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Florida HIPPY Research Brief #2

Training & Technical Assistance Center for
Florida's Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters

Positive Changes in HIPPY Families

Introduction

HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters) practitioners, implementing agencies, funding agencies, the Florida HIPPY Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) Center, and the University of South Florida see HIPPY as a program with multiple customers and beneficiaries, including children, parents, families, communities, schools, and employers.

Parents and families are an important piece in the HIPPY puzzle. The HIPPY delivery system relies on dedicated parent or primary caregiver participation, including:

- Attendance at group meetings,
- Weekly in-service training sessions with HIPPY paraprofessionals for role-playing HIPPY lessons, and
- Daily interactions with HIPPY children to complete HIPPY activity packets.

HIPPY is frequently characterized as primarily an early childhood education program, and secondarily as a:

- parent training program,
- parent education program,
- parent empowerment program, and
- community-building program.

However, seven of the eleven HIPPY USA program objectives address positive changes in parents and families:

- Empowering parents to view themselves as primary educators of their children.
- Teaching parents and children the value of learning.
- Stimulating educational interaction between parents and their children.
- Creating an educational milieu in the home that encourages literacy.
- Fostering parent involvement in school and community life.
- Breaking through the social isolation of parents.
- Providing parents with the opportunity of becoming paraprofessionals in their own community.

Successful program outcomes have typically been gauged in terms of changes in children's abilities, behaviors, skills, or academic performance; however, alternative measures that reflect parent change should be explored.

Research Questions

- What proportion of current HIPPY paraprofessionals were HIPPY parents?
- What types of positive changes have HIPPY paraprofessionals and coordinators seen in HIPPY parents and families that they would attribute in whole or part to HIPPY participation?

Purpose

The purpose of this research brief is to document a wide range of changes in HIPPY families that have been observed by HIPPY paraprofessionals and coordinators. The Florida HIPPY T&TA Center and the University of South Florida will use the information in this research brief as a resource for designing future in-depth investigations of parent, child, and family changes that might be attributed to HIPPY participation. HIPPY sites may use this research brief as a resource when:

- selecting strategies for making an impact in the lives of HIPPY families and
- measuring positive changes in families that may be due to or aided by HIPPY participation.

Method

This research brief is based upon data extracted from the Six Sites Study, including information from paraprofessional surveys, paraprofessional focus groups, and coordinator interviews.

Thirty-one paraprofessionals completed paraprofessional surveys and participated in 120 minute focus groups. Six coordinators, two supervisors, and two assistant coordinators were interviewed.

Findings

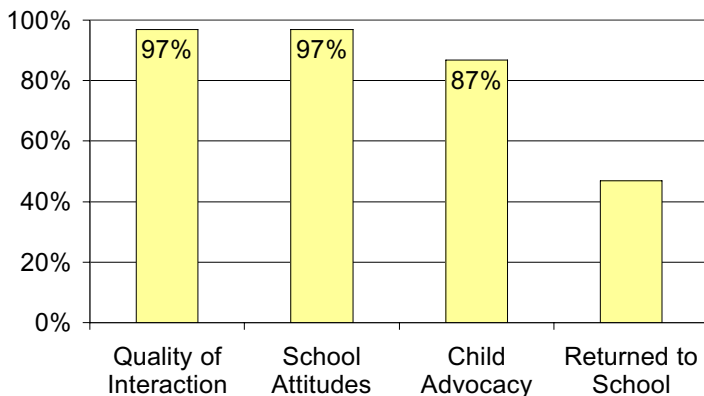
What proportion of current HIPPY paraprofessionals were HIPPY parents?

- About one-third (32%, 10/31) of paraprofessionals indicated that they were HIPPY parents prior to becoming HIPPY paraprofessionals.

What types of positive changes have HIPPY paraprofessionals and coordinators seen in HIPPY parents and families that they would attribute in whole or part to HIPPY participation?

- Nearly all (97%, 29/30) of the paraprofessionals reported that they had seen positive changes in the quality of interactions between HIPPY parents and their children.
- Nearly all (97%, 30/31) of the paraprofessionals indicated that they had seen positive changes in their HIPPY parents' attitudes toward their children's education and the school system.
- Most (87%, 27/31) paraprofessionals reported that their HIPPY parents were better advocates for their children in elementary school due to HIPPY.
- Nearly half (47%, 14/30) of the paraprofessionals indicated that at least one of their HIPPY parents had returned to school or begun classes since starting HIPPY.

