



SELECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES IN CANADA

**Michael Leaf
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INTRODUCTION

The relation between poverty, compromised development and academic failure is well established in the research literature (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Hunt, 1961; Scarr-Salapatek, 1971). In Canada, where the level of child poverty is one in five, this relationship presents a problem of the gravest nature. The more recent work of UBC's Clyde Hertzman shows similar findings. In Grandview-Woodland, the neighborhood where the majority of Vancouver HIPPY program families live, the link between stressful socio-ecological conditions and child outcomes is painfully clear. Recent research conducted by Hertzman and his colleagues (2001) on all kindergarten children in Vancouver ($n = x$), indicates that Grandview-Woodland has the highest rate of children in the bottom ten percent for social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and physical health and well-being.

For close to four decades now, programs have been implemented based on the premise that early intervention for impoverished children can yield significant improvement in cognitive, academic and social outcomes. Despite their differences, the underlying logic of these intervention programs is essentially the same. Improving the early environment and experiences should enhance the child's development. In turn, the child should enter formal education with greater school readiness and an increased likelihood of success. Early school success should improve the chances of later success and eventually lead to higher-paying jobs and other social and cultural rewards (Campbell & Ramey, 1994). In other words, a primary aim of early intervention is to place children on a normative developmental trajectory so that they continue to show optimal development after the intervention ends.

The theory underlying the HIPPY program, the elements of the program, together with ongoing collection of research data support the claim that the HIPPY program does increase the children's readiness to succeed in school and their parent's ability and confidence in helping them achieve this outcome.

GOOD PRACTICE 01 – “HIPPY PROGRAMME, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters”

1. PROJECT PROFILE

1.1 Project Promoter(s)

NGO Britannia Community Centre¹
NGO National Council of Jewish Women

Partner:

Simon Fraser University



1.2 Project Name

HIPPY CANADA, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters

1.3 City(ies) where it has been implemented

In Canada it started in Vancouver, British Columbia; Victoria, BC; New Westminster, BC; Toronto, Ontario and Montreal, Quebec

1.4 Level

HIPPY International is based at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. It is the licensing agent for the HIPPY programs around the world and supports prospective sites in their initial investigation and implementation. Over the years, the HIPPY program has been replicated in different countries.

HIPPY Canada is active in different sites across the nation.

1.5 Period of implementation

Vancouver HIPPY Project began in 1998. The *Vancouver HIPPY Program* was launched in November 1999 as the first implementation of HIPPY in Canada.

1.6 Budget

The average program costs are approximately \$2, 500 CDN per family per year.

Initial and permanent founding source

HIPPY Canada Funders

- *HIPPY Canada* Board
- Human Resource Development Canada - National Literacy Secretariat
- Vancouver Foundation
- Simon Fraser University

Other founding sources achieved

- Government Grants
- Other Grants
- Site Fees
- Other Donations & In-kind
- Charitable Donations
- Aboriginal Research Fees
- Workshop Fees
- Interest & Other

¹ located in Vancouver's Eastside in the Grandview Wood lands neighborhood

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

2.1 Field(s) of intervention

The Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program is designed to maximize, through early intervention, the educational potential of young children at risk. The HIPPY program's goal is to ensure that children of low-income families are ready for kindergarten and that their parents play a key role in preparing them. The HIPPY program recognizes the power of the parent as primary educator – a child's first and best teacher. Through its Home Visitors, the program works collaboratively with parents to develop home instruction that will improve their children's linguistic, social and cognitive skills. Together they build a framework that enables the children to flourish. The strategy is simple: it works by helping parents help their children to succeed early in life.

2.2 Main objectives of the project

HIPPY Canada's goals are to deliver a home-based program designed for:

1. The enrichment of preschool children at risk; and
2. Increasing their parents' awareness of their own strengths and potential as home educators.

Objectives

- Improve the academic performance of HIPPY children in comparison to similarly situated students
- Support parents as the child's first educator and improve child/parent interaction
- Reduce social isolation and foster parent involvement in the community
- Provide jobs and training to parents who typically experience multiple employment barriers
- **Facilitate the active participation of multi-cultural families in Canadian society**
- Contribute to the development of strong, active communities

2.3 Target group(s)

The target are preschool children at risk and their parents.

