



PROJECT L.E.A.F.

Program Name – Project LEAF (Learning English Among Friends)

Description of program

Project L.E.A.F is a collective effort of several organizational partners, college students, community volunteers, and the neighborhood staff, all of whom partner to create interactive literacy activities between parents and their children. Parents are afforded literacy in language and cultural awareness. As well, the local ministry will partner with local agencies to provide a presence for a myriad of resources on site.

Benefits of program

Parents are the first and foremost teachers of the child. Now, local churches have an opportunity to duplicate an initiative develop a family literacy program that becomes the collective effort of several community and organizational partners. This program, when tailored to the specific needs of local ministries enables the program administrator to transform local church space into a stimulating family learning environment. An opportunity for educating parents and youth will translate into quality time for family social interaction and enlightenment.

Implementation Steps

Local ministry should prepare to hold weekly meetings after school, preferably 5:30-6:00pm.

1. When participants arrive they pick up nametags.
2. Parents will proceed to GED classes and/or ESL sessions. Before going to class to ESL or GED classes, the parents accompany their children to one of three places.
3. Children from infancy to 3 attend enriched child care classes provided by AVANCE Waco, a parent education agency that serves Spanish-speaking individuals in Waco.
4. Children between the ages of 4 and 6 attend LEAF Kids, a pre-reading class where they play, listen to stories, and engage in activities that expose them to hearing and speaking English.
5. Children 6 and older participate in age-appropriate games, art, and craft activities in the gymnasium. Develop a partnership for supervised recreation by staff from the YMCA. The ESL class is taught in small groups for 90 minutes, with one teacher for each five to seven students. Together they

study workbooks with pictures and vocabulary focused on a theme such as rooms in a house, common tools, a trip to a grocery store, or playground equipment.

6. Encourage teachers to bring examples of the objects being studied or magazines with pictures the students cut out to make posters or collages. For example, for the unit on measurement, the groups may use scales to weigh items and rulers and yardsticks to measure each other's height, the dimensions of the room, and pieces of furniture.

7. At 6:45 p.m., select a staff member to ask the entire group a question related to learning English, family life, or living in their respective city/area. Examples are, "What difference has learning English made in your life?" and "What do you like about living in City A?"

8. Have each group to discuss the question for a few minutes.

9. Then encourage one volunteer from each group to stand and report in English the highlights of their discussion. Everyone in the room is expectant as each person stands to speak. Although most of the participants struggle to express themselves, the group provides support.

10. After each report, the speaker receives heartfelt applause.

11. At 7 p.m., the parents go to their children's rooms to pick them up and see their handiwork.

12. The family then proceeds to the cafeteria for a family meal that is either donated in partnership, purchased from a local vendor or provided by a local church.

13. After dinner, selected LEAF participants attend a computer literacy class taught in Spanish by a LEAF participant. Time scheduled until 8:30 p.m.

14. Participants in the GED class return to their studies until 9 p.m.

15. Children go to the gym for supervised recreation.

16. Partner with state representatives to arrange a trip to state capitol for LEAF participants to tour the Capitol and meet with legislative delegation of similar culture. In Waco, it was the Mexican American legislative delegation. These family focused events provide valuable opportunities to develop leadership skills among the participants and to strengthen their sense of ownership of the program.

Opportunity for Community Partnership

Relevant partnerships were developed to empower parents by introducing them to new options for family activities in the community and opportunities for education. Developing partnerships and linkages to education with various sectors – business, education institutions, government, social service, and religion – has been a key component in the strategy for reaching and teaching these families. To achieve the larger goal of strengthening families and building community, LEAF must be positioned as an integral part of the community. Professors and students from Baylor University's Schools of Education and Social Work serve as the staff for the LEAF program. Child care is provided by staff from AVANCE Waco and supervised recreation by staff from the YMCA. Nearby McLennan Community College provides the GED instructor, and GEAR UP Waco (a federal grant program that promotes postsecondary education in schools located in low socioeconomic areas) provides funding and an

instructor for the computer literacy class. In addition, several private foundations, individuals, and organizations, including churches, provide funding or in-kind support for the LEAF program. Finding ways for others to contribute to LEAF and sharing recognition with them for the program's success has created a network of mutual support and pride that is vital to the stability and growth of the South Waco community. Similarly, your local ministry may adapt this program for implementation, networking with your own local and/or community resources. For assistance with implementation, contact resource below.

Please direct your questions to:
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