

Evaluation of the School Readiness of
Parent-Child Home Program Participants:
Abstract of the New York University Study of
Five Long Island School Districts

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The purpose of this study was to identify the effects, at kindergarten age, of The Parent Child Home Program upon children and their parents. With the assistance of school and Parent-Child Home Program staff in 5 Long Island school districts, New York University researchers collected data from 135 children and 117 parents. Children were assessed using a number of measures of early literacy and social competence, selected to focus particularly on the children's school readiness. Teachers were quite helpful in providing additional data about children's social competence in the classroom, their early literacy abilities, as well as ELP (NY State Early Literacy Profile) scores in the districts that use this measure. Additional information about family background and parents' participation in school-related activities was provided by parents.

Children who had participated in The Parent-Child Home Program were matched with randomly-selected children from their own classrooms who had not participated in the Program. Although the children for this comparison group came from the same communities and classrooms as The Parent-Child Home Program children, initial analyses revealed many differences between the comparison and intervention groups. Specifically, the comparison group (those who did not participate in The Parent-Child Home Program) parents were, on average, better educated and less likely to be Latino, and worked more hours per week. This is consistent with what would be expected in these communities, where the Program explicitly targets those most in need of early literacy services: families with limited education, limited exposure to English, and/or limited opportunities for cognitive stimulation. This information suggests that The Parent-Child Home Program is achieving its goal of reaching those in the community most in need of services.

Results indicate that despite the challenges of limited English proficiency, low parental education, immigrant status, and poverty, children who had been in The Parent-Child Home Program were performing similarly to their peers on a number of measures. The Parent-Child Home Program appears to be successfully bridging the achievement gap for these children, preparing them to enter school as ready to learn as their more advantaged peers. Specifically, Program graduates and their more advantaged peers were indistinguishable in the following areas:

- Teacher-reported measures of early literacy.
- Early Literacy Profile (ELP) scores (in districts which use this test).
- Social awareness (knowledge of name, birthday, and address).
- Two aspects of social competence as measured by teacher reports.

- A third aspect of social competence, inhibitory control, as measured by children's performance on a test of this skill (inhibitory control is the capacity to suppress a behavior when it is necessary to do so, despite an opposing desire. Not talking out of turn when one has something important to say is an example of exhibiting inhibitory control).
- Ability to understand the basics of a book (e.g., identify the author) as well as basic story comprehension.
- Ability to name colors and to count objects.

In addition, the parents of both these groups of children were indistinguishable in terms of their involvement in children's schooling. This is particularly important, since parental involvement in children's schooling is a predictor of later school success.

On only two measures administered was there a difference between the performance of the comparison group and the Program children. These differences were entirely explained by the children's primary language not being English. That is, children from families with limited English proficiency were more likely to perform poorly on certain tests of early literacy. Since Latino children are overrepresented in The Parent-Child Home Program sample, this group performed worse overall on these two measures.

The results of this study suggest that The Parent-Child Home Program is a highly effective program for preparing children for kindergarten, since it puts into place three key aspects of later school success, all of which are critical aspects of the federal "No Child Left Behind" initiative.

1. **Early literacy skills:** Teachers found that Parent-Child Home Program children and their more advantaged peers were indistinguishable in this area, which is an important basis for the development of later reading ability. Parent-Child Home Program children also performed at the same level as their classmates on the ELP in the districts where it was administered. In addition, Parent-Child Home Program children performed at the same level as their more advantaged classmates in terms of demonstrating knowledge of the purposes and conventions of books and basic story comprehension.
2. **Social competence skills:** Current research suggests that at early ages, social competence is a critical predictor of later academic and social success.
3. **Parental involvement:** As noted above, parental involvement in children's schooling is an important correlate of school success throughout children's school careers.