The HIPPY program is designed to serve parents of three-, four-, and five-year olds who want educational enrichment for their children, including parents who may have a limited formal education.

2.4 Number of beneficiaries

During the first four years of implementation (1999-2003) the *HIPPY Canada* program has worked with 600 different families.

2.5 Summary of the Practice

Strategy

HIPPY provides a concrete and practical response for addressing the literacy needs of families that live on low incomes. The HIPPY program was developed in 1969 to address the lack of school-readiness in children considered at risk. Its design accepts that two major influences on young children are their families and their schools. The program combines these two primary influences – family and school - to provide a simple, flexible and easy to follow format that can prepare children at risk for the demands of the primary school classroom.

Activities

- Families apply to be part of the program. They are typically selected on the basis of need, which is determined by income.
- The family makes a two-year commitment (i.e. ages 3 or 4, and 5) to participate thirty weeks per year. The program runs concurrently with the school year.
- Home Visitors, who are parents in the program, are employed to work with ten to twelve families each.
- The Home Visitors call upon the family every second week, bringing a new set of materials – usually a storybook and a packet of instructional materials.
- The Home Visitor and parent spend about one hour reviewing the materials, using role-play. All of the instructional materials are prepared at a grade three reading level, and they are available in a number of languages.
- Utilize community outreach strategies for new immigrant and refugee families living in isolation.
- Select Home Visitors who are themselves members of the multicultural communities served by the program.
- Ensure the Home Visitor speaks the parent's first language.
- Connect immigrant and refugee parents with other parents and other immigrant and local communities.
- To link parents with other community resources and support systems.
- Every other week, the HIPPY program offers a group meeting at community centers or schools, with enrichment activities for parents.
- If the parent has low literacy skills, an older child or a friend can take part in the visit.
- Parents spend about 15 minutes each day doing activities with their child.
- Home Visitors are provided with weekly training sessions that better prepare them for their home-visiting work.

The versatility of the HIPPY program enables meaningful partnerships around the world with existing government and community-sponsored programs such as Head Start, Mother Goose, and Parents as Teachers. Joint delivery of these programs ensures that community resources are maximized to meet the complex needs of families living in poverty.

Expected Results

Children entering kindergarten will be better adapted to the classroom; will express more self-confidence in their abilities to succeed in school.

Parents will understand and engage in a variety of activities to promote the cognitive, physical, emotional, social and creative development of their children. They will act as advocates on behalf of their children in the school system.

Parents participate in children's extra-curricular activities and in the community. Five Parents from each community who are involved in the program will be employed as Home Visitors annually.

The Home Visitors will each receive a total of 100 hours of instruction per year. After two to three years, Home Visitors will be encouraged and supported to find other employment. Parents will understand and participate in the Canadian school system. They will have knowledge of, and access to, a variety of other community services and increased interaction with other parents in their cultural communities. Parents create a mutual support network through their involvement in the program.

Results

The elements of the program and the research data collected verify the assertion that the HIPPY program does increase children's readiness to succeed in school by developing the parents' ability and confidence to help their children achieve success. By focusing on the development of the parent, HIPPY not only positively affects early childhood development but has the potential to, and practice of, impacting parental change in regard to self-concept, literacy levels, community involvement, and employment opportunities.

Over the last decade hundreds of thousands of children around the world have benefited from their participation in the HIPPY program through better academic success and social adjustment in kindergarten. In turn, the impact on families, community organizations and the schools themselves totals in the millions.

Since its launch in November 1999, Hippy Canada has been constantly growing. Early in 2000, a coordinator and six paraprofessional Home Visitors representing five different cultural communities that live in the Grandview-Woodland area were hired as HIPPY staff. These women were known through their involvement in their own cultural communities, which included First Nations, African, Latin American, Vietnamese, and Near Eastern and Eastern European groups. Within weeks of being hired, the coordinator and Home Visitors had recruited families from 26 different nations (including 6 First Nations) to participate in the program.

HIPPY Canada completed four years of operation in Canada in June 2003. Over this time, the *HIPPY Canada* program has worked with 600 different families. Four HIPPY sites provided services to the community in 2002-2003 – Vancouver, Victoria, Halifax and Aboriginal Consortium. In these sites, 350 families started the HIPPY program, and 261 successfully completed the program. Families completed an average of 21 weeks of the 30 week program.