Areas of Positive Change in HIPPY Families Most Often Identified by HIPPY Coordinators and Paraprofessionals



During focus groups, paraprofessionals were asked to describe positive changes they have seen in their parents. These changes were grouped in five categories:

1. Increase in Community Involvement

- Parents became more involved in HIPPY activities, rather than just attending.
- Parents became more supportive of HIPPY (e.g., volunteer time, babysitting and refreshments).
- Parents are attending more HIPPY group meetings and going on field trips. They usually start by going on a field trip since that is a special occasion.
- Parents come to realize that it takes a village to raise a child. HIPPY parents start to be there for each other (e.g., baby-sit, rides to doctor appointments).
- They used to just go to church, now they sing in the choir.
- One parent takes kids in the community to the pool or on bike rides. She's become a community leader.
- Parents say their co-workers ask them for help because they know what is happening in the community.
- Some parents became foster parents.

2. Personal/Professional Development

- Parents are talking about going back to school.
- I drove one of my parents to sign up for college classes.
- Some parents are attending college. I helped them apply for a scholarship.
- Some parents started nursing school.
- Some of my parents got a GED. Others are taking classes.
- One parent is going into the ministry/church leadership.
- Parents have taken classes to learn English. Some are now actively trying to learn English by listening to English TV and radio and going to places where English is spoken.
- Parents have learned new words that are useful for them also education lingo.
- Some parents have gone back to work; they aren't lying on the couch anymore. They developed a work ethic.
- Parents have learned that education doesn't stop at a certain age. You are always learning.
- Some parents are interested in becoming HIPPY paraprofessionals.

3. Personality/Attitude Changes

- The self-esteem of some parents has increased. They gain self-confidence.
- Parents become comfortable asking for help when they need it.
- Parents can deal with bumps in their lives better. They don't shut down completely in difficult times.

- Parents are better at being on time. They always used to be late.
- Some parents have fixed themselves up. They have more confidence in their abilities and are not as depressed.
- In abusive families (victims are moms), they become aware of their options and know they are not alone. We provide information and let them know others like them have made it. Some parents get out of those situations.
- HIPPY parents are happier.

4. Children: Changes in Relations and Understanding

- Now they look in their child's eyes, turn off the TV and spend quality time with their child.
- They really listen to their children now. Before they used to talk at their kids all the time and never listen.
- HIPPY parents play more with their kids.
- Parents don't compare their kids anymore. They've learned that each one is an individual.
- Some of my parents used to think that when school starts, their job is over now someone else would be teaching their child.
- Parents have more realistic expectations. They have learned what is age appropriate, e.g., 3-yr-olds don't need to color within the lines or know the alphabet. They have learned that these skills build slowly.
- Parents do more extension activities. They are teaching their children all day.
- Parents are more patient with their children.
- Parents are learning to schedule with their kids.
- Some HIPPY parents are teaching their children to follow directions, are being more directive and expect them to follow directions.
- Parents become better communicators with their HIPPY child, their other children, and other adults.
- HIPPY parents are more open-minded, keep children less sheltered, more curious, exploratory, experimental, open to new activities, trying new things, and see their children in relation to other kids. HIPPY has opened a whole new world for them.

5. School-Related Changes: Attitudes & Behaviors

- Parents have changed their attitudes towards school. They want their kids to stay in school and not drop out.
- These parents have learned that if you don't pay attention to your kids, the teachers will pass them by, too.
- We've shown them how to advocate for their children at school. We've gone to school with them. Our kids go to the same schools.
- Parents aren't afraid of the school anymore.
- Some of my parents just showed up at school and wanted to volunteer.

- Now they know the names of their children's teachers.
- Parents ask for feedback from their children's teachers.
- Parents attend PTA meetings.
- Parents look inside the backpack of older children to see what they have for homework.
- They take their kids to the library on their own.
- They have higher expectations for their kids in school. They push their kids more at school because they know they can do it--because they did it in HIPPY.
- When their older HIPPY kids did well at school, they saw that HIPPY made a difference and became even more concerned with education, grades, teachers, and went to parent conferences.
- They are excited about registering 5-yr-olds for school.

