

Evaluation and Research

PARENTS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

International Research on the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Program

Edited by Miriam Westheimer

This book delivers a comprehensive picture of HIPPY, a family support, parent-focused, early childhood literacy program. With 17 evaluation studies of the program, offered by researchers and practitioners from seven different countries, the book highlights the successes and challenges HIPPY faces in communities around the world. Dedicated to HIPPY's founder, Professor Avima D. Lombard, the collection presented here aims to provide answers to the different questions that might arise among all kinds of stakeholders, from program practitioners to policy makers to family members to researchers.

The studies are organized around five themes: exploring theoretical perspectives; examining HIPPY's impact on children, on families and on communities; and navigating the research process. An in-depth introduction describes the various purposes of the book, outlines the contents of each chapter, and provides, in the form of two unique tables, detailed information that can be used as a reference for many stakeholders. With the goal that the book be as accessible and useful to program practitioners as to researchers, each chapter is followed by suggestions on how to integrate the evaluation findings into the daily life of the program. The result is a volume that can serve as an invaluable tool for international early literacy and family support program development, while also offering direction for the future course of the HIPPY program.

Chapter-by-Chapter Synopsis

Part 1: Exploring Theoretical Perspectives

1. Ready or Not: One Home-Based Response to the School Readiness Dilemma

Miriam Westheimer
(USA)

This chapter describes the HIPPY program from both a theoretical and a practical perspective, beginning with a description of the complexities of the school readiness concept and HIPPY's programmatic response to school readiness. A brief historical perspective is provided to set the stage for the growth of the program in the United States. The HIPPY program is described in some detail focusing on learning activities, staffing, and working with parents. Some programmatic implementation issues are presented, such as using structured (as opposed to open-ended) curricular materials and working with paraprofessional (as opposed to professional) home visitors. Through explicit discussion of the program's basic philosophy and elaborations on its programmatic tensions, the chapter offers an insider's view into the issues that can emerge as a model program gains a national scope and presence.

2. Principles of Child Development, Learning, and Partnerships: Where Does the HIPPY Program Fit?

Sue Bredekamp
(USA)

Focusing on three principles of program development - child development, the learning process, and the adult role in the learning process and on partnerships between professionals and parents, this chapter peels open the many layers of developmentally appropriate practice to show how HIPPY fits within each. It uses practical and realistic examples from the field to illustrate how decisions about the best practices for young children can and should be made. The chapter compares the appropriate scaffolding and support that children need to learn and develop with the scaffolding that HIPPY provides parents as they assume new roles with their own children. It concludes with a discussion of the importance of productive partnerships between parents and professionals.

3. Understanding HIPPY in the Context of Contemporary x Perspectives on Development, Risk, and Intervention

Lucy Le Mare
(Canada)

Building on the well-established relationships among poverty, compromised development, and academic failure, this chapter provides a conceptual framework that examines HIPPY in the context of a model of development and risk. The HIPPY program is validated through comparison with a set of principles and values that are believed to constitute a successful early intervention approach. These

principles are developmental timing, program intensity, direct provision of learning experiences, program breadth and flexibility, individual differences in program benefits, and environmental maintenance of development. Following this discussion, the chapter analyzes HIPPY in the context of recent perspectives on development and risk, with the aim of shedding light on both the links between poverty and academic/social outcomes and the mechanisms that explain how HIPPY contributes to the positive development and school readiness skills of young children. Through close examination of the Vancouver, Canada HIPPY program, the chapter then provides a model that links factors influencing early childhood development to the different components of HIPPY. The model is built through a process of conceptualizing risk status in terms of both proximal and distal factors capable of affecting family interaction patterns that influence the developmental outcomes of children.

Part 2: Examining HIPPY's Impact on Children

4. The Impact of HIPPY on School Performance in Third and Sixth Grades

Robert H. Bradley

Barbara Gilkey

(USA)

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of HIPPY on school performance during third and sixth grades. This longitudinal, quasi-experimental study used a post-hoc matching design to compare demographically similar children who participated in the HIPPY program to children in the third and sixth grades who had no preschool experience, and to children in those grades who had other preschool experiences. The program showed modest positive impact on school suspensions, use of Title 1 services, grades, classroom behavior, and achievement test scores at both grade levels. Although the effects were generally modest, they were broad-based and consistent with program aims and activities. Because of the potential for selection biases in the design, the authors claim that the results should be interpreted with caution.

