Chief Minister Paul Henderson today attended a forum of successful applicants for funding under the Territory Government’s Families as First Teachers program.

Speaking at a forum of groups involved in the program today, Mr Henderson said grants totalling $1.365 million had been awarded to 35 recipients to help Indigenous families and children up to 3 years of age.

“This program is designed to get children ready for school so that they can get a good start to their education,” Mr Henderson said.

“Education is one of the key priorities of this Government, with a focus on improving attendance, literacy and numeracy in remote communities.

“We need to help families get their kids ready to learn when they start going to school.

“This includes providing learning resources including books, running playgroups, early learning playgroups, health and parenting support.”

The Families as First Teachers program is an $11 million election commitment and is being rolled out in the Territory’s 20 growth towns and regional areas.

Already under the program and in addition to the grants program, early childhood professionals have begun working with communities to deliver early childhood development and family support programs.

They are in place in Numbulwar, Galiwinku, Maningrida, Lajamanu.

A new program will commence in Angurugu/Umbakumba next month. More programs will begin in 2010.

The development of materials and resources for family support is also part of the Families as First Teachers program.

Forums will be also be held in Nhulunbuy on October 27 and Alice Springs on November 3.

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