Home Visitors spent a total of 7,677 hours teaching parents to teach their children, and parents spent a total of 9,729 hours teaching their children. The sites spent 480 hours in group meetings.

The four sites combined hired a total of 23 Home Visitors and spent a total number 2,402 hours on training them. Training included both weekly Home Visitor training and additional training. Home Visitors received training in a wide range of subjects, such as child and health care, communication and computer and cultural-specific topics.

Each of the four sites created between 3,000 and 8,050 hours of employment each during 2002-2003.

3. STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES

3.1 Sustainability

HIPPY International, based at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is now in its 30th year. Over the years, the HIPPY program has been replicated in ten countries, currently operating in Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States. National early childhood programs based on the principles and programmatic approaches of the HIPPY program also exist in Turkey and the Netherlands. The programs operating in Chile and Mexico were closed as a result of changes in political leadership and priorities. Discussions are now taking place about the possibility of starting new programs in Ethiopia, France, Singapore and Zimbabwe

The cornerstone of the HIPPY program's success is its commitment to ensuring that all sites are initiated by the communities that they will serve. The HIPPY program has found

that programs that respond to a groundswell of community interest and stem from clearly identified needs are more likely to succeed over the long-term.

In all cases, however, there has proved to be a need for central coordination at a national level once a critical mass of sites (usually around five or six) has been established. In the Netherlands, the United States, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia administrators saw that it made good economic and administrative sense to implement a national body for the coordination of HIPPY program activities.

3.2 Actual and potential advantages of the practice

HIPPY Canada has established a national development plan that will provide coordination and support to existing and prospective sites across the nation. The experience of other HIPPY national programs, such as that in the United States, suggests that after factoring in differences in population size it would be safe to predict the start-up of 50 additional sites over the next five years. A program of this magnitude would contribute substantially towards the Early Childhood Agenda by reaching 10,000 children who would otherwise be at risk of failing in school, and preparing them to succeed.

The *HIPPY Canada* secretariat plays a pivotal role in the orchestration of the national plan by providing critical quality control in the development and maintenance of HIPPY program sites. The secretariat also yields economic benefits by centralizing many support functions. It ensures:

- the appropriateness of the materials given the diversity of Canadians;
- the suitability of the material for translation into French;
- the development and distribution of materials;
- the development and delivery of training and training materials;
- site accountability and evaluation;
- long-term sustainability of *HIPPY Canada*.

The secretariat also ensures that the HIPPY program is placed on government and voluntary sector early childhood agendas and assists in national fundraising strategies. The *HIPPY Canada* office is currently housed at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver.

3.3 Risks and negative impacts

The risks or negative impacts of the program could be to start the program with out the right possible funding sources in which case it could lead to the program stop. Another risk is starting the project without a wide network of support (non profit organizations, government and academic institutions) that is essential to identify the needs of the community and organize it. Finally, an inaccurate choice of coordinators and home visitors could lead to a loss of motivation and continuity of the parents' participation, this increasing the risk of quitting the program.

4. POTENTIAL REPLICABILITY IN CITIES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

4.1 Conditions and prerequisites

One basic thing necessary to implement the HIPPY program is the support of volunteer organizations, groups and individuals, especially for the initial stages.

Volunteer organizations, can support the HIPPY program in a variety of ways depending on local needs and interests. Volunteers often become involved with the HIPPY program during the initial stages of implementation, frequently serving as catalysts for bringing

HIPPY to their communities. Volunteers assist with enrichment activities such as field trips, group meeting activities, graduation ceremonies, and childcare. Volunteers also help make invaluable program connections: they serve on advisory boards and help with advocacy, fund raising and public relations

Another basic condition would be to fund raise since the beginning of the design of the program to pay one person or a group of persons that could do the design, networks and lobbying with the local authorities to push the program. Isolated efforts could end with the program.

Each program has one full-time professional coordinator who is responsible for all aspects of the program. This includes recruitment, training and supervision of Home Visitors. Home Visitors, who are themselves parents in the program, conduct the home visits. They work part-time with 10–15 families. Becoming a Home Visitor is often a first job and a step out of dependency.

The coordinator or group formed since the foundation of the program will need to:

- Learn about the program
- Mobilize Community Support
- Determine Community Needs And Resources
- Establish Program Requirements
- Create A Budget

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LINKS

www.hippycanada.ca