5. A Promising Start: An Evaluation of the HIPPY Program in New Zealand

Galia BarHava-Monteith

Niki Harr?

Jeff Field

(New Zealand)

Three studies were carried out to investigate the impact of participation in the HIPPY program on New Zealand children's reading ability, school readiness, and school behavior. In study 1, scores on a Reading Diagnostic Survey were obtained for 77 six-year-old HIPPY children and 704 six-year-old non-HIPPY children. In study 2, 29 HIPPY children who had recently entered school and 29 control children were assessed using four sub-sections of the Metropolitan Readiness tests. In study 3, the Behavioural Academic Self Esteem Scale (BASE) was completed by teachers for the HIPPY and control children in study 2, and for all their classmates. HIPPY children were found to show consistently better performance on all of the measures used and the differences reached statistical significance on three of the six sub-tests of the Reading Diagnostic Survey and the BASE scale.

6. The Use of Item Response Theory to Develop a Measure of First-Grade Readiness Thomas P. Gumpel (Israel)

This paper examines perceptions of school readiness in Israel as a first step toward describing the development of a measure of readiness for first grade. That measure, the Readiness Inventory (RI) (which has been used in other studies, including the one of HIPPY Australia that appears as chapter 18 of this book), consists of six items, uses a four-point rating scale, and has an alpha of 0.86. It was completed on 139 first-grade children and analyzed using a polytomous rating scale model of Item Response Theory. The instrument shows a high level of item and case fit. Based on an item map which elucidates the latent trait of school readiness as perceived by first-grade teachers, the RI reveals that behaviors dealing with academic skills are less indicative of readiness than abilities dealing with role-governed behaviors or strategic learning behaviors. The study validates the RI through the examination of two different groups of pre-school children: those who participated in HIPPY and those who did not participate in HIPPY or any other similar program. Scores on the RI were significantly higher for HIPPY graduates than for non-HIPPY graduates; a breakdown by sex revealed that only HIPPY boys out-performed their non-HIPPY boy peers on the RI. This validation study suggests that the RI is able to discriminate between ready and not-ready children.

7. Preschool Children in the HATAF and HIPPY Programs: Feedback from Preschool Teachers

Drora Kfir
Irit Elroy
(Israel)

After a full day of professional development, HIPPY and HATAF coordinators in Israel decided they wanted to know how their programs were faring. To answer the question, the coordinators, with the help of a research team, conducted a survey about the satisfaction of the preschool teachers of children in these programs. The original sample included 46 teachers in 46 different preschools and, of these, 34 were interviewed. Based on this small sample, the survey attempted to explore teachers' familiarity with the program's goals, their familiarity with how the program actually functions, and their attitudes toward the program. The authors' overall conclusion is that both HATAF and HIPPY resonate very positively with the teachers who are familiar with the programs and who work in neighborhood preschools.

8. Program Effectiveness and Parent Involvement in HIPPY

Amy J. L. Baker
Chaya S. Piotrkowski
Jeanne Brooks-Gunn
(USA)

This article presents the findings from a series of interconnected research studies, including a two-site, two-cohort evaluation in New York and Arkansas, a one-site case study, and a three-site qualitative study. With respect to program effectiveness, results varied across the New York and Arkansas sites, and across participating cohorts at each site. For Cohort I, children who had been enrolled in HIPPY scored higher than children in the control/comparison groups on measures of cognitive skills (New York), classroom adaptation (New York and Arkansas), and standardized reading (New York); and more children were promoted to first grade (Arkansas). For Cohort II, comparison group children outperformed HIPPY children on school readiness and standardized achievement at post-test (Arkansas). Analyses to account for the differing results between cohorts were inconclusive. Qualitative analyses revealed considerable variation in parent involvement in HIPPY. Program staff identified four patterns of attrition from HIPPY: (1) early attrition within the first month after enrollment, (2) attrition between the program's first and second years, (3) attrition due to changes in the life circumstances of participating families, and (4) attrition due to turnover among the home visitors. Families were more likely to participate in in-home than out-of-home aspects of the

program (for example, group meetings), but different family characteristics were associated with participation in the in- and out-of-home aspects. The authors conclude with recommendations for future practice and research.

