

RESEARCH-TO-PRACTICE SUMMARY

Lessons Learned from Head Start and HIPPY Collaborations

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The purpose of this project was to examine the blending of the Head Start and HIPPY programs. Data on current Head Start/HIPPY collaborations was collected through focus group interviews with home visitors, teachers, parents, and administrators. Themes discovered through qualitative analysis included the recognition of home visiting as a way to provide services to more families; the ability to provide additional services to children and families; increased communication between all parties involved in the collaboration; better perceived outcomes for both the children and the parents; the difficulty of including all the requirements of both programs in their work with families; difficulties around assessment; and the lack of time among home visitors to serve families, plan, and train. Major recommendations for future programs were to plan for the collaboration of services during the grant writing stage; partner with school districts in order to track the long-term outcomes for children; and the most frequent recommendation was to adjust case-loads to reflect the additional work required of program staff to meet each programs' requirements in the collaboration.

Keywords: early childhood education; HIPPY; Head Start; home visiting; program collaboration

The purpose of this project was to investigate potential models of formal collaborations between two proven early childhood programs, one delivered in the classroom (Head Start) and one delivered by parents in the home (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters – HIPPY). Head Start and HIPPY share the common goals of preparing children for kindergarten by closing the achievement gap and empowering parents as first and best teachers for their children (U. S. Department of Health and Human Service, 2015; HIPPY USA, n.d.). With the current economic conditions, non-profits and community organizations are struggling to maintain funding. To ensure that the limited funding available for early childhood is used efficiently, it would seem to be in the best interest of programs serving the same population to pool resources. With common goals, philosophies, and populations - Head Start and HIPPY are ideally positioned to collaborate with each other.

While several informal collaborations exist throughout the country, there is not a set of formal guidelines for Head Start and HIPPY programs who wish to establish a formal collaboration. This paper includes the results of an investigation into three Head Start programs

that operate in collaboration with HIPPY. The purpose was to gather information about these current Head Start and HIPPY collaborations. This study examined the following research questions:

- (1) What models for collaboration are currently used in Head Start/HIPPY collaborations?
- (2) What were the motivations behind the current Head Start/HIPPY Collaborations?
- (3) What are the perceived benefits of Head Start/ HIPPY Collaborations as expressed by administrators, staff, and parents?
- (4) What are the perceived challenges of Head Start/HIPPY Collaborations as expressed by administrators, staff, and parents?

Overview of Head Start Program

The Head Start program is a comprehensive early childhood program designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing children of low-income families with services to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs. (Garces, Thomas, & Currie, 2002; Smolensky & Gootman, 2003). At the time of its inception, Head Start was unique in their approach to supporting the whole child rather than just focusing on classroom learning (Garces, Thomas, Currie). While the focus of the Head Start program has evolved over the years, the primary goal continues to be to better prepare children from low-income families to be both developmentally and cognitively ready for school.

Outcomes of Head Start Participation. There has been extensive research over the past several decades documenting the effectiveness of Head Start for children who lack the same educational opportunities as children from middle and upper-class families. Children who participated in Head Start as preschoolers show significantly better language and cognitive development than demographically similar children who did not attend Head Start (Aikens, Klein, Tarullo, & West, 2013; Love et al., 2002). In addition to cognitive benefits, at the end of program participation, Head Start children score better on social-emotional development, have better social skills and impulse control, and exhibit fewer problem behaviors such as aggression and hyperactivity (Aikens et al., 2013; Love et al., 2002). While there are some studies that question the long-term benefits of Head Start, other studies have found that former Head Start children had higher attendance rates in elementary school (Connolly & Olsen, 2012); continued to have higher scores on tests of academic and executive functioning through fifth grade (Greenberg & Domitrovich, 2011); and are less likely to be held back a year by eighth grade (Phillips, Gormley, & Anderson, 2016).

