PRIME TIME Overview
(For distribution to colleagues and potential community partners)

PRIME TIME FAMILY READING TIME® is a unique humanities-focused and outcomes-based family literacy program. Created by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH) in 1991, the mission of PRIME TIME is to create the precondition for future learning among economically and educationally vulnerable families. PRIME TIME’s methodology is proven to generate long-term improvements in student achievement by transforming families into individual and collective communities that continue to read and learn together after the program ends.

The core elements of the PRIME TIME methodology are humanities-focused content, quality children’s literature, open-ended questioning techniques, and collective learning. PRIME TIME combines these elements to help families better comprehend what they read, enjoy the reading experience, and read more as a result, setting the stage for lifelong learning. In PRIME TIME discussion, trained facilitators guide participants to think beyond shallow considerations of who, what, when, and where, promoting critical thinking, reasoning, and questioning skills. PRIME TIME demonstrates how literature can enrich one’s life, models strategies for continued family bonding through literature, and provides families with critical information on library resources for continued reading once the program ends. PRIME TIME creates the precondition for future learning by bonding families around the act of reading and transforming them into lifelong readers.

The goals of PRIME TIME are to:
• Deliver quality humanities education experiences,
• Increase public library use,
• Increase family bonding and reading time,
• Improve reading attitudes and behaviors, and
• Improve student academic achievement.

Format and Agenda:
PRIME TIME takes place once weekly for six or eight weeks. During each 90-minute session, a scholar and storyteller model the techniques of storytelling, reading aloud and asking open-ended questions, and they stimulate discussion based on the thematically linked stories presented. Pre-literacy and literature-based exploratory activities are provided for 3-5 year olds. A library staff member will make a 5-10 minute presentation at each of the themed sessions to promote library materials and services.

Program Components:
Audience—Up to 25 families; parents and their 3-10 y/o children who may have difficulty with or low interest in reading.
Books—Each week participants will check out a packet of books on the next week’s theme.
Team Members—A scholar, storyteller, program coordinator, community organizer, and preschool facilitator are trained to implement the program at each site. All except the program coordinator receive a stipend.
Training and Support—Each implementing team member receives role-specific training, manuals and access to PRIME TIME staff and consultants.
Promotional Materials—Each program is provided customized flyers, brochures, posters, etc. to help publicize the program for recruitment and community support.
Healthy Meals—Healthy meals are provided as part of the evening agenda. This provides an opportunity for mingling, increasing comfort, and is another incentive for attending the program. Food donations can be secured through local businesses or civic and professional organizations.
Door Prizes—There should also be a drawing for door prizes each week. This is to encourage attendance. Door prize donations can be secured through local businesses.
Transportation—Transportation will be provided for those who need it.
Newspapers—To encourage additional reading, a newspaper will be given to each family each week.
Volunteers—Volunteers are needed to help make families feel more comfortable in the setting; sign-in for the evening, serve food, translate different languages, etc.

Awards:
• 2000: Winner of the Coming Up Taller award from the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.
• 2000: Honored by the national Federation of State Humanities Councils as the outstanding program of the year.
• 2003: Winner of the national Public Library Association’s Advancement of Literacy award for making a significant contribution to adult literacy.