The Florida HIPPY Story
Mary Lindsey, Ph.D., HIPPY State Director

There are many ways to measure the success of a program. In past editions we have discussed funding successes and failures, parent and child outcomes, program growth and sustainability, but we are dedicating this issue to telling our HIPPY stories through the eyes of our administrators, researcher, parents and children, and the university provost. This is the Florida HIPPY Story!

Outstanding Project Team
Dr. Lise Fox, USF Administrator

For almost two decades, the Florida HIPPY Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) Center has guided the work of HIPPY programs throughout Florida to ensure that young children have the early experiences that prepares them for school success.

Their mission of empowering parents as primary educators of their children is profound and their success in accomplishing it has been impressive. They have a well-tested approach that has resulted in notable outcomes. Many of the children who were supported by HIPPY long ago are now graduated from college, some with the highest honors, and leading productive lives. This team works to empower communities to change the trajectory of children in poverty; they change lives.

In addition to impressive work, the HIPPY team is an amazing enterprise. They have persisted through budget cuts and threats of sequester and shut down and come out on top! With over $2.5 million in funding, they continue to grow and expand and bring this powerful model to more children and families.

In addition to being notable citizens in making the lives of children better in Florida, they are critical contributors to ensuring that HIPPY is conducting research and has the data to support this model. This is exactly the kind of work that is the hallmark of what our Department is about.
In 2012-13 the Florida HIPPY Training and Technical Assistance Center launched a new initiative with support from the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) at the University of South Florida to offer HIPPY services to children in Hillsborough County who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and are assessed to be developmentally at ages three through five. The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu) is a community-based initiative that provides direct assistance, technical assistance, training and information and linkage to resources for people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and related disabilities across their lifespan in addition to their families, professionals and businesses. CARD was an ideal partner in this initiative because of their professional staff who could provide instruction and coaching to HIPPY home visitors who were new to serving this special population of children. Project staff was interested in understanding what enhancements, strategies and supports, if any were necessary in delivering the HIPPY curriculum that would lead to successful outcomes for children.

The HIPPY/CARD initiative served 16 children in the first year. Three home visitors served CARD children on their caseload, and in the second year, five home visitors will serve CARD children. HIPPY home visitors worked with parents to complete a preference and reinforcement profile for each child before they began delivering the HIPPY curriculum to parents. These profiles are developmentally appropriate and offer a variety of choices that parents can use to encourage a child to complete a curriculum activity task. Monthly staff meetings with the home visitors were held by project’s CARD staff to review bi-weekly check-in logs and discuss children’s progress with completing the HIPPY curriculum.

As a first-year, first-time partnership, we learned that while some of the CARD/HIPPY children were able to successfully...
progress through the HIPPY curriculum, other children required additional time to complete the HIPPY lessons. Many of the challenges home visitors encountered during the home visit occurred when children were home during the home visit and wanted to participate with mom and the home visitor in role playing the activities.

Four HIPPY/CARD children completed 30 weeks of the HIPPY 4 curriculum. The remaining ten children are continuing with their HIPPY lessons in the second year of this project. Although the CARD sample is small, the preliminary results of the HIPPY pretest and posttest scores suggest that children with autism are learning the HIPPY curriculum. All of the four CARD children’s posttest scores were higher than their pretest scores with the average numerical change from pretest to posttest of 4, the same as that of the non-CARD children. Further, the four CARD children’s posttest raw scores on the Get Ready to Read Screening Tool exceeded their pretest raw score with an average numerical change from pretest to posttest of 3 points.

We are very excited with the initial success of the HIPPY/CARD initiative and look forward another successful year.

Employee with Distinction

Kevin Burke, Office of the USF Provost

Eric Biel is the first to say that his route to a bachelor’s degree from USF was “very eclectic,” as one might gather from his major in criminology coupled with a minor in biomedical physics. But he’s equally quick to characterize the experience as being “completely awesome.”

“There’s just something about being among all the great academic minds at USF that makes you want to plug into that as much as possible. I’m interested in so much,” says Biel, who transferred to USF after completing his associate’s degree at nearby Hillsborough Community College.

Having long been a volunteer science and math tutor for his fellow students both in high school and at HCC, Biel started out at USF thinking about a major in secondary education, but later switched to mathematics, until the highly structured nature of that curriculum and its in-class requirements proved not a good fit with his work responsibilities as a staff assistant with the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program located in the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences.

“My schedule really didn’t permit me to go to school full-time,” Biel recalls. He credits HIPPY State Director Dr. Mary Lindsey with continuing to emphasize that he persist with his education by finding a more flexible course of study.

“She was very proactive in pushing me toward success, for which I’m very grateful. And I couldn’t have been more thrilled to find a place in the criminology program.”

Biel received his diploma in May 2013 as one of only four students in the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences to graduate “with distinction,” as determined by the faculty of the college based upon the four criteria of scholarship, research (for his work with HIPPY), service to the community (as a tutor, local PTA volunteer, and staff advisor to the USF skimboarding club), and overcoming adversity (the loss of his left eye as the result of an accident during batting practice with an area softball team he managed while at HCC, also as a volunteer).

Biel is now a graduate student in the College of Business’ MBA program.
HIPPY Mission Statement

HIPPY programs empower parents as primary educators of their children in the home and foster parent involvement in school and community life to maximize the chances of successful early school experiences.

HIPPY Parent Testimony

Hernisha Reid, Florida HIPPY Parent

January 29, 2014

To whom this may concern,

The HIPPY program has helped to educate my child in preparation for VPK. My son Jayden Reid started the HIPPY program at the age of 4, February 2013; it was 7 months before the start of VPK. Prior to being a part of the HIPPY program, my son could not write his name without assistance, he could not identify all the alphabets nor identify numbers 1-20. After HIPPY program 4 was complete in August 2013, Jayden Reid could now write his first and last name, identify, write, and sound out all the letters of the alphabet, count and identify numbers up to 20, amongst other things. The program has engaged my family as a whole and has also provided some educational structure on a weekly basis that Jayden looks forward to. Jayden Reid entered VPK in August 2013. He is exceeding expectations in all subjects and is now reading at age 4. I know that because of HIPPY, my son will do very well in kindergarten and I won’t have to worry about him struggling in school. I am telling everyone I know with young children what the program has done for Jayden and what it can do for their children. I am a parent who is most grateful for the opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful program.

A HIPPY Child’s Favorite HIPPY Activity

My name is Baron Sanchez Garcia Jr. and I am 6 years old. I like HIPPY because it helped me to read and write. I also learned to count and say my ABCs. One of my favorite books was Don’t Go to Kindergarten! And last my favorite activity was learning the HIPPY Shapes and learning they can be used as signs.

How Can I Help? Make a Donation Today!

Checks payable to: USF Foundation (Memo Line: Acct # 530004 HIPPY Services Fund)

Please send all donations to: Florida HIPPY Foundation Account, 13301 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MHC 2113A, Tampa, FL 33612

Supported by funds from Florida’s Office of Early Learning in collaboration with the University of South Florida.

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