

## About Florida HIPPY

The Home Instruction for Parents of 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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- **The HIPPY home visitors** who generously contributed their time in conducting parent recruitment, verifying parent telephone numbers and securing replacement parents for this study.
- **The HIPPY parents** who provided information about their child's current skills and their participation in educational and community activities.



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

## HIPPY Families Participate in Home Literacy Activities

### Introduction

Parents who are their child's first teacher set an example by encouraging imagination and curiosity that foster a love of learning in their children. Children are more successful in school when their parents are actively involved in their learning and show an interest in their progress (Child Trends, 2000; Hargrave and Senechal 2000; Primavera, 2000). Parents who are actively involved in their preschool child's education engage in several types of activities with their child, such as:

- Frequently read to their preschool child;
- Have conversations around the shared picture book reading experience;
- Encourage their child's learning with appropriate play and educational materials;
- Participate in activities with their child outside the home; and
- Teach their child the alphabet and letter sound associations.

HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) is a home visiting program for caregivers of young children designed to increase school readiness and to foster parent involvement in their children's education and in community life. HIPPY's systematic program of role playing during home visits and group meetings is designed to engage parents in learning activities with their children and to view themselves as active agents in their children's education and schooling.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the level of involvement of HIPPY parents in home literacy activities with their children compared to a national sample of parents with young children.

### Research Question

**What kinds of home literacy activities do HIPPY parents engage in with their children?**

### Method

A telephone survey asked parents participating in HIPPY programs in Florida to indicate whether they had engaged in a number of different home literacy activities during the past week and in certain community educational activities with their children during the past month. The questions on the Florida HIPPY Parent Survey II on parent involvement in educational activities and children's pre-academic skills were drawn from the Parent Interview of the 1999 National Household Education Survey. The NHES was selected as the comparison study because participants in this survey were parents of young children; it measured the same content areas that were of interest in this study and used the same methodology developed for the Florida HIPPY Parent Survey II.

### Participants

Children were randomly selected by program proportionally according to the number enrolled in each curriculum year during 2003-04. Three hundred children or approximately 20% of the total number of HIPPY children in Florida were randomly selected for recruitment. Telephone interviews were completed by USF staff with 210 parents or 70% of the target sample.

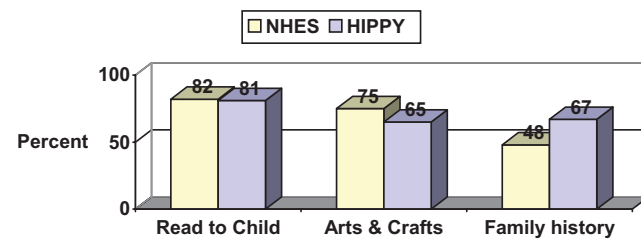
Though participants in both studies were parents of preschool children, there were differences between the NHES and HIPPY samples in ethnicity, primary language and annual income. Compared with NHES parents, HIPPY parents had a substantially lower annual household income, a larger percentage of minority children, and more than twice the percentage of single-parent households than was found in the national sample.

## Findings

### Overall NHES and HIPPY Samples

Parents in the NHES and the Florida HIPPY Parent Study are actively involved in helping their young children learn (see Figure 1). The findings for the overall samples of the two groups are remarkably similar with the only notable differences being that NHES families participate in arts and crafts with their children more than HIPPY families and HIPPY families spend more time teaching their children about family and ethnic history.

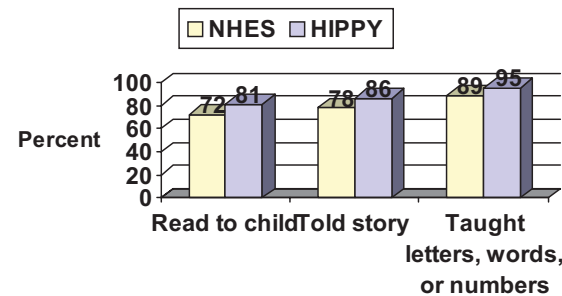
Figure 1. Home Literacy Activities During the Past Week Overall Samples



### Parents With Incomes Below \$25,000

As shown in Figure 2, when compared to NHES parents with an annual household income below \$25,000, a larger percentage of lower-income HIPPY parents reported that they read to their child more than three times during the past week, told their child a story, and taught their child letters, words or numbers. HIPPY parents were also engaged more frequently in other home literacy activities such as talking with their child about family history or their ethnic heritage.

