

“After us, our HMoob language will disappear.”

New Report: Creating a Family Literacy Program to Strengthen HMoob Language and Family Wellbeing in the Fox Valley

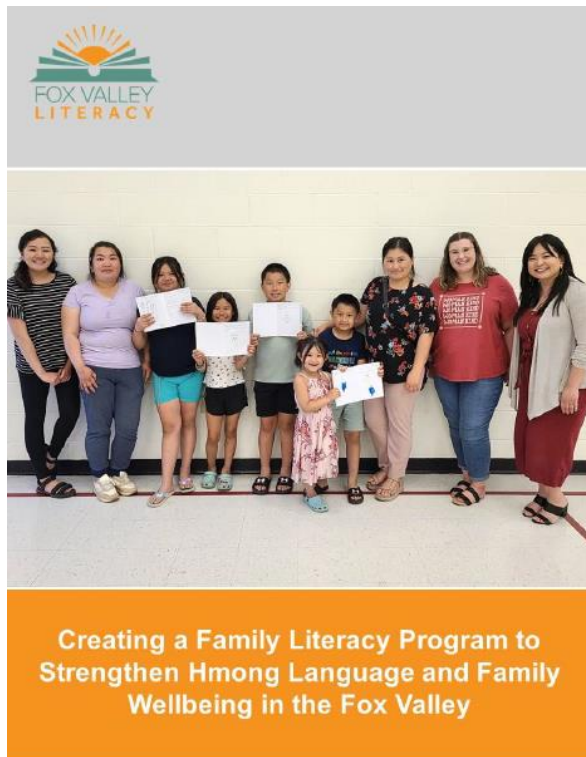
Saib daim yees duab no txog qhov tsev neeg program uas siv lus Hmoob!

Responding to an Unmet Need

Over the past year and a half, Fox Valley Literacy worked with HMoob leaders and community members to create a program that would support HMoob language preservation, intergenerational connectedness, and family wellbeing. Children learned HMoob, and parents strengthened their English skills. Parents explored how to empower their children’s education. They explored how culturally appropriate approaches to mental health could support their families’ resiliency and joy. Children and parents cultivated social emotional skills, and families experienced learning together.



Our Top Learnings from a Year of Research and Collaboration:



1. **Intergenerational language loss is affecting family connectedness and identity preservation.**

There are generational disconnects in what it means to be HMoob. There is a sense of *“not knowing who we are or where we’re going as HMoob people.”*

2. **New strategies for language preservation are needed.** Speaking HMoob at home doesn’t necessarily lead to language transmission. Many children interact with their parents primarily in English even if their parents are not proficient English speakers. Parents are frustrated and feel disempowered.

“We want to have a way to teach them HMoob so that we do not lose our language. Because they are born here, they spend their time more at school than with us. At home, they have a phone, a computer, the internet, and Wi-Fi. They touch and use all these items and do not spend a lot of time with us, which makes them not able to speak HMoob. For these reasons, I can see that maybe in the future other

[non-HMoob] people will be translating our own language to our children.”

3. **Language and identity loss and family alienation are connected to historical trauma and socio-economic strain.** Larger changes within the community structures and workplaces that enable families to spend time together would go a long way in supporting language and identity preservation and whole-family mental health.

“A reason why children in America don’t know HMoob is because their parents are always working. One comes, one goes. One comes, one goes. One comes back and sleeps while the other leaves.”

4. **Creating spaces for specific groups helps people to feel that they are valued, belong, and are worth investing in.**
5. **Look to community leaders and individuals to guide decision making.** Communities know who they are and what they need and hope for their future. Don’t rely on assumptions about community experiences, perspectives, or desires. Recognize and respect diversity within communities. Prioritize collaboration and learning in program design and implementation, even if that means adopting a slower pace.

“I hope that my children will have a life goal. [I hope] in the future they have a goal that they can work towards and they know how to start [living] their own life. [I hope] they know what it is like when you help others.”

6. **Uplift culturally appropriate mental health resources.** Normalize talking about and seeking help for mental health. Take steps to attract and keep HMoob mental health professionals in the Fox Valley. Emphasize that mental health service providers take confidentiality very seriously and that people can seek help without jeopardizing their reputation.

Find more insights and recommendations for supporting HMoob families’ language preservation, English language development, parent engagement in children’s education, and child development and family wellbeing in our [full report!](#)

Thank you to the amazing families, leaders, community members, partners, and the Mielke Family Foundation and the Wallace Family Foundation for making the Family Literacy program possible!

Saib daim yees duab no txog qhov tsev neeg program uas siv lus Hmoob!