The benefits of Head Start participation are even evident through adulthood. Garces, Thomas, and Currie (2002) used data from the Panel Survey of Income Dynamics to review outcomes for close to 4,000 adults followed from childhood. Among European-Americans, adults who had attended Head Start were significantly more likely to complete high school, attend college, and possibly have higher earnings in their early twenties than their nonparticipant siblings. African American adults who had attended Head Start were significantly less likely to be booked or charged with a crime than were their nonparticipant siblings. Other studies document that as adults, Head Start graduates are more likely than non-Head Start graduates to graduate high school,

attend at least one year of college, are less likely to be unemployed, report higher wages, and are less likely to be in poor health (Bauer & Schanzenbach, 2016; Johnson; 2010).

Overview of the HIPPY Program

HIPPY is a free, early intervention program for parents of 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children. Developed in Israel and brought to the United States in 1984, HIPPY now operates 128 communities in 20 states and the District of Columbia as well as ten other countries internationally. HIPPY is intended to provide educational enrichment to at-risk children from low SES and immigrant families by training parents to prepare their children to be ready for school. The major purpose of HIPPY is to increase children's school readiness by empowering parents to be active in their children's education and by providing home instruction. The HIPPY program includes three key components: the HIPPY curriculum, individual home visits for parents with a peer mentor, and monthly group meetings for parents (HIPPY USA, n.d.).

Outcomes of HIPPY Participation. There is a great deal of evidence documenting the positive effects of HIPPY on students' school readiness at kindergarten entry. Numerous studies have shown that HIPPY children perform better on measures of school performance such as reading ability, language learning, social development, classroom adaptability, and mathematics skills than non-participants (Barnett, Roost, & McEachran, 2012; Brown & Johnson, 2014; Johnson, Martinez-Cantu, Jacobson, & Weir, 2012; Lopez & Bernstein, 2016). Other studies have shown that HIPPY students had better attendance, more social skills, fewer behavior referrals, fewer suspensions, and higher standardized test scores when compared to students from similar socio-economic backgrounds (Bradley & Gilkey, 2003; Brown & Lee, 2014; Klein, Weiss, & Gomby, 2001).

Research also indicates that HIPPY participation supports children by enhancing their home literacy environment, the quality of parent-child verbal interaction, and parents' ability to help their children learn (Brown & Johnson, 2014; Jacobson, 2003; Roundtree, 2003). In addition, parents participating in HIPPY had significantly increased confidence in their role as their child's first teacher between the start and end of HIPPY program participation (Barnett, Roost, & McEachran, 2012). HIPPY participation also increases parent and family involvement in their child's education. BarHava-Monteith, Harre, and Field (1999) found that HIPPY parents in New Zealand were significantly more involved than comparison caregivers in educational activities. These activities included things like helping with field trips, serving on school committees, and serving as teachers' aids. HIPPY parents were also significantly more likely to be involved in an adult education class.

How do Head Start and HIPPY Fit Together?

Head Start programs promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families. They engage parents in their children's learning and help them in making progress toward parents' educational, literacy and employment goals. Significant emphasis is placed on the involvement of parents in the administration of local Head Start

programs. Similarly, the purpose of the HIPPY program is to support parents as their child's first teacher to increase school readiness. This is done with a structured curriculum that is delivered to the children by their parent. The purpose of the home visit in both the Head Start and HIPPY programs is to help parents improve their parenting skills and to assist them in the use of the home as the child's primary learning environment. The home visitor works with parents to help them provide learning opportunities that enhance their child's growth and development.

Examples of Current Collaboration Models

Head Start Home-Based with HIPPY

- HIPPY is used as the curriculum for the home visits. The HIPPY curriculum offers 30 weeks of activities, but the Head Start Home-Based Option requires 32 home visits. Typically an additional home visit is added to the beginning and the end of the program year to meet this requirement.
- Each home visit lasts a minimum of 90 minutes (rather than just 60 minutes with HIPPY alone) with the additional 30 minutes on an activity with the child.
- Monthly parent meeting follows the HIPPY group meeting model plus two Socializations focused both on the parents and the children.

HIPPY as the Home Visiting /Volunteer Component of Head Start Center-Based Option

- HIPPY serves as the home visiting and parent-teacher conference component of a center-based Head Start program.
- The parent involvement component of the HIPPY program fulfills the required home visits and parent-teacher conferences home-visiting requirement of Head Start and the volunteer requirement of the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework (PFCE Framework).

