

HIPPY's Theory of Change
Narrative Description and Explanation of the Logic Model
July 2004

Introduction

Background and Mission of HIPPY

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home visitation program that focuses on parent involvement and school readiness. HIPPY is unique in that the services are offered directly to parents, who then work with their own three, four, and five year old children. HIPPY's mission is to help parents prepare their children for success in school and beyond, and to empower parents as their children's first teacher by giving them the tools, skills and confidence they need to work with their children in the home.

In the United States HIPPY operates as a network of local programs and state offices, coordinated and certified through HIPPY USA, the national office. There are currently 167 HIPPY sites in 26 states and Washington D.C.

HIPPY's Formal MISSION STATEMENT

HIPPY programs empower parents as primary educators of their children in the home and foster parent involvement in school and community life to maximize the chances of successful early school experiences.

HIPPY USA supports the development and operation of programs in communities across the United States through ongoing program development and technical assistance informed by research and public policy.

HIPPY's Guiding Theories (Theoretical Basis of HIPPY)

Given the growing awareness of a connection between early educational experiences and adult success in the social and economic spheres, the importance of early childhood education for children in disadvantaged families became a focal point of research and policy in the latter half of the twentieth century. Considerable research over the past several decades has established a strong link between home environment and school performance (Bertrand, McCain, Mustard, & Willms, 1999; Chao and Willms, 2000; Lillie 1975; Mantzicopoulos, 1997), and several studies have suggested the existence of preconditions that are favorable to school success, such as specific aspects of the home environment (Vernon-Feagans, Hammer, Miccio & Manlove, 2001; Wasik, Dobbins & Herrmann, 2001); the value of education in the home and expectations of parents (Fan & Chen, 1999); and verbal interaction patterns between parents and children (Hart and Risley 1995). Indeed, research on parent involvement has suggested that the involvement of parents in their children's educational activities in the home is an important predictor of school success (Bennett, Weigel, & Martin, 2002; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Ho and Willms, 1996; Parker, Boak, & Griffin, 1999; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Despite recognition of the importance of the home as an

educational setting, most programs that have been developed to address inequities in educational access and attainment have concentrated their efforts within the school system. HIPPY, however, is designed to target intervention within the family. HIPPY's focus on the parent also follows the growing research base on the importance of the primary caregiver during early childhood in stimulating early development of young children (Wagner, Spiker, Linn, Gerlach-Downie, & Hernandez, 2003).

Recognizing that barriers to early intervention within the homes of vulnerable families may include not only limited access and resources for educational materials but also limited parental awareness of the home as an educational setting and lack of self-efficacy among parents (Lombard, 1994), the HIPPY approach has two points of focus: 1) the strengthening of the parents' self-efficacy through the activities he or she does as "an educator in the family setting", and 2) the educational enrichment of the child through the provision of curriculum activities, books, and other educational materials (Lombard 1994, p 8). HIPPY addresses these areas through a structured home visitation model that includes the delivery of instructional materials with a cognitively based curriculum, role play as a teaching method for the parent, and a staffing plan that encourages community participation and growth.

HIPPY's approach to curricular design is based on programmed instruction. Early research in instructional technique has indicated that young children from disadvantaged families can achieve success with highly structured materials (Lombard, 1994). The HIPPY activities, therefore, are structured to "progress in simple, planned stages with the objective of providing children with a series of tasks that they can master easily as they advance to levels of increasing difficulty" (Lombard 1994, p 18). The content of the HIPPY curriculum responds to early childhood learning goals in seven domains: literacy, language development, physical and motor development, social/emotional development, mathematics, science, and creativity (Greene, 2003). Recognizing the range of functioning experienced by young children, learning activities emphasize the development of a series of concepts over a three year period; the curriculum is structured to progress by adding and expanding upon a child's emerging skills (Lombard, 1994; Greene, 2003). Lessons are scripted to facilitate use by novice "teachers" thus eliminating the need for the parent to make independent decisions about instruction technique or progress. Parents become more sensitive to their role as instructor over time as their children's mastery of the concepts grows.