9. The Vancouver HIPPY Project: Preliminary Evaluation Findings From a Multicultural Program

Lucy Le Mare

Karyn Audet

(Canada)

After briefly describing how the HIPPY project came to Vancouver, its first site in Canada, Le Mare and Audet report on preliminary findings of this program's first evaluation. Using a quasi-experimental design, the researchers compared a group of 14 multi-ethnic children (including Chinese, Vietnamese, European, African, and Latin American) in the HIPPY program to two other similarly-sized groups of children from the same classrooms. The children in one comparison group had no preschool experience prior to kindergarten and the children in the second comparison group had been in center-based programs. Using a wide range of measures that examine children's cognitive and social and emotional development, they found that the HIPPY children outperformed the children in the two comparison groups on every measure. After explaining the limitations inherent in this research design, Le Mare and Audet conclude with a highly positive evaluation of the HIPPY program.

Part 3: Examining HIPPY's Impact on Parents

10. Maternal Scaffolding Behavior within the HIPPY Context

Wanda Roundtree

(USA)

This study investigates the scaffolding behavior of three African-American mother-child pairs participating in HIPPY. Pre- and post-HIPPY observations looked at how the mothers and children engaged with literacy materials, such as commercial puzzles, books, and construction toys. The study was designed to address the following research questions: (1) Prior to intervention, what are the predominant scaffolding strategies utilized by African-American mothers during literacy activities? (2) In what ways does the HIPPY intervention affect lower socioeconomic status (LSES) mothers' natural scaffolding abilities? (3) In what ways do the HIPPY materials and/or method facilitate parents' natural scaffolding behavior? Research findings resulted in relatively strong claims regarding the mothers'

propensity to use a range of scaffolding strategies. However, only one dyad appeared to be more responsive to the HIPPY treatment when compared to the other pairs, as evidenced by an increase in the mother's scaffolding behavior during the post-HIPPY observation period. Nevertheless, since all three dyads demonstrated a range of scaffolding functions during their engagement around HIPPY materials, it can be concluded that the HIPPY model is an appropriate intervention paradigm for facilitating parental scaffolding behavior, because of the program's emphases on the parent-child relationship, language as a primary medium to support children's functioning, and child-centered, academically-oriented tasks.

11. An Evaluation of a HIPPY Early Intervention Program: Can Parents Benefit Too?

Galia BarHava-Monteith

Niki Harr?

Jeff Field

(New Zealand)

This quasi-experimental study assessed the potential benefits of HIPPY to parents, or more generally to caregivers, who participate in the program. The study used a sample of 134 primary caregivers, both HIPPY and non-HIPPY, to examine the caregivers' formal educational involvement, attitudes toward education, and self-esteem. HIPPY caregivers were found to be significantly more involved than comparison caregivers in educational activities; no significant effects were found in terms of attitude, and no significant effects were found in terms of self-esteem. Ethnic group membership emerged as an important variable. Pacific Islander caregivers were less likely to be involved in formal educational activities and had significantly lower self-esteem than both New Zealand European and indigenous Maori caregivers.

12. On Hugh McLean's Evaluation of HIPPY Outcomes in South Africa Miriam Westheimer

This chapter is about a study of caregivers in South Africa. Using comparative focus groups - with two of the four groups comprised of HIPPY participants and two comprised of non-HIPPY participants - McLean designed an exploratory study to focus on parents' attitudes and approaches to parenting. This essay teases out of the study a few major themes and issues raised by parents: defining and differentiating between naughty versus good children, women's dominant role in childrearing, parents adjusting to a changing world, and the quality of time spent with children. Each issue is illustrated

with direct quotes. The chapter concludes with a list of program recommendations and implications.
(South Africa)

Part 4: Examining HIPPY's Impact in a Community Context

13. Reaching Out and Making a Difference:

The Context of Meaning in a Home-Based Preschool Program

David W. Britt

(USA)

Britt examines two years of operation of an American HIPPY program and shows the impact of changed context on process and outcomes. Over two years, the program examined in the study went from a basic staff consisting of a program director and paraprofessionals, to an augmented staff that included a family support specialist. "Reaching out to families" and "making a difference" in their lives was a strong norm during both years of the program. In the second year, however, the more resource-rich service context altered several things: the nature of problems observed, the directness of interventions tried, and the meaning and limits of "reaching out" to families and "making a difference" in their lives. Alternative explanations of the data are briefly discussed and eliminated.

