



HOME INSTRUCTION PROGRAM FOR PRESCHOOL YOUNGSTERS

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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HOW HIPPY WORKS: A SUMMARY OF HIPPY EVALUATION RESEARCH

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Since the HIPPY program model was initiated at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel, evaluation has been an integral component of the program's development. The original longitudinal study followed HIPPY children through the tenth grade (Lombard, 1994). Since then, evaluations have been conducted in the Netherlands (Eldering & Vedder, 1992), Turkey (Kagitcibasi, 1987) and South Africa (Adams, Skuy & Fridjohn, 1992), with mixed results.

HIPPY USA remains committed to supporting research both to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program and to identify areas in need of improvement. The following summarizes some of the research reports that HIPPY USA has gathered over the years. The reports vary in their design, the rigor of their methodologies, and the degree to which they support estimations of program impact. Cumulatively, these studies point in a positive direction and demonstrate the potential benefit of the HIPPY program to children, parents and the entire community.

Arkansas Statewide Study. In 1999, a quasi-experimental study was conducted by Dr. Robert Bradley of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to determine what effects HIPPY had on students who had completed two full years of the program and who were enrolled in third and sixth grades. The sample consisted of 1,032 children: 516 HIPPY children and 516 matched comparison children, consisting of one group with a different preschool experience and one group with no preschool experience. Student outcomes were examined in five categories: (1) school attendance; (2) official actions (suspension, retention, and special education) taken by the school district that affected students' experience in school; (3) classroom grades; (4) standardized achievement test scores; and (5) student behavior.

In the area of (1) *school attendance*, there was no significant difference between the HIPPY children and the comparison group of children. In terms of (2) *official actions taken*, there was a significant difference between the proportion of children with no preschool experience who had been suspended (5.6%) and the HIPPY children who had been suspended (1.4%); there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of retention in grade or special education placement. When comparing (3) *final grades in three subject matter areas*, HIPPY children performed better than the other children in Reading and Language Arts. HIPPY children also performed better than other children with no preschool experience in Math, but the difference was not statistically significant. Although the differences in grade point averages were only modest between the HIPPY children and the other children, the effects persisted through both 3rd and 6th grades. These same differences in Reading, Language Arts and Math were also found in the (4) *achievement test scores*. Finally, when determining (5) *student behavior*, "overall academic performance" was one of the indicators where teachers rated HIPPY children superior to children with no preschool experience. The trend was the same when comparing HIPPY children with children who had a different preschool experience, but the difference was not quite statistically significant. Teachers also rated HIPPY children better adjusted than the other children. All of these differences persisted for both grade levels.

[Note: Periodic updates of this research summary will be available. For information on the studies included in this summary, please contact HIPPY USA at 212-532-7730.]

Texas Studies in 1998-1999 and 1999-2000. The 1998-1999 evaluation (Jacobson and Ramisetty-Mikler) looked at the effectiveness of HIPPY in four cities in Texas, by studying areas such as: parental involvement in the child's education, parent-child educational experiences, and child's school adaptability and functioning. The instruments used were the Parent Interview and the Kindergarten Teacher Survey, developed by the Center for Parent Education at the University of North Texas, by adapting instruments developed by the Center for Young Children and Families at Teachers College, Columbia University. The sample population included 353 parents and 94 teachers from 38 schools in Austin, Dallas, Denton, and Houston, reporting on 152 children. Most significantly, almost three-quarters of the parents (72.6%) reported observing their child frequently expressing interest in reading or looking at various books or signs, but only 61.9% reported that they "frequently" or "always" encouraged their child to read or look through books or any other printed matter. However, 88.5% of parents explained that they became more aware of the importance of reading by participating in the HIPPY program. According to the teachers, the children enrolled in HIPPY show evidence of expected personal and social development and are learning language, literacy, and math. While the children fared better in structured, concrete activities, they demonstrated less competence in areas of meaning, interpretation and self-initiated learning as compared to their classmates.

The 1999-2000 evaluation looked at the effectiveness of HIPPY in the same four cities, in the same areas and using the same instruments. This year, 45 parents were interviewed, and 27 teachers from 16 schools reported on 37 children. This study states that 70.9% of parents reported that their child expressed interest and enthusiasm "every day" to read or look at books and printed materials. There is no report on whether parents encouraged their children to read or look at books and printed materials for this program year. However, there were findings that 79.5% of parents urged their child to write, scribble, draw or paint "almost every day." For this year, the teachers rated over 60% of the HIPPY children, in comparison to other children in the class, as either "good" or "excellent" in classroom adaptability. However, the number of students reported on by teachers is quite small, and there is a question whether such a small sample can be generalized over a larger population.

U.S. Department of Education Study. The first major U.S. study, funded primarily by the U.S. Department of Education, was conducted by the NCJW's (National Council of Jewish Women) Center for the Child (Baker & Piotrkowski, 1996). The two-site, two-cohort longitudinal study of HIPPY examined the effects of HIPPY on children's school performance through the second grade. The design at each of the sites was different -- quasi-experimental in one site with nonrandomized comparison groups and experimental in the other with randomized controls. In one site, the HIPPY children were compared to children who had no preschool services whatsoever; in the other they were compared to children who, like the HIPPY children, had participated in a full-day, high quality prekindergarten program.