The use of role play in the parent training element of the HIPPY program is grounded in experiential learning theory, which emphasizes interaction, doing, and reflection (Fenwick, 2003; Shields, Aaron, & Wall, 2001). According to experiential learning theory, the concrete experience afforded by role play provides the parent and home visitor the foundation and opportunity for discussion and reflection about the activity and learning process, through which abstract concepts and generalizations about learning and teaching are developed (Lombard 1994; Sala, 1986; Shields, Aaron, & Wall, 2001). In role play, learning occurs through modeling and through the dialogic reflection between the parent and home visitor. Role play promotes self-efficacy and confidence in a way unique among instructional techniques by requiring parents to take an active part in

the instructional process, either as the teacher or the learner. Additionally, role play is a desirable method of instruction because it can be easily mastered by individuals with limited formal education and literacy skills (Willis and Gueldenpfenning, 1981).

HIPPY's Target Population

HIPPY is intended for any parent who wants educational enrichment for his or her preschool aged child. HIPPY, however, was developed to support and foster the active involvement of parents who may lack the confidence and/or skills to “educate” their children due to their own negative educational experiences. These parents are often also low income, but socio-economic level is not always an indicator of the need for HIPPY. The HIPPY model was specifically designed to remove barriers to participation in early childhood programs caused by poverty, lack of education, or social isolation. Additionally, the model's approach to recruitment of home visitors and parents is designed to engage parents with children who are at greater risk of school failure because of poverty, parents' lower levels of education, and other risk factors.

HIPPY's Guiding Principles

HIPPY is built upon these guiding principles:

- 1) All parents want what is best for their children;
- 2) All young children can learn, though each child is unique in his/her rate of growth and development;
- 3) All children mature in the same developmental areas;
- 4) Early learning and development are multidimensional and the developmental domains are highly interrelated;
- 5) Parents are the primary and most important educators of their young children; and
- 6) Knowledge and understanding of child growth and development and age-appropriate materials and techniques are essential to maximize educational experiences for children and to support parents in their roles as their children's teachers. (Greene, 2003)

The HIPPY Method (Teaching Model)

HIPPY programs are staffed by home visitors drawn from the target population or community, who are supervised by a professional coordinator, with a background in an area such as early childhood or social work. The curriculum is delivered (and role play occurs) during home visits interspersed with bi-weekly group meetings. In the HIPPY teaching model, the home visitor meets with the parent to role play a lesson, then the parent completes the activity packets in the lesson with his or her child during daily 15-20 minute sessions. This method both fosters parent-child interaction and provides parents the experience of teaching their child themselves.

The HIPPY model includes the use of a unique and developmentally appropriate curriculum, with role play as the method of teaching the parent the skills needed to

implement the curriculum with their child. Each of the three HIPPY curricula (for ages three, four, and five) contains 30 weekly activity packets, nine storybooks for each year as well as a set of 20 manipulative shapes. The HIPPY curriculum provides experiences with skills, concepts, and shared book reading that together constitute 'school readiness' for young children (Lombard 1994; Greene 2003). Skills and concepts are developed and built on sequentially through completion of the weekly activities. In addition to the core HIPPY materials, HIPPY USA has developed enrichment materials to enhance the curriculum and provide additional learning opportunities for children.

Group meetings, interspersed with home visits, are an integral part of the HIPPY model. During group meetings, parents come together to learn as a community with a focus on topics relating to school involvement, community involvement, child learning, and personal development. Group meetings are considered an important element because they are a means for breaking the social isolation that may be experienced by people living in low income neighborhoods and an opportunity for parents to develop social networks and supportive relationships with other parents.