14. The Mutually Reinforcing Roles of Volunteers and Professionals: HIPPY as a Case in Point

Oliver Schuberth

(Germany)

Considering HIPPY paraprofessionals to be comparable to volunteers, Schuberth argues for the value of incorporating volunteers in the social services and offers three models to define the potential relationship between professional and voluntary service providers: the substitutive model, the supplementary model, and the complementary model. He contends that the complementary model, with very intensive collaboration between social workers and volunteers, is the most effective, and he uses HIPPY as a context to better understand it. To explore HIPPY in this regard, Schuberth conducted semi-structured interviews with one professional, one paraprofessional, and one mother who worked together in the program, and he reports on the relationship of the professional and paraprofessional from each of these three perspectives. In addition, he reports on the participants' overall evaluations of the HIPPY program.

15. HIPPY Program's Influence on Establishing Home-School Partnerships and Enhancing Children's School Readiness

Pia Rebello Britto

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn

(USA)

This study examined the HIPPY program's influence on establishing home-school partnerships and enhancing school readiness in one program in New York City. Direct and indirect parental involvement in children's school activities were used as indicators to assess HIPPY's influence on home-school partnerships. Kindergarten children's classroom adaptability was used to assess the program's influence on children's readiness for school. Two instruments were developed for the evaluation: the HIPPY Parent Interview and the Kindergarten Teacher Survey. The sample size was 17 HIPPY families and 13 teachers who have HIPPY children in their kindergarten classrooms. There was no comparison group. The survey results suggest that the HIPPY program has encouraged high rates of parental participation in children's schooling, despite the fact that mothers reported feeling a time-bind. The program's influence on parental participation was seen partly in mother's choices of schools for their children. The teacher reports indicate that most of the HIPPY children were performing at the same level or higher than their classmates. Most of the teachers stated that they would like more children like "a HIPPY child" in their classrooms. The study concludes with a caution against generalizing these findings, which are limited because of the small sample size, the lack of a comparison group, and the lack of pre- and post-data.

Part 5: Navigating the Research Process

16. The Florida HIPPY Recipe for Research

Lois-Lynn S. Deuel

Mary Lindsey

Dabaram Rampersad

(USA)

Utilizing a metaphor of research as recipe, this article makes the experience of researching HIPPY in Florida accessible to field practitioners. It describes the initial research planning stages, which include establishing the need for research, considering community-based priorities, and gathering support from important stakeholders. It also discusses how the authors developed a research plan in Florida, and chose the appropriate instruments and data collection methods. It concludes with a consideration of how the research-practitioner team in Florida was able to use the data collected to develop programmatic

recommendations regarding the promotion of elementary school success, behavioral changes that can be expected for participating parents and families, and paraprofessional training and development.

17. Evaluating HIPPY in Texas: Process and Progress

Arminta Lee Jacobson
(USA)

This study presents the results of a three-year evaluation of HIPPY programs in Texas, looking specifically at children's adaptation to kindergarten and parents' involvement in their children's education. In designing the study, it was assumed that kindergarten teachers can recognize early childhood preparation for school by mothers and that children's growth in school readiness is accompanied by parental development and increased involvement. Data were collected only for those participating in HIPPY; there is no comparison group. A variety of measurements were used, including parent interviews, teacher surveys, children's test scores, and staff self-assessment. The evaluation processes and procedures for each of the three years of the study are described in great detail, so that this chapter depicts the evolution of an evaluation, including changes in measurement instruments and methodology. The changes that took place over the course of three years reflect refinement in ways of asking questions about HIPPY's impact. Findings for each measure in each of the three years of the study are presented along with a discussion of what changes were made and why. While the findings are generally quite positive, the lack of any comparison group clearly precludes the possibility of coming to any general conclusion.

18. HIPPY Implementation and Research in Australia: Progress and Prospect

Suzanne Dean
Cynthia Leung
Tim Gilley
Jacqueline Grady
(Australia)

This chapter describes the process of starting HIPPY in Australia. From the outset, that process included an integral role for research. As part of the original committee formed to explore implementation options with the responsibility to help set the research agenda, Dean et al. provide both an insider and outsider view of the process. They build on lessons learned from research conducted in other countries, and report on the process of working in close collaboration with the program staff to document a need for the program through a qualitative needs assessment; better understand the process of starting a new program

in a new country through a process study; place the program in its academic context through an extensive literature review; and make the case for the program's effectiveness through a quasi-experimental outcome study. In this study, they also build on previous HIPPY research to promote the potential for an international research effort by using the Readiness Inventory tool created in Israel (see Chapter 6). Throughout the chapter, Dean et al. raise issues which deserve serious programmatic attention, and they conclude with directions for future research efforts.