

# Summary of Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Parent Outcome Research

By Kirsten Ellingsen, PhD, Dianna Boone, & Lowell Myers

## Background

**Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)** is an evidence based home visiting program focused on parent-involved learning for preschool age children. HIPPY was established in 1969 at Hebrew University in Israel as a research and demonstration project. It is currently implemented in 13 countries. HIPPY programs were established in the United States in 1984 and now serve more than 15,000 families across 140 communities in 21 states and the District of Columbia. HIPPY programs aim to prepare children for long-term school success starting at kindergarten by empowering parents as their first and most important teachers. It was developed for families experiencing economic disadvantage, limited English language proficiency or social isolation. The HIPPY model involves community based home visitors who meet with parents in their homes to role play curricular activities one hour a week for thirty weeks per program year. Parents then spend approximately 15 to 20 minutes per day with their children using the reviewed HIPPY books and activity packets. Programs also have regularly scheduled parent group meetings. All HIPPY programs share the same four core components: a standard developmentally appropriate school readiness curriculum, role-play as method of instruction, peer home visitors, and home visiting as the service delivery method. For more information please visit the HIPPY USA website at [www.hippyusa.org](http://www.hippyusa.org).

**The National Research and Evaluation Center (NREC)** at the University of South Florida (USF) is the national research center for HIPPY USA. The purpose of the National Research and Evaluation Center (NREC) is to advance the evidence base for HIPPY USA. The NREC mission is to conduct rigorous research, provide meaningful program evaluation support to HIPPY programs, & engage in productive collaboration to promote positive child, family, & community outcomes. For more information about the NREC please visit the website at <http://www.hippyresearchcenter.org>.

## Parent Involvement and Early Childhood Education

Parent involvement and early childhood education have been regarded as two of the most important strategies to maximize positive outcomes for children, particularly those from low income backgrounds (Sproul, 2012). Although early HIPPY research predominantly focused on child outcomes from program participation, recent studies also examine effectiveness related to parent outcomes. The summary of research presented below highlights key findings related to parent outcomes. For a review of child outcomes, visit the NREC website to download Research Brief 1 (<http://www.hippyresearchcenter.org/research-briefs>).

## HIPPY Program Participation Increases Parent Involvement in Early Learning and Literacy Promoting Activities

Several specific parent behaviors have been related to positive child educational outcomes including frequent shared book reading and an enriched home language environment (Halle, Zaff, Calkins, Geyelin-Margie, 2000; Hoff, 2013; Janus & Offord, 2007; Duncan et al 2007). Published HIPPY research has started to document higher rates of these types of parenting behaviors and attitudes that can facilitate development and school success after program participation. Impact studies to date show increased literacy and academic activities at home, more enriched home environments, improved confidence and parenting efficacy, and high levels of involvement when children enter school.



### CONTACTS

HIPPY National Research & Evaluation Center  
Dr. Kirsten Ellingsen, Director  
University of South Florida  
NREC\_director@usf.edu  
[www.hippyresearchcenter.org](http://www.hippyresearchcenter.org)

HIPPY USA  
Lia Lent, Executive Director  
[llent@hippyusa.org](mailto:llent@hippyusa.org)  
(501) 537-7727  
[www.hippyusa.org](http://www.hippyusa.org)



**HIPPYUSA**<sup>®</sup>  
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters

**USF**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH FLORIDA  
COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL  
& COMMUNITY SCIENCES

## Parent involvement in home educational activities

Parents engage in more literacy and educational activities at home after participating in a HIPPY program.