Implications for Research & Practice

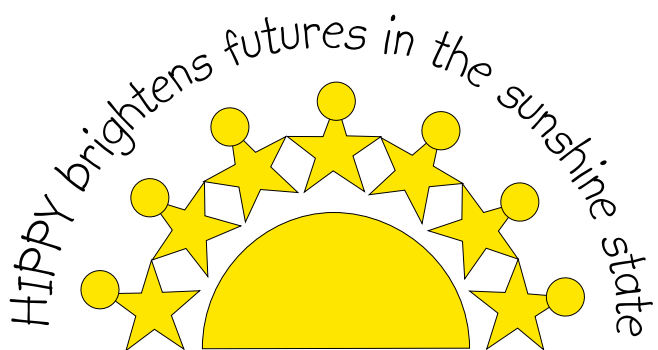
- Paraprofessionals and coordinators have observed a myriad of positive changes in their HIPPY parents and families in the areas of increased community involvement, personal and professional development, personality and attitude changes, changes in their relationships and understanding of children, and changes in their attitudes and behaviors towards school. This preliminary investigation has demonstrated that seven of the eleven HIPPY program objectives addressing parents and families are being met.
- The University of South Florida and the HIPPY T&TA Center will share the findings from this investigation with the Florida HIPPY Research Advisory Committee. This group will assist in the prioritization and initiation of subsequent investigations regarding the impact of HIPPY on parents and families in 2000-2001.
- HIPPY paraprofessionals indicated that HIPPY parents and families would be reluctant to complete any surveys asking about personal and family changes. Reasons included:
 - ▶ Families have confidentiality and privacy considerations.
 - ▶ Families may be unaware of changes (only an external observer would notice).
 - ▶ Families may be modest and inclined to minimize changes.
 - ▶ Positive changes may be in progress and not considered real until they've achieved their complete goals.
 - ▶ Families may not complete surveys or interviews because of literacy or language problems.
 - ▶ Some families are more tuned into their failures than their successes.
 - ▶ Families would not volunteer information to open-ended questions.

- Some paraprofessionals indicated that directly approaching families for personal information (particularly parent- or family-focused rather than child-focused) would not be a successful research endeavor. Paraprofessionals indicated that they know their families well and would be willing to complete a checklist that provided a broad set of positive changes. A follow-up focus group with parents at a regular HIPPY group meeting could verify checklist findings and provide concrete examples and illustrative personal stories.
- Paraprofessionals and coordinators indicated that any measures of parent or family change must be sensitive to subtle changes or changes that are in progress. For example:
 - ▶ A parent may have progressed from showing no interest in school, to talking about going back to school, to attending school, to completing a GED. Measure must be sensitive to those middle steps.
 - ▶ A parent who attends one parent-teacher meeting at school (after having never attended before) makes a bigger and more meaningful change than a parent who has previously visited three times (and now attends a fourth meeting). Measures must reflect meaningful changes and the extent of changes—not simply count events or averages.
- Findings from this preliminary investigation could be used by Florida HIPPY sites for:
 - ▶ program improvement related to parent participation,
 - ▶ evidence-based grant writing and justification to funding agencies for expanded and continued support and funding, particularly with respect to parent involvement, parent training, parent empowerment, and community building.

**This Research Brief was prepared by
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About Florida HIPPY

The Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home based, parent involvement program designed to help parents provide educational enrichment for their three, four, and five-year-old children.

The Florida HIPPY Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) Center, based at the University of South Florida (USF), works in collaboration with HIPPY USA's National Office in New York to provide training, technical support, and guidance to all of the HIPPY programs in the state of Florida.

The Florida HIPPY T&TA Center, in conjunction with USF, HIPPY USA, and Florida HIPPY sites, began this research initiative to evaluate the efficacy of the HIPPY model, measure and describe changes in program participants, and provide evidence-based support for HIPPY programs.

Data from selected Florida HIPPY programs have been collected and analyzed. The purpose of these research briefs is to share knowledge on topics of interest with HIPPY stakeholders. Findings from this research may be used to develop "best practices" in service delivery, for program improvement and enhancement, to describe program functioning and impact to stakeholders, and to support program sustainability.



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