Dual Enrollment

- Often children are enrolled in both the Head Start and HIPPY programs simultaneously with each program running side-by-side with varying degrees of overlap in services.
- The collaboration between programs includes communication between the HIPPY Home-Visitors and the Head Start teachers and administrators.
- As with the other collaboration models, family participation in the HIPPY program fulfills the parent involvement component of the PFCE Framework.

THE CURRENT STUDY

This study used a qualitative descriptive research design through focus groups and interviews at three existing Head Start/HIPPY collaborative sites to garner the programmatic, implementation and logistical details of how local communities have already blended HIPPY into the Head Start model. Site 1 used HIPPY as the curriculum for 36 three-year-old children in the Home-Based Head Start program. These children then transitioned to a center-based four-year-old Head Start program. Site 2 had 35 families in the county that participated in both programs – exemplifying the Dual Enrollment Model of collaboration. Finally, Site 3 served 72 families of three and four-year-olds using the Home-Based Option with HIPPY as the curriculum.

A total of five focus groups and three director interviews were conducted. After the transcription of the focus group and interview recordings, the data were analyzed to first classify the information from all of these sources into several initial categories defined by the research questions. These initial categories included: motivation for collaboration, services for families, benefits to children, communication, benefits to parents, challenges, and recommendations.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Motivations for Collaboration

- The value of serving families by going to their homes.
- The ability to provide more services with less money.

Perceived Benefits of Collaboration

- Head Start and HIPPY worked together to do more for children and families than each program could on its own.
- The ability to provide services to families that might not be available outside of the collaboration.
- The added communication between all of the parties involved in both programs. This included communication between the home visitor and the child's classroom teacher, the home visitor and the Head Start administrator, the parent and the home visitor, the parent and the child's classroom teacher, the parent and the child, and even among other parents in the programs.
- The overwhelming majority of comments made by all the focus group participants were related to the benefits of the Head Start/HIPPY collaboration for children. The home visitors/staff and parents specifically mentioned higher scores on formal assessments, smoother transitions to the classroom, improved school readiness, development of routines related to school, improved social skills, and bonding time with parent.

Perceived Benefits for Parents

- The support parents received from the relationship with their home visitor.

- Parents gained confidence in their own parenting skills.
- Parents indicated increased confidence in their ability to be their child's first teacher.
- Parents gained a better understanding of the expectations of their child once they begin school and their role as parents in supporting their child once they are in school.
- The understanding and confidence to be an advocate for their child.
- Parents reported benefits from the development of social networks among the parents in the collaborative program.

Challenges to Collaboration

- The practical issues with blending the requirements and regulations from two different programs into one collaborative program.
- Challenge of blending the different assessments and require the results to be entered into different database or software program.
- Lack of commercially available assessment that is designed to capture everything that happens during a home visit.
- The lack of time, specifically for those using the Home-Based Option with HIPPY. This is perhaps because their HIPPY home visitors also served as the Head Start Parent Advocate.

Overview of Recommendations for Future Collaborations

- Participants suggested that during the grant writing process, plan for the continuation of services for children and families beyond the Head Start/HIPPY collaboration.
- Participants suggested sites partner with local school districts so children who participate in the HIPPY/Head Start collaboration can be assigned a school identification number. This will allow the program to continue to track a child's academic progress through graduation.
- Lower caseloads for home visitors than typical in a traditional Head Start Home-Based program. Most of the home visitors in the focus groups recommended a caseload of 9 or 10 families. The home visitors also suggested flexible caseloads for home visitors with high-needs families as discussed in the previous section.
- Programs set aside for home visitors to plan for lessons, enter data, and receive training. Remember that HIPPY requires additional time in preparation and training.
- Plan for assessment. The home visitors requested that whenever possible, choose assessments that meet the requirements of both programs. They also suggested having a method of documenting assessments that met the requirements of both programs to eliminate the need to enter the same data into two different software programs.

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