- Necoechea (2007) conducted an experimental study to examine the effects of HIPPY on children's early language skills, emergent literacy, and parent involvement. A randomized control trial design was used with a sample of low-income immigrant Mexican American families. HIPPY program participation was significantly related to self-reported level of parent involvement. Specifically, mothers reported significantly more involvement with their children after 15 weeks in HIPPY compared to the control group in providing home based literacy and language opportunities, quality instruction and interaction, and frequent modeling of literacy activities.
- Mothers new to a HIPPY program significantly increased their involvement in home literacy activities across their first year of program participation (Johnson, Martinez-Cantu, Jacobson & Weir, 2012). Parent involvement surveys were administered at the start of HIPPY and again after one program year. Within group analysis revealed a significant increase in reported parent engagement in academic-related activities at home.
- A quasi-experimental research study conducted with Spanish speaking families compared randomly selected parents who participated in HIPPY for 6 months and a wait-listed group of parents. After participating in HIPPY, parents were more likely than a comparison group to engage in the types of academic activities at home that help prepare children for school (Nievar, Jacobson, Chen, Johnson, & Dier, 2011). Home observations and parent self-report measures found HIPPY parents to be more likely to provide cognitive stimulation at home and offer their children a greater variety of learning experiences.
- A recent Australian national evaluation of HIPPY was conducted as a two-year longitudinal quasi-experimental study (Liddell, Barnett, Roost, & McEachran, 2011). Propensity score matching was used to derive a non-HIPPY comparison group using data collected from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). Several positive significant effects for parents were documented in this study. HIPPY parents reported doing significantly more in-home and out-of-home literacy and learning activities with their child. Further, HIPPY parents reported that their child liked being read to for longer periods of time in any one sitting, compared with non-HIPPY parents.

## Program participation enhances the home learning environment

HIPPY program participation has been associated with more enriched home learning environments.

- In the quasi-experimental study of HIPPY impact on home learning environments of Latino families conducted by Nievar and colleagues (2011) HIPPY program participation was the best predictor of positive ratings of the home environment above income, perceived efficacy, stress, depression and maternal education. HIPPY parents had higher scores on the Parental Involvement and Efficacy measure and the following subscales of the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME): learning materials, academic stimulation, modeling, and variety. Families in HIPPY had more learning materials in the home, provided a greater variety of learning experiences, and encouraged more types of pre-academic activities in their homes.

## Confidence and feelings of empowerment

HIPPY parents have reported increased confidence and parenting efficacy.

- Low income Spanish speaking mothers reported higher levels of parenting self-efficacy after 6 months participation in a HIPPY program compared to a randomly selected group of mothers on the program wait list (Nievar et al., 2011).
- A recent national evaluation of HIPPY in Australia found a significant increase in HIPPY parents' confidence in their role as their child's first teacher between the start and end of HIPPY program participation (Barnett, Roost, & McEachran, 2012). They were also significantly more likely than non-HIPPY parents to give themselves a better rating as a parent (Barnett et al., 2012). At the end of the program, parents who completed HIPPY were also more confident they could influence decisions affecting their local communities. In addition, they indicated a higher sense of neighborhood belonging when compared to the national matched sample of parents after participating in a HIPPY program.

## Parent involvement with schools

HIPPY parents are involved with their children's education after they enter school.

- In Texas, kindergarten teachers were surveyed about the parent involvement of 5-year-old HIPPY students (Johnson et al., 2012). Teachers were asked to compare level of involvement for HIPPY parents relative to other parents in the classroom. HIPPY parents had frequent school contact during their children's kindergarten year with teachers indicating parents had three or more times when they had personal contact with the teacher (97.8%), attended a conference (96.7%), attended an open house of other program (92.2%), observed in the classroom (41.6%), volunteered for field trips (52.9%) and volunteering in the classroom (61.8%). Overall, teachers reported that more than half (54.4%) of HIPPY parents were more involved in their child's education compared to other parents in the classrooms.
- In Australia, teachers reported that HIPPY parents had more contact with the school and were significantly more likely to be involved in their child's learning and development than the comparison group of parents (Barnett et al., 2012).

## Positive Parenting Practices

There is also evidence that parents demonstrate more positive parenting practices after completing HIPPY.

- HIPPY program participation has been associated with reduction in negative parenting practices. While HIPPY parents and a matched comparison group reported similar levels of hostile parenting at the start of the study, only HIPPY parents reported a significant decline in the level of hostile parenting by end of program (Barnett et al., 2012).
- HIPPY has demonstrated positive child outcomes for teenage mothers. In five urban Texas school districts, kindergarten teachers completed the Kindergarten Readiness Survey, a 45-item survey examining five dimensions of school readiness including social-emotional development, approaches to learning, physical development, language development, and general knowledge for HIPPY graduates (Brown, 2013). Adolescent mothers who participated in HIPPY had children who performed equally with other entering students from traditional-aged mothers who participated in HIPPY. The researchers offer that the study results suggest that HIPPY is as effective in equipping the children of teenage mothers with the skills and knowledge needed to enter school ready to learn as it is with traditional-aged mothers.

