At-a-Glance

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home visiting program for parents of three-, four-, and five-year-olds targeting school readiness and parent involvement. HIPPY Dallas ISD had a total budget of $2,610,439 for program year 2014-2015, including a general operating budget from Dallas ISD of $1,000,000, $1,060,700 from Title I funding, $100,000 from Title III funding, and $449,739 from external sources. The HIPPY program in Dallas began in 1988 and is the largest of 12 HIPPY programs in the state of Texas, serving 943 children and 877 parents in 2014-2015, with 764 children and 712 parents successfully completing the program year. The purpose of this report is to summarize implementation and outcomes for HIPPY participants.

Methodology

Implementation and Participants. HIPPY Dallas ISD program implementation information primarily came from an interview with the HIPPY Dallas ISD program manager. To summarize participant characteristics, frequency analyses were conducted using information from the Texas HIPPY Visit Tracker database.

Coordinator, Home Instructor, and Parent Perceptions. Interviews with coordinators (n = 8) and focus groups with home instructors (n = 8) and parents (n = 13) were conducted in April and May 2015.

School Readiness. To examine school readiness, the evaluator used outcomes from both the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA-3) and the BRIGANCE® Screens III (BRIGANCE). The BSRA-3 outcomes were used to compare pre-test/post-test raw and standard scores for HIPPY Dallas ISD participants (within-group). Comparisons were conducted using paired-sample t tests (statistical significance) and Cohen’s d\(^2\) effect sizes (practical significance). BRIGANCE outcomes were used to compare kindergarten students in Dallas ISD who were HIPPY Dallas ISD participants to a matched group of kindergarten students in the district who were not previously enrolled in HIPPY Dallas ISD (between-groups). The evaluator used Chi-square and Fisher’s exact statistics to test for group independence and phi and Cramer’s V statistics to determine practical significance.

Parent Involvement. First-year HIPPY parents completed the Parent Involvement Interview as a pre-test during the first two weeks and as a post-test during the last two weeks of the program year. Frequency analyses were conducted comparing pre-test and post-test averages.

Implementation and Participants

Figure 1 provides a brief overview of key HIPPY child and parent demographic characteristics. Of the 764 child participants, most were enrolled in the HIPPY Year 1 curriculum\(^3\) (58%), with 30 percent in HIPPY Year 2 and 12 percent in HIPPY Year 3. Most were Hispanic (78%), used the Spanish language curriculum (73%), and participated with a biological parent (80%). Most parent participants were married (68%), were Hispanic (77%), had one child enrolled in the program (93%), were not employed outside of the home (63%), and had an annual household income of less than $20,000 (54%).

Participation in HIPPY Dallas ISD expanded this year in accordance with a Dallas ISD initiative to increase early childhood services. Compared to 2013-14, the number of children served by HIPPY Dallas ISD increased by 64, and 103 additional students completed the 2014-15 program year.

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1 Portions of this report were adapted from McEnturff (2014).
2 Cohen’s d values of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 are considered small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Cohen, 1988).
3 Throughout this report, the term HIPPY Year 1’s refers to participants using the first year of the HIPPY curriculum, meant for children approximately age three. The same applies to HIPPY Year 2’s (for children approximately age 4) and Year 3’s (for children approximately age 5).
Coordinator, Home Instructor, and Parent Perceptions

Interviews and focus group results revealed positive perceptions of the program and constructive suggestions for improvement. All agreed that both child and parent participants benefitted from the program. The following additional group-specific themes emerged:

- Coordinators praised the supportive work environment and the strong organization and structure of the program. They expressed concern about recruitment, training, and retention of home instructors, particularly when hired after the program start date. They suggested more stringent hiring cutoff dates, ongoing training, reduced caseloads, and reduced paperwork for home instructors.

- Home instructors were positive and passionate, and they expressed tremendous satisfaction with respect to their role in HIPPY Dallas ISD. They offered a wealth of constructive feedback, particularly regarding training, paperwork requirements, and compensation. They suggested ongoing training and resources on processes and systems, reduced paperwork and data entry, and a pay structure review to help improve home instructor efficiency and retention.

- Parents voiced great satisfaction with the program and believed that both they and their children benefitted from their involvement. Parents agreed that they would like HIPPY services to expand to include additional meetings and older children. They suggested improving consistency among school administrators regarding HIPPY field trip attendance policies.