Each HIPPY program is supervised by a professional coordinator whose primary responsibilities are to recruit parents, hire and train home visitors, organize parent group meetings, track family progress, link families to other services, and ensure program sustainability. The coordinator and the home visitors meet weekly to role play the materials, to discuss the previous week's activities, and to share experiences and problems. Supervision of home visitors by coordinators occurs largely through these weekly meetings.

HIPPY home visitors are members of the participating communities and are also current or former parents in the program. The home visitors' knowledge of their unique communities facilitates the development of rapport and trusting relationships with families, and, by having used the HIPPY materials with their own children, home visitors identify with the challenges parents face. Because home visitors and parents speak the same language both literally and figuratively, they interact as peers.

The HIPPY Logic Model

The HIPPY Logic Model diagram presents a series of activities and the outcomes that are expected to occur for parents and children who are enrolled in the program for at least curriculum years 4 and 5, but preferably for all three years. The model progresses linearly, and presents a chain of events that may be read as a logical progression using "if... then" statements. However, as with most complex systems involving behavior change and skill development, the events and stages in the logic model are recursive and will experience feedback and possibly reversion before moving forward. Below is a narrative description of the stages in the HIPPY Logic Model describing the chain of events that links the activities of the HIPPY program to the final outcomes for children and parents who participate in the program.

HIPPY Activities

HIPPY USA has published a list of required and recommended program practices, which outlines the guidelines for operating programs. Programs seeking certification are assessed annually during on-site visits by HIPPY USA trainers. Once certification is obtained, programs are assessed every 3 years. HIPPY USA trainers use the comprehensive Self-Assessment and Validation Instrument (SAVI) to assess programs. The SAVI contains indicators for practices in the program areas of Home Visiting, Group Meetings, Role Playing, Curriculum, Staffing/Training/Supervision, Administration, Outreach and Collaboration, and Documentation.

Home visits are employed as the primary means of contact with participating families, and are conducted at least biweekly. Home visits last at least 30 minutes with the bulk of the time devoted to role play. The parent is the focus of the home visit, and home visitors are required to individualize the home visit to the family's language needs, including parent literacy level. During home visits, parent educators set the stage for parent instruction by helping parents set goals for themselves and their child. Home visitors also model teaching behavior for the parent and provide support and encouragement to the parent throughout the HIPPY year. Home visitors are trained in strategies for building rapport and trust with parents and begin each visit with a short period of conversation meant to build connection and engage parents.

The structured home visit activities include:

- Review the previous week's completed activity packet with the parent;
- Discuss the educational objectives of the current activities or review the Parent Skill Boxes (new home visitors);
- Share child development activities and concepts;
- Share activity related information discussed during the previous staff meeting;
- Role play the current activity packet with the parent;
- Provide the parent with other educational materials, extension activities or resources, if appropriate; and
- Inform the parent of program, school or community events.

In addition to home visits, programs are expected to hold group meetings on a biweekly basis during the program year. Group meetings must be held at a time and place convenient to parents, and parents select topics for group meetings.

During group meetings the following activities occur:

- Parents role play the weekly activity packet;
- Parents are presented with additional parenting information;
- Parents receive additional educational materials, information, and resources;
- Parents learn about school culture and organization; and
- Parents are exposed to a variety of topics that support their personal growth

The role play and instruction parents receive during home visits and group meetings are designed to encourage and support parents to complete the weekly activity

packets with their children. After role playing activity packets during home visits and group meetings, parents work with their children to complete the assigned activity packets. Parents are expected to spend approximately 15 minutes per day, five days per week working on the activity packets with their child. Parents may also complete the supplemental extension activities with their child if they choose to do so. Activity packets include explicit directions for parents to use in instructing their child. Role play models appropriate instructional and interactive behaviors and also assists parents with creating a learning environment conducive to positive interactive exchanges including establishing a work setting in the home and a routine and schedule for completing the activities. Through these activities, parents provide their children with developmentally appropriate pre-academic instruction.

Stage 1 Outcomes

Stage 1 outcomes are the changes in children and parents that are expected to occur during the time the family is enrolled in HIPPY.