As they began their elementary school careers, HIPPY children in the first cohort outperformed those in the comparison groups on objective measures of school performance and teacher ratings of their motivation and adaptation to the classroom. HIPPY children had better attendance, scored higher on standardized achievement tests, and were perceived by their teachers as better students (Baker et. al. forthcoming). While these results were not replicated in the second cohort, the study concludes:

... that there were significant findings in both City A and B in Cohort I supports the hypothesis that participation in the HIPPY program improves children's [school] performance and competence.

Two-site Case Study. An in-depth case study, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, was designed to capture the daily realities of participating in the HIPPY program from both the staff's and the parents' perspectives (Baker et al, 1996). Its stated purpose was to inform decision-makers and program practitioners about four central issues: (1) How do communities take ownership of HIPPY? (2) What are the challenges for implementing HIPPY with families for whom English is a second language? (3) What shapes patterns of parental participation in HIPPY? and (4) What are the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessionals?

In addition to the detailed case study findings, the final report includes three more general chapters: a discussion of common programmatic issues and concerns (Halpern); a larger perspective on the extent to which these challenges are shared by other HIPPY programs nationally and the approaches HIPPY USA takes in addressing these issues (Westheimer), and a critical, outside review of the entire report that frames the issues in the context of the larger field of family support and early intervention programs (Powell).

Halpern's summary chapter states:

*The case studies provided anecdotal, but relatively consistent, evidence that participation in HIPPY has a variety of benefits **for at least some parents and families**, for most or all paraprofessionals, and less clearly (because it did not come up as much in interviews) for children.*

Pine Bluff Study. In Pine Bluff, Arkansas, HIPPY graduates in second grade were matched with non-HIPPY children in the same classrooms who had similar demographic characteristics. Half of the comparison children had no formal preschool experience, while the other half had attended a center-based preschool program prior to entering kindergarten (Bradley & Whiteside, 1995). This evaluation focused exclusively on student outcomes at the end of second grade.

This study indicates that children who participated in HIPPY earned better grades in school achievement tests, had higher math scores, and were rated by their teachers as displaying more age-appropriate classroom behavior than the comparison children who had no formal preschool experience. The findings did not reveal any difference for the above outcomes between the children who participated in HIPPY and those children who had a formal center-based preschool experience. Subject to the caveats detailed in the final report, the authors, from the University of Arkansas, concluded that "*these findings attest to the long-term efficacy of the program.*"

Rogers School Study. Another retrospective study using public school records was conducted in Rogers, Arkansas (Cates, 1995). HIPPY children were originally recruited from a pool of four-year olds who scored below a district-defined threshold on a school-administered test of language development. School personnel tested children from the same pool of HIPPY-eligible children again at kindergarten. Children who had participated in HIPPY earned significantly higher scores on this test of language and auditory skills than HIPPY-eligible children who did not participate in the program.

Brownswell Case Study. The benefits of HIPPY for paraprofessionals are supported by another, albeit much less rigorous, case study of one inner-city program that describes the program through the eyes of its paraprofessionals (Lovejoy & Westheimer, 1993). The study found that, through their work with HIPPY, the paraprofessionals gained increased understanding of the needs of the community, concrete ideas on how to act on those needs, and improved job skills, which prepared them for future employment.

Prairie County Study. For five consecutive years, from 1991 to 1996, Arkansas' Prairie County HIPPY staff used a developmental screening test to identify and select children most in need of the HIPPY program. The same screening was given after completion of the first year of the program and showed large gains for the HIPPY children. The performance of HIPPY children as they entered kindergarten was higher than school district staff would have expected from the population served by HIPPY.

Montgomery Study. In Montgomery, Alabama, HIPPY was evaluated by assessing children's readiness for kindergarten. Typically, a high proportion of children from the same socio-economic backgrounds as HIPPY children fail to pass the district's readiness test. However, 100% of HIPPY children passed. The district used these findings as justification for expanding the HIPPY program.

New Orleans Study. The New Orleans program evaluated HIPPY by tracking the progress of 375 HIPPY children through school, with the oldest children in seventh grade in 1994-95. Based on these public school records, HIPPY children were found to have good attendance, good social skills, low suspension rates, and average-to-good academic performance, compared to local expectations for children from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

In addition to tracking the performance of children, the program conducted informal interviews with teachers and surveyed parents each year. Teachers reported that HIPPY participants are more verbal than non-HIPPY participants, and parents commented regularly on how well their children were doing in school. A vast majority of HIPPY parents surveyed indicated that they would recommend HIPPY to other parents, that HIPPY had improved their communications with their child, that HIPPY helped them to feel more confident in their role as their child's first teacher, and that HIPPY improved their child's social skills. These findings, for both parents and children, were used to sustain existing funding for the New Orleans program and to support state legislation that enabled HIPPY to expand within Louisiana.

Conclusion

- A. HIPPY USA realizes that these studies provide a set of mixed results. However, we remain open to self-scrutiny and reflection and will continue our openness in reporting results.
- B. We are also aware that more research is needed to better understand the degree of impact HIPPY can have, for whom and under what circumstances. The following are HIPPY USA's current goals:
 - 1. A national research agenda that continues to address HIPPY's effectiveness, while also focusing on areas in need of improvement and change;
 - 2. Evaluation of local community variations in the implementation of the HIPPY program and specific adaptations to the HIPPY model;
 - 3. Guidance and support of local program evaluation, including establishing national performance indicators, developing and adapting evaluation tools, and assembling an Evaluations Guide to help clarify issues, such as terminology, processes and procedures.

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