

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 Children's Pre-Academic Skills

Introduction

When children enter kindergarten, their knowledge and skills have been shown to differ by a number of risk factors associated with school success including family income level and primary language in the home (West, Denton, & Reaney, 2000). Opinions vary widely regarding what young children should know or be capable of doing to be ready for school. However, research in emergent literacy has shown that children entering school with pre-reading skills are likely to be successful in kindergarten. Pre-reading skills include ability to recognize letters, words, or numbers, recognize whole words by sight and read them aloud, and understand letter-sound relationship at the beginning and ending of words. Pre-reading skills develop during the preschool period through a parent's active involvement in the reading process and a supportive home literacy environment (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 2000).

HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Children) 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

One purpose of this study was to gather information on the pre-academic skill development of HIPPY children compared to a national sample of parents and their young children.

Research Question

What kinds of pre-academic skills are HIPPY children developing, and to what degree?

Method

A telephone survey asked parents participating in HIPPY programs in Florida to indicate their child's current skills in recognizing letters of the alphabet, counting, writing their first name, and reading story books on their own. The questions on the Florida HIPPY Parent Survey II on children's current 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

The responses of parents whose children were enrolled in kindergarten were excluded from these analyses so the HIPPY parent data could be compared with data in the national sample. 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.

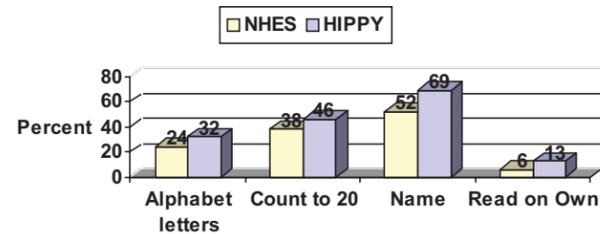
Findings

Differences were found between children in the NHES and HIPPY subgroups. HIPPY participants are predominantly minority, low-income children compared to NHES children. More HIPPY children reside in single-parent households, and a greater proportion of HIPPY children speak Spanish as their primary language than do children in the national study.

Overall NHES and HIPPY Samples

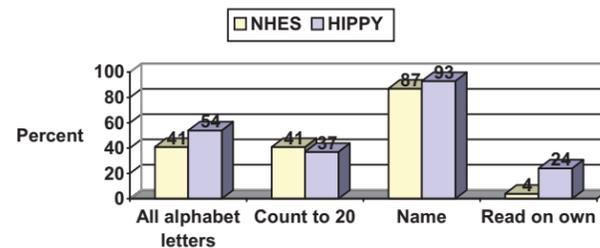
Overall, children in both samples who were not yet enrolled in kindergarten were reported by their parents to be showing signs of emerging literacy skills. However, as reported by their parents, more HIPPY children than NHES children can recognize all the letters of the alphabet, count to 20, and write their first name even if some of the letters are backwards (see Figure 1). Most preschool children only pretend to read storybooks on their own, rather than actually reading the words. However, compared to children in the national sample, more than twice the proportion of HIPPY children are reading story books on their own.

Figure 1. Pre-Academic Skills of Children - Overall Samples



One interest of this study was learning more about the extent to which HIPPY children had developed pre-academic skills by the time they entered kindergarten compared to children in a national sample. A comparison of the skills of five-year old children in both studies suggests that a larger percentage of five-year old HIPPY children are able to recognize all letters of the alphabet, write their first name, and read or pretend to read storybooks on their own (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Pre-Academic Skills of Children Age 5

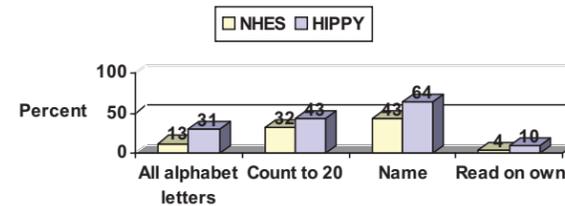


In order to perform more equitable comparisons that would eliminate the differential effects of income and parents' primary language, subgroups of children who were not enrolled in kindergarten were formed from both the NHES and HIPPY samples for the analyses of children's pre-academic skills: (1) children residing in low or middle income households, and (2) children whose primary language was English or Spanish.

