HIPPY Families Participate in Educational Activities in the Community

Introduction

Goal One of the National Education Goals stresses the importance of family-child engagement in literacy activities to children’s development, especially for children with multiple risk factors such as living with fewer than two parents and living in a family with an income below the poverty level. This goal suggests that for all children to start school ready to learn, parents need to devote time to helping their children learn. Parental involvement with their children in community educational activities encourages children’s imagination and curiosity and fosters the love of learning in their children.

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.

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 outside the home.

Participants

Children were randomly selected by program proportionally according to the number enrolled in each curriculum year during the past three years. 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 family structure. More than twice the percentage of single-parent households than was found in the national sample.

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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 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 and 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.

This project is supported by funds appropriated by the Florida State Legislature via the Florida Partnership for School Readiness (now Office of Early Learning) at the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) in collaboration with the University of South Florida.

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Findings

Overall NHES and HIPPY Samples

As shown in Figure 1, HIPPY and NHES parents reported they participated in community educational activities with their children. The findings for the overall samples of the two groups are remarkably similar with the only notable difference being that a larger percentage of HIPPY families participated in an event sponsored by a community, ethnic, or religious group.

Families with incomes below $25,000

As shown in Figure 3, HIPPY parents with annual household incomes below $25,000 participated more in educational activities outside the home than low income families in the national sample. The most notable difference between the HIPPY and NHES low income families is that a much larger percentage of HIPPY parents attended an event with their children sponsored by a community, ethnic, or religious group.

English-Speaking Parents

As shown in Figure 4, there was little difference between the English-speaking parents in the national study and those in HIPPY with regard to visiting the library or an art gallery, museum, or historical site during the past month. It is noteworthy that less than half of the parents in both studies had participated in these activities with their children. English-speaking NHES parents and English-speaking HIPPY parents were much more likely to have attended a group or community event with their children.

Spanish-Speaking Parents

Compared to Spanish-speaking NHES parents, a larger percentage of Spanish-speaking HIPPY parents have taken their child to a play, concert, or other live show and visited a zoo or aquarium, and attended an event sponsored by a community, ethnic, or religious group (see Figure 5). Spanish-speaking HIPPY and NHES parents reported similar rates of visiting an art gallery, museum, or historical sites and visiting the library with their child. It is notable that both groups of Spanish-speaking parents reported low rates of library usage compared to other community educational activities.

Programmatic Implications

- HIPPY families reported low rates of library usage compared to other community educational activities. HIPPY parents were much more likely to have taken their child to a zoo, aquarium or an event sponsored by a community, ethnic, or religious group than visit the library with their child. HIPPY programs may want to explore reasons some parents are not taking their children to the library and help parents identify ways to overcome barriers to library use.

- HIPPY programs may also want to consider developing HIPPY summer programs that offer parents opportunities to participate in learning activities with their children such as accompanying their children on field trips, developing a summer reading list, and disseminating tips on how to use the library.