## Summary of HIPPY Effects on Parent Outcomes

A primary objective of the HIPPY program is to increase parent involvement in home based literacy and educational activities, school and community life to increase early school success of children. The results of the reviewed published studies examining parent outcomes document several benefits of HIPPY program participation including an enriched home learning environments, positive changes in parent engagement in early educational activities at home, and later parent involvement with schools. Studies have also demonstrated program benefits in parenting practices with reductions in hostile parenting and increased sense of parenting efficacy. Identified positive parent outcomes after participation in HIPPY are associated with benefits to children that are immediate (e.g., frequent shared book reading) ongoing (e.g., enhanced home learning environment) and lasting (e.g., increased parent efficacy and involvement in school).

## Limitations and Future Direction

The results highlighted in this research brief must be considered relative to the research design used for each study. For a review of impact studies used to establish HIPPY as evidence based home visiting model see (<http://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/>). Studies to date have not attempted to investigate how parent outcomes are related to child outcomes as HIPPY programs effects. Given the primary goals for HIPPY programs, one of the primary activities of the NREC is to identify, develop, and recommend standardized measures for parent and child outcomes. A HIPPY USA parent involvement questionnaire is currently under development. Future research will not only need to clearly define what is meant by parent involvement, there will also need to be appropriate measures and methods to assess type and level of involvement and the influence on child outcomes. Immediate and long term changes in attitude, educational expectations and parenting behaviors should be investigated. In addition, understanding other key factors that influence different parent outcomes is important. Dosage, fidelity, and level of parent participation in HIPPY are key factors to assess that may differentially affect parent involvement and, consequently, child outcomes.

## References

- Barhava-Monteith, G., Harré, N., & Field, J. (1999). A promising start: An evaluation of the HIPPY program in New Zealand. *Early Child Development & Care, 159*(1), 145-157.
- Barnett, T., Roost, F., & McEachran, J. (2012). Evaluating the effectiveness of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY). *Family Matters, 91*, 27-37.
- Brown, A. (2013) The Impact of Early Intervention on the School Readiness of Children Born to Teenage Mothers. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, doi: 10.1177/1476718X13479048
- Farrant, B. M. (2012). Joint attention and parent-child book reading. *Family Matters, 91*, 38-46.
- Halle, T., Zaff, J., Calkins, J., Geyelin-Margie, N., (2000). Background for community-level work on school readiness: A review of definitions, assessments, and investment strategies. *Part II: Reviewing the literature on contributing factors to school readiness*. Washington, DC: Child Trends, Inc.
- HIPPY International (n.d.a). HIPPY brochure. Available at: [http://www.hippy-international.org/images/broch\\_hippy\\_l2.pdf](http://www.hippy-international.org/images/broch_hippy_l2.pdf)
- Hoff, E. (2013). Interpreting the early language trajectories of children from low-SES and language minority homes: Implications for closing achievement gaps. *Developmental Psychology, 49*(1), 4-14. doi: 10.1037/a0027238
- Johnson, U. Y., Martinez-Cantu, V., Jacobson, A. L., & Weir, C. (2012). The Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters program's relationship with mother and school outcomes. *Early Education & Development, 23*(5), 713-727. doi: 10.1080/10409289.2011.596002
- Liddell, M., Barnett, T., Diallo Roost, F., & McEachran, J. (2011). Investing in our future: An evaluation of the national rollout of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY). *Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations, 1-123*. [http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/Investing\\_in\\_our\\_future\\_HIPPY\\_National\\_Rollout\\_Evaluation\\_FinalReport\\_2011.pdf](http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/Investing_in_our_future_HIPPY_National_Rollout_Evaluation_FinalReport_2011.pdf).
- Necoechea, D. M. (2007). *Children at-risk for poor school readiness: The effect of an early intervention home visiting program on children and parents*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Riverside.
- Nievar, A. M., Jacobson, A., Chen, Q., Johnson, U., & Dier, S. (2011). Impact of HIPPY on home learning environments of Latino families. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 26*, 268-277. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.01.002
- Romano, E., Babchishin, L., Pagani, L. S., & Kohen, D. (2010). School readiness and later achievement: replication and extension using a nationwide Canadian survey. *Developmental Psychology, 46*(5), 995-1007.
- Sproul, F. M. (2012). *Effects of family involvement: Early childhood cognitive outcomes using longitudinal growth curve models*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.