School Readiness

Both within-group and between-groups analyses showed a positive correlation between HIPPY Dallas ISD participation and improved school readiness.

BSRA-3. Raw scores on composite and all sub-tests statistically and practically increased from pre- to post-test for all curriculum years. HIPPY Year 1 raw scores were generally lower on the Spanish version than on the English version, but these gaps contracted for HIPPY Year 2’s and Year 3’s. As shown in Figure 2, both English and Spanish average standard scores for all curriculum years improved from pre-test to post-test, and both English and Spanish average scores for all curriculum years exceeded the school-ready threshold by the end of the program year. A majority of HIPPY Year 1’s (64% English; 53% Spanish), Year 2’s (77% English; 76% Spanish), and Year 3’s (93% English; 75% Spanish) were classified as ready for school.

BRIGANCE. More HIPPY than Non-HIPPY Dallas ISD kindergarten students exceeded the above average cutoff score on all subscales and exceeded the gifted cutoff on the total performance scale (HIPPY: n = 17; Non-HIPPY: n = 5). Although no statistically significant differences were found between subscale mean scores, HIPPY participation was statistically and practically related to higher scores in total performance. A statistically and practically higher percentage of HIPPY than Non-HIPPY kindergarten students met the age-appropriate range (thus indicating school-readiness) on the academic/cognitive development subscale, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Parent Involvement

HIPPY Dallas ISD participants achieved noted gains in parent involvement during their first year in the program.

Note: Standard score categorizations are established by the publisher (Bracken, 2002) as follows: Very Delayed (≤ 70), Delayed (71 to 85), Average (86 to 114), Advanced (115 to 125), and Very Advanced (≥ 130). The maximum standard score possible is 160. All pre/post improvements were statistically significant (p < .001) and practically significant, except for English Year 3’s.

Note: *Percentage of students at or above age-appropriate range on the Academic/Cognitive Development domain significantly and practically differed by HIPPY participation, p = 0.045, Φ = .13
Parent involvement as reported on the Parent Involvement Interview increased from pre-test to post-test in all activities. First, as shown in Figure 4, parents reported spending an average of almost five extra minutes per day reading to their children at post-test (18.2 minutes) than they did at pre-test (13.3 minutes). In addition, as illustrated in Figure 5, at least 84.6% of parents reported at post-test that they engaged in four literacy enhancement activities when they read to their children, with two of the activities approaching 100% participation. From pre- to post-test, these percentages increased from a range of 53.1 percent to 76.6 percent in the same activities at pre-test. Finally, parent involvement increased across the board on 23 additional parent-child activities from pre-test to post-test.

Recommendations

Take advantage of stable enrollment goals in the coming year to improve process efficiency and training. As HIPPY Dallas ISD enrollment has increased in the past few years, processes have had to scale in turn. Reports of inconsistent processes and inadequate training and resources were a main concern of staff members during interviews and focus groups. Paperwork and data entry processes should be reviewed for accuracy and consistency. As recommended by the 2014 HIPPY USA accreditation report and the 2013-14 HIPPY Dallas ISD program evaluation, data integrity could also be improved by considering allocation of specific staff members for data entry and/or file maintenance.

Implement incentives for increased family participation and commitment. All HIPPY Dallas ISD staff members noted that family retention was a challenge, and that resulting unstable family caseloads may contribute to home instructor attrition. Implementing strategies to encourage and positively reinforce family commitment to the program should be considered. Possibilities include ensuring communication of topics prior to group meetings and frequent public acknowledgement of parents and children who have met certain attendance/packet completion goals.

Improve the ability to link HIPPY and Dallas ISD data. HIPPY Dallas ISD staff members currently flag students in the Dallas ISD databases who have completed each program year. This flag provides little useful information about the participant, and many children may not be flagged because their names and/or birthdates are slightly different in each database. The Visit Tracker system houses a wealth of information on each participant, but a key is needed to accurately join the two record sets so that useful and accurate data files can be created to track former HIPPY students at Dallas ISD. A meeting should be conducted to discuss the processes and key data that should be used to improve the available data for short and long term future analyses involving HIPPY Dallas ISD participants.

References


The full 2014-15 HIPPY final evaluation report can be found at http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, contact Program Evaluation at 972-925-6457.