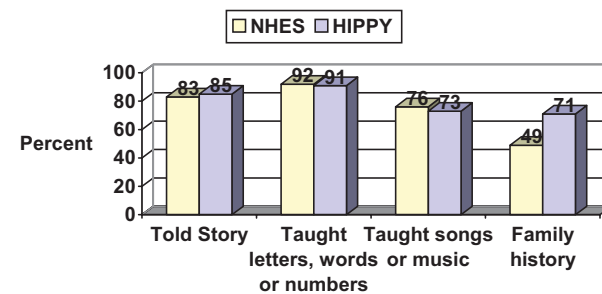
Figure 2. Home Literacy Activities During Past Week Parents with Incomes Below \$25,000



### Parents With Incomes Above \$25,000

As shown in Figure 3, there were few differences between NHES and HIPPY parents whose annual household income was above \$25,000 annually with regard to the frequency of telling their child a story in the past week or teaching their children letters, words or numbers or songs or music. However, a sizeable difference existed between NHES and HIPPY parents in talking with their child about the family history or ethnic heritage with 22% more HIPPY parents talking with their children about family history or ethnic heritage.

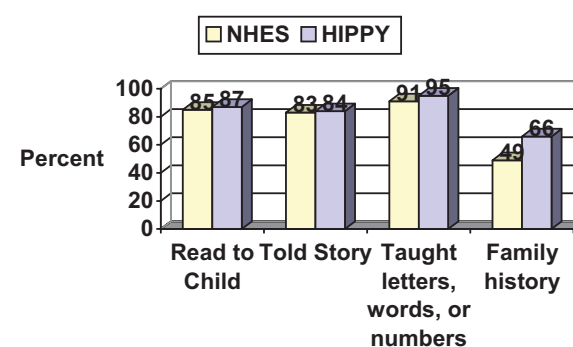
Figure 3. Home Literacy Activities During the Past Week Parents with Incomes Above \$25,000



### English-Speaking Parents

There was little difference between the English-speaking families in the national study and those in HIPPY with regard to the frequency of reading to their child three or more times a week or telling their child a story. However, English-speaking HIPPY parents are more likely than English-speaking NHES parents to have taught their child letters, words or numbers. A considerable difference exists between the English-speaking parents in the two studies in the frequency that parents talked with their child about family history or ethnic heritage (see Figure 4) with HIPPY parents engaging in this activity more frequently than non-HIPPY parents.

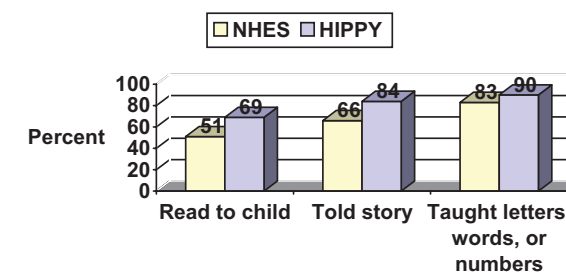
Figure 4. Home Literacy Activities During the Past Week English-Speaking Families



### Spanish-Speaking Parents

When compared to Spanish-speaking NHES parents, HIPPY parents whose primary language is Spanish are more likely to have spent time reading to their children three or more times a week, telling their child a story, and teaching their children letters, words, or numbers (see Figure 5). Spanish-speaking HIPPY families spent less time than NHES Spanish-speaking families teaching their children songs or music and working on arts and crafts with their children.

Figure 5. Home Literacy Activities During the Past Week Spanish-Speaking Families



### Study Limitations

Findings from this study should be considered in the context of certain limitations. These limitations must be taken into consideration when interpreting the significance of the findings.

- The sample of 210 HIPPY children represented only 13% of the 1,660 children enrolled in the HIPPY program statewide. The number of program participants varied across HIPPY programs and resulted in an over representation of participants for some programs and an under representation for others.
- Both the NHES and HIPPY studies utilized self-report data that were not independently verified.
- There was a five-year difference between the NHES and the HIPPY studies. Thus, the results from the 1999 NHES study that were used as comparison data for the 2004 HIPPY study may not accurately represent parents' level of participation nationwide in 2004.

### Programmatic Implications

- HIPPY parents whose annual household income was greater than \$25,000 were less likely than NHES parents in the same income category to spend time teaching their child letters, words, numbers, songs or music. HIPPY programs may want to emphasize to all HIPPY parents the importance of helping their children develop pre-academic skills.
- HIPPY programs should continue to create opportunities for lower income parents to continue participating with their children in home literacy activities and community educational activities. For example, providing parents with free arts and crafts supplies and books will eliminate the burden on parents of purchasing these materials.

### References

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