literacy_scale_for_adults_ELSA
- Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. (2021, October 20). *National Action Plan for Adult Literacy*. <https://www.barbarabush.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BBF-National-Action-Plan-for-Adult-Literacy-2021.pdf>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, June 21). *Food Literacy*. <https://www.cdc.gov/health-literacy/php/research-summaries/food-literacy.html>
- Clark College Libraries. (2026, January 15). *Evaluating Information: SIFT (The Four Moves)*. Clark College LibGuides. <https://clark.libguides.com/evaluating-information/SIFT>
- College of Staten Island Library. (2026, January 14). *Information Literacy: Definition and Importance*. <https://library.csi.cuny.edu/c.php?g=1358097&p=10028530>
- DeWalt, D. A., Berkman, N. D., Sheridan, S., Lohr, K. N., & Pignone, M. P. (2004). Literacy and Health Outcomes: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 19(12), 1228-1239. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1492599/>
- Legal Services Corporation. (n.d.). *Executive Summary*. <https://justicegap.lsc.gov/resource/executive-summary/>
- Meineke, Michelle. (2024, April 24). *Can you answer these 3 questions about your finances? The majority of US adults cannot*. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/04/financial-literacy-money-education/>
- Mishra, V., & Dexter, J. P. (2020). Comparison of Readability of Official Public Health Information About COVID-19 on Websites of International Agencies and the Governments of 15 Countries. *JAMA Network Open*, 3(8), e2018033. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.18033>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *U.S. PIAAC Skills Map: State and County Indicators of Adult Literacy and Numeracy*. <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/>
- National Center for Families Learning. (2023). *Financial fitness: A guide to everyday money*. <https://familieslearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Financial-Fitness.pdf>

- National Center for Families Learning. (2023). *Setting the foundation for learning success: A brief on family literacy*. https://familieslearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FLC60x30Family_Literacy_Brief_5.pdf
- National Skills Coalition. (2020, May 20). *The New Landscape of Digital Literacy: How workers' uneven digital skills affect economic mobility and business competitiveness, and what policymakers can do about it*. <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/05-20-2020-NSC-New-Landscape-of-Digital-Literacy.pdf>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2024). *Survey of Adult Skills 2023: United States*. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/survey-of-adults-skills-2023-country-notes_ab4f6b8c-en/united-states_427d6aac-en.html
- The Adult Literacy and Learning Impact Network (ALL IN). (2023). *Nationwide Employer Survey Report*. <https://allinliteracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/ALL-IN-Employer-Survey-Report-12.5.23.pdf>
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. (2025, October 27). *74% of Americans Think They Could Explain How America Works. 58% Fail a Basic Civics Test*. <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/civics/74-of-americans-think-they-could-explain-how-america-works-58-fail-a-basic-civics-test>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2026, March 24). *What you need to know about literacy*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/literacy/need-know?hub=401>
- Watson, A. (2025, September 12). *Confidence in ability to recognize false news and information in the United States in 2025*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/657090/fake-news-recognition-confidence/>



Navigating the World: Incorporating Multiple Literacies through Family Literacy

A Guide for Educators

FamiliesLearning.org

At the bottom of the page, there are several diagonal stripes in shades of orange, blue, and green, creating a dynamic, modern look.