Children Residing in Households with Annual Incomes Below \$25,000

As shown in Figure 3, HIPPY children from low income households are developing pre-academic skills in all child competency areas measured in this survey, as reported by their parents, and are doing so in larger proportions than NHES children.

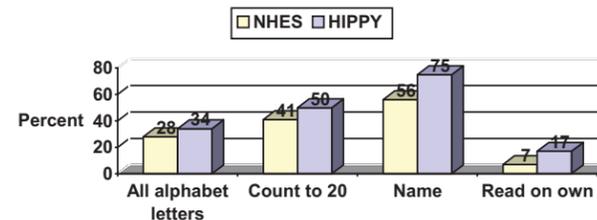
Figure 3. Pre-Academic Skills of Children - Parent Income Below \$25,000



Children Residing in Households with Annual Incomes Above \$25,000

There are also differences in pre-academic skills between children in HIPPY and NHES who reside in households with an average annual income greater than \$25,000. As shown in Figure 4, the greatest differences are seen in children's ability to write their first name and read or pretend to read on their own. More HIPPY children than NHES children also display emergent counting and letter recognition skills, according to their parents, though the differences between the two groups in these skill areas are not as great.

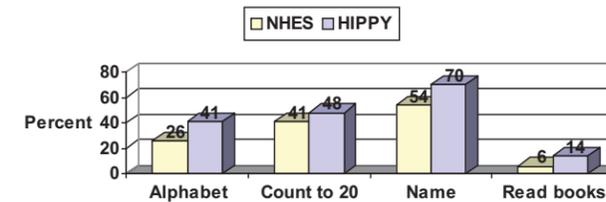
Figure 4. Pre-Academic Skills of Children - Parent Income Above \$25,000



English-Speaking Children

As shown in Figure 5, the greatest differences for English-speaking children are seen in their knowledge of alphabet letters and their ability to write their first name. More HIPPY children than NHES children also display emergent counting and reading skills, according to their parents, though the differences between the two groups in these skill areas are not as great.

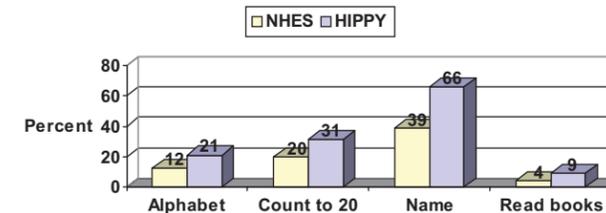
Figure 5. Pre-Academic Skills of Children - English-Speaking Children



Spanish-Speaking Children

In comparing the emerging academic skills of Spanish-speaking children, more HIPPY children than NHES children are developing skills across all skill areas, as reported by their parents (see Figure 6). The skill area in which HIPPY children show the greatest disparity over NHES children is in writing their first name, with substantial though lesser disparities in alphabet knowledge, counting, and emergent reading.

Figure 6. Pre-Academic Skills of Children - Spanish-Speaking Children



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.

Implications for Research & Practice

- HIPPY programs may want to consider developing HIPPY summer programs that offer parents opportunities to continue working with their children on additional learning activities.
- The next step for Florida HIPPY research is to collect data on the performance of these HIPPY children on Florida statewide school readiness tests and kindergarten school performance indicators. Further, gathering information on children's pre-academic skills prior to entering kindergarten by using a standardized instrument measuring children's pre-academic would eliminate the bias inherent in self-report data.

References

- West, J., Denton, K., Reaney, L. M. (2000). The Kindergarten Year: Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Kindergarten Class of 1998-99: Westat, Inc.
- Whitehurst, G.J. & Lonigan, C.J. (2000). Emergent Literacy: Development from Pre-readers to Readers. In S. Neuman & Dickinson (Eds), (2001). Handbook of Early Literacy Development: New York: Guilford.