

## **The Parent-Child Home Program**

**THE MISSION STATEMENT:** "The Parent-Child Home Program, a research-proven home visiting model, prepares young children for school success by increasing language and literary skills, enhancing social-emotional development, and strengthening the parent-child relationship."

([www.parent-child.org/](http://www.parent-child.org/))

The Mother-Child Home Program (MCHP) was created in 1965 and based on the premise that enhancing the interactions between low SES parents and children would improve intellectual, cognitive, and socioemotional development/achievement of the kids. Many early, short-term studies show that MCHP kids are academically "superior to similarly disadvantaged control and comparison children" (Levenstein, Levenstein, Shiminski, Stolzberg, 1998, p.269).

The Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) was created in 1970 and is an exact replication of MCHP except for two word changes: Replacing the title word "Mother" with "Parent" and replacing the phrase "toy demonstrator" with "teaching demonstrator" (Levenstein et al., 1998, p.272). For the purposes of this paper I will discuss and report on the results of studies which used either program.

### **Who is Eligible for PCHP?**

The parents must have low education (high school diploma or less), low occupational status, low income, and be non-homeowners (must be renting/leasing). The children that are served are ages 2 to 3 (Levenstein et al., 1998).

### **Characteristics of the Parent-Child Home Program**

Over the course of the 2 year program, Teaching Demonstrators visit the home 46 times and conduct half hour sessions in which they model positive interaction for the parents with the child and the toy or book. (Levenstein et. al, 1998). A new toy or book is brought and given to the family each home session.

Counseling or explicitly teaching parents how to interact with their child is not the goal of the Teaching Demonstrator. Rather they demonstrate positive verbal interactions/responses like shared book reading ("**lap-time**"), or pointing out colors, shapes, sizes and numbers with the child and encourage the parent(s) to join in.

The Parent-Child Home Program is based on research like Hart and Risley's (1995), which shows that the amount of verbal interaction between a parent and a 10-36 month-old child is positively correlated with the child's cognitive development at age eight. In other words, the more time a parent spends talking, reading, and playing with their infant/toddler, the "smarter" and more capable of learning new vocabulary the child will be in early elementary school. This is important because word recognition is key in gaining the ability to understand the meaning of texts in early formal reading instruction and keep children motivated to learn to read (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

### **Studies and Research on the Outcomes of PCHP children**

♦ Long-term Impact of a Verbal Interaction Program for At-Risk Toddlers: An Exploratory Study of High School Outcomes in a Replication of the Mother-Child Home Program.

By Levenstein, Levenstein, Shiminski, & Stolzberg (1998)

The Goal: To determine if the PCHP has lasting results on academic performance by comparing high school graduation rates and dropout rates for PCHP participants and control group participants.

Participants: 117 at-risk toddlers (living in poverty) who had been randomly assigned to the PCHP or to the control group back in 1979 and 1980 and who were/had completed their schooling in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. 104 were PCHP children and only 13 were random control group children.

At the start of the original study, all the toddlers had relatively the same IQ scores based on their performance on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, so the two groups are comparable. This follow-up study began in June of 1996 when many of the children who had been in the PCHP were approximately 17-20 years of age.

Results:

Program Exposure	% that GRADUATED from high school	% that DROPPED OUT of high school
PCHP 2 full years	84.1 %	15.7%
PCHP 1 year only	68%	28.6%
Control - No PCHP	40%	53.9%

\*\*\*6 teens were still in high school working towards graduation in June of 1996 which is why the percentages do not add up to 100%.

Conclusions: So it seems that children who are living in poverty have better chances of graduating from high school if they participate in an exact replication of the Mother-Child Home Program or the Parent-Child Home Program. Even only completing half of the program still shows better chances of high school graduation than not participating in a verbal-interaction program.

Limitations of this follow-up study: Despite the fact that the children who completed the full two years of the Parent-Child Home Program showed much greater rates of graduation (and much lower rates of dropping out) than both 1-year participants and control group children, this result should be regarded with caution because Levenstein et al. (1998) had a very small control group to work with. Only 13 children comprised the control group, while 104 children had some of interaction with PCHP. There is a possibility that if the experimental groups and the control group had been equal we would not have seen such large differences in graduation and drop-out rates between them. So we can also conclude from this study that more longitudinal research is needed to really know for sure if the benefits of the Parent-Child Home Program are lasting.