In the course of reviewing and role playing the weekly activity packets with home visitors, parents gain knowledge in child development as well as a better understanding of age appropriate expectations for their child's development. They learn HIPPY teaching principles and techniques (repetition of words, positive correction, and appropriate encouragement) as well as skills for initiating, monitoring and directing educational activities with their child. Parents are encouraged to find new ways to become involved in their child's pre-academic learning and apply skill-building techniques learned in HIPPY to daily interactions with their HIPPY child and other children. Through participation in HIPPY it is also expected that parents will progressively improve their time management skills, become more responsive and responsible (as they are coached in the use and care of HIPPY materials) and thereby establish habits, routines and schedules for interacting with their child around educational activities.

At the same time that parents are increasing the time they spend on educational activities with their child, the HIPPY activity packets are increasing in complexity and length, thus providing further learning opportunities for HIPPY children. These educational opportunities and learning activities will foster children's development across domains and the acquisition of pre-academic skills.

HIPPY is designed so that parents develop more empathy for their child and gain a better appreciation of their child's skill level and progress. As parent and child complete the weekly packets, they will naturally spend more time in quality interactions, thereby increasing the bond, on-going communication, and the confidence levels and feelings of achievement for both parent and child.

Parents are instructed using developmental concepts and terminology. Therefore, they acquire knowledge of the professional language used by educators that allows them to be more effective communicators and advocates for their children with teachers, physicians and other professionals. Through HIPPY parents develop increased

understanding of their role in guiding their child's preschool instruction and their academic support role once the child is in school, leading to involvement in school activities.

A goal for parents attending group meetings with other parents from their community is an increased level of comfort participating in social interactions and group learning. As a result, parents often form new social networks and interact in a cooperative manner with other parents (e.g. joint outings, trading child care services etc.). Group meeting topics inform parents about parenting skills; community resources and events; and school events, personnel, policies, and procedures thus reinforcing information distributed by staff during home visits. This exposure translates over time into an increased connection between the parent and the child's school (once the child begins formal education) and between the parent and the community. With this foundation parents become active members of the home-school-community partnership, often volunteering within and advocating for schools and other organizations and activities (e.g. parent-teacher organization, classroom volunteer, holiday parties, little league etc.).

Stage 2 Outcomes

Stage 2 outcomes are the changes in children and parents that are expected to have occurred by the time the family has completed HIPPY 3, 4 and 5 curricula or HIPPY 4 and 5 curricula.

After completing a minimum of two years of HIPPY with their children, parents will have acquired skills and habits necessary to teach pre-academic skills to their children and to guide their educational experiences in the home and the community. Through the addition of the HIPPY materials and the new knowledge and skills learned by both parents and children, the general home literacy environment will also have improved, and the level of parent-child interaction will have increased. Through completing HIPPY activities with their parents, children will have acquired the pre-academic skills and knowledge in HIPPY's seven key learning domains that enable them to be successful in kindergarten. This should be reflected in successful performance on standardized tests of school readiness and academic progress.

Through the skills and information conveyed during the home visits and group meeting activities parents will have become comfortable as their children's teachers and will have the language, knowledge, experience and confidence to assume an active role as their child enters a formal academic environment. They establish a routine and conducive environment for homework and use their skills to effectively monitor and assist their child with homework. They advocate for their child and communicate regularly and successfully with their children's teachers. They attend school events, participate in school-based parent activities, and volunteer in their children's classrooms.

Stage 3 Outcomes

Stage 3 outcomes are the changes in the child and parent that are expected to occur after the family has completed HIPPY.

In the long term it is expected that the training and experiences parents receive through HIPPY and the resulting early educational experiences their children receive will result in sustained parent involvement in the school system and in assisting their children with homework, providing learning activities for their children at home and in the community, increased family involvement in local communities, stronger parent-child relationships, and long-term academic success for children.

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