The Family Literacy and Employment Project (FLAE) is a collaborative project among many agencies which seeks to design and pilot a work-focused comprehensive family literacy program to assist families in reaching economic self-sufficiency, enhance the development of preschool children and reduce the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

The first few months of the project included many meetings among the agencies to plan and work out the logistics of project implementation. A request was made and approval received to change the fiscal agent from the NC Center for Family Literacy to the Nash-Rocky Mount Schools. As the majority of the funds would be expended through the school system, this was seen as a more efficient operation. It was, however, one of the reasons that it was late into the first quarter before we had a signed contract from DSS. (There were also personnel changes at the Nash-Rocky Mount office which presented challenges in swiftly moving paperwork.) A sub-contract was then developed and signed with the NC/National Center for Family Literacy to direct the project and provide training and technical assistance to staff.

Collaborating partners, including Edgecombe Community College developed job descriptions and vacancy announcements for the staff for the project. Interviews were held and a coordinator (Vonda Watkins) was hired and began work on June 6, 2000. An adult education/pre-employment instructor, Katrina Sessoms, was selected to begin work July 1, 2000. She was, however, involved in much planning during the month of June. Two staff members at Fairview (guidance counselor and kindergarten teacher) were also assigned to work with the project. They, along with the principal LaVerne Espy, have been instrumental in the planning and preparation for FLAE.

This project is located at Fairview Early Childhood Center which is a year-round school serving pre-k and kindergarten students from three Rocky Mount elementary school districts. During this first quarter, the school has been completing an addition to their building. A new classroom near the front entrance and Media Center was designated to house the parents in the FLAE project. Because of construction delays, the room will not be ready for participants until sometime in July. However, by the end of June, cabinets were in, carpet was being laid and some furniture had arrived. Much time has been spent reviewing, assessing and ordering materials and equipment to be used in the project. (The
Recruitment of participants has been a major activity during this first quarter. Presentations were made at Fairview parent meetings including PTA, Orientation and Open House. Surveys/informational brochures were sent to parents of students in April and May. During June, telephone calls and home visits were made to potential participants who had responded with possible interest. The proposed program was explained and pre-registrations began. Meetings were also held with community agencies and organizations to “get the word out” and a mechanism was established to receive referrals. Conversations are being held with others to find ways to collaborate and coordinate services offered to potential participants.

A staff development plan for the training of staff is being developed and implemented. It includes attendance of the coordinator and adult teacher at the Advanced Family Literacy Institute in Louisville in July. It also includes participation in work-focused seminars and visits to other projects that have “pieces” of what we are seeking to develop for our project.

Meetings and consultations have been held regarding the evaluation of this project. Staff at the School of Social Work have been very helpful with suggestions. A meeting was also held with the Director of Research at the National Center for Family Literacy. As a result, plans are being finalized for the instruments to be used as well as procedures to follow for evaluation. Forms have also been developed to gather intake, progress, and exit data.

Pre-registration meetings and conferences continue to be held with potential participants. Based on the completion of construction, classes should begin by the end of July or first of August. Thus, less than 5% of project funds were expended by the end of June, but this will increase quickly as materials and equipment begin arriving in July.