Low Cost Strategies to Predict and Increase School Parent Involvement: The Benefit of a Needs Assessment

William Carlson, B.S., Momoko Hayakawa, Ph.D., Arthur Reynolds, Ph.D.
University of Minnesota

Introduction

• Research indicates that early school parent involvement (PI) positively affects children's adjustment to school, as well as their academic and social trajectories (Hayakawa, Englund, Warner-Richter & Reynolds, 2013; Hill & Taylor, 2010; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999).

• Williams & Sanchez (2013) identified the primary barriers for parent involvement of inner-city parents as time poverty, lack of access, lack of financial resources and lack of awareness.

• While there is a breadth of evidence supporting the social and academic benefits of improving PI, there is a paucity of research regarding cost-effective methods for predicting and improving it.

• Given the importance of early parent involvement and a strong family-school connection, the program proposed methods for predicting and increasing parent involvement and identifying families at risk for low participation.

Methods

• The Midwest Child-Paren Center Preschool-3rd grade (MCPC) intervention program is an evidence-based early childhood intervention program targeting school-based intervention for high risk multi-cultural communities in three Midwestern states.

Participants

• 991 preschool children from urban, economically disadvantaged communities attending an MCPC preschool in Chicago during the 2012-2013 school year whose parent’s completed a parent survey (57% of the total program cohort).

• 88% free or reduces price lunch, 62% female, 59% African American, 39% Latino, 40% single parent caregiver, 80% MCPC participants.

Discussion

• A needs assessment tool effectively identified families whose children are at risk for not receiving the benefits of early school parent involvement and thus are in need of additional support.

• Administering a parent survey and needs assessment targeting PI that includes information like time availability, and specific areas of interest eliminate the major barriers to PI of inner-city parents outlined by Williams and Sanchez (2013).

• Surveying intent for PI activity attendance at the beginning of the academic year appropriately informs program tailoring and accurately identifies those most at risk of family non-participation.

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For more about the Child-Paren Center P-3 program, please visit cpcp3.org

Contact Will Carlson with questions: carl2871@umn.edu