

Plenary 2: *Building on Strengths and Aligning Programs for Children and Families*

Wednesday, April 17, 2019

1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. | *Constitution CDE*

1. Descriptive Information

Plenary 2: *Building on Strengths and Aligning Programs for Children and Families*

Since its inception, Head Start has been considered a “two-generation” program, providing children with enriched learning environments and helping families to access the services that will enable them to support their children’s development (e.g., parenting education, social services, health and mental health services). Yet, there has been little empirical evidence to guide programs’ decisions regarding the specific approaches and implementation supports that are most likely to result in improved parental well-being and, ultimately, positive child outcomes.

In 2013, four Head Start-University Partnership grantees investigated innovative approaches to promoting both family well-being (e.g., parent mental health, family economic security) and children’s school readiness in Head Start programs. Researchers from the University of Alabama, Northwestern University, and University of Southern California will present strategies used to align and coordinate child and parent programming in Head Start, share key lessons learned from the implementation of these strategies, and present preliminary findings among program participants from their longitudinal experiments. These will include measures of parent psychological well-being and English language acquisition and children’s cognitive and socio-emotional development.

Facilitators

Kathleen Dwyer, OPRE/ACF

Presenters

Teresa Eckrich Sommer,
Northwestern University | *Head Start, Two-Generation ESL Services, and Parent Engagement*

Ansley Gilpin, University of Alabama
| *Power PATH: Aligned Two-Generation Intervention for Head Start Children and Families*

Ferol E. Mennen and Abigail Palmer Molina, University of Southern California | *Healthy Moms Healthy Kids: Reducing Maternal Depression for Better Outcomes in Head Start Children*

Discussant

Marjorie Sims, Ascend at the Aspen Institute

Scribe

Katie Caldwell, ICF

2. Documents Available on Website

- Power PATH: Aligned two-generation intervention for Head Start children and families
- A Two-Generation Approach to Supporting Immigrant Families
- Healthy Moms Healthy Kids: Reducing Maternal Depression for Better Outcomes in Head Start Children

3. Brief Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1: Kathleen Dwyer**
 - This plenary will focus on approaches to aligning programs for children and families, to promote both family well-being and children’s school readiness
 - Since its beginning, Head Start has been considered a “two-generation” or “whole-family” program. It provides children with enriched learning environments, and it helps families access the services that will enable them to support their children’s development, such as parenting education, social services, health and mental health services.
 - All Head Start programs must implement developmentally appropriate research-based early childhood curricula; and all Head Start programs must implement a family partnership process that includes a family partnership agreement and activities to support family well-being, including family safety, health, and economic stability.

- Yet, there has been little empirical evidence to guide programs' decisions regarding the *specific approaches* and *implementation supports* that are most likely to result in improved parental well-being and positive child outcomes.
- In 2013, OPRE awarded four Head Start-University Partnership grants to researchers, working in partnership with Head Start programs, to test innovative approaches to promoting both family well-being and children's school readiness, within the context of Head Start programs.
- [Presenter and discussant introductions]

- **Summary of Presentation #2: Teresa Eckrich Sommer**

- Two generation program with immigrant families at CAP Tulsa in Oklahoma
- Children who are Dual Language Learners (DLL) score lower in reading than English speaking peers
- Head Start serves 300,000 DLL children annually,
 - 97% of these children are Spanish speakers
- CAP Tulsa developed an ESL program for parents with children in Head Start
- Community based ESL programs are often open enrollment with few attenders
- Two-Gen approach to ESL- family centered program and the coordinated class schedules with Head Start and additional child care and financial support
- CAP Tulsa, explicit Two-Generation mission
 - First sought to address known barriers
 - Coordinated parent and child schedules
 - Small classes only for Head Start parents
 - Tailored curriculum to help parents engage in their child's schooling which was their first priority
 - Parents are supported in interactive reading with their children
 - Greater intensity, 4 times a week with 11 hours of instruction
- Experimental mixed methods study, longitudinal study of 300 people for 3 years
 - 3 ESL cohorts
 - 97% Hispanic attenders: 84% born in Mexico, 94% mothers or two parent households, low income
- Outcomes:
 - 83% completed first semester, 70% completed second semester
 - High attendance
 - English language skills were advanced to high intermediate level for beginners Bidirectional learning: parents were encouraged to read to their children
 - Improved confidence in skills and self efficacy
- Holds promise but jury is still out on final results especially for children

- **Summary of Presentation #3: Ansley Gilpin**

- Power PATH program
- Partnership with Head Start in Alabama, focused on 8 counties in western Alabama
- PATHS preschool social emotional classroom curriculum aligned with Coping Power that was adapted to normal functioning parents with children in Head Start
 - Child and parent curriculums were aligned to cover similar topics
- 540 head Start preschoolers (aged 4-5)
- 60 classrooms from 14 head start centers, urban to rural settings
- Randomly assigned to Power PATH vs Head Start as usual
- Parents: mean age of 30, 90% birth mothers, 63% single
- Implementation data:
 - All rooms implemented the full PATHS program
 - Head Start center staff co-lead the parent component with grant staff
 - 44% average attendance for parents
- Preliminary Outcome Data:
 - 4 timepoints were measured

- When evaluating executive function, children who began the program with high executive control to begin were doing very well at T4, those with low control at the beginning had improved their executive function skills but still were behind peers who began the program higher functioning
 - Implementation of the Power PATH intervention is feasible, seeing moderation in treatment, important to continue to look at aligned programming
- **Summary of Presentation #4: Ferol E. Mennen, Abigail Palmer Molina**
 - Mixed methods study; saw that mother's depression slowed child's treatment progress
 - Theory of change: Children will change as the mothers depression improves
 - Treatment was interpersonal psychotherapy group
 - 3 groups: intervention, control, and comparison group with no depression
 - Primarily Latina and monolingual Spanish, low levels of education
 - Used the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS)
 - Found that at baseline maternal depression related to child behavior problems but not executive functioning and school functioning
 - Treatment effects:
 - Treatment group depression decreased much more than control
 - Interpersonal psychotherapy significantly reduced maternal depression and parenting stress
 - The treatment was found to not have an effect on child behavior
 - Preliminary qualitative results:
 - Interviewed 13 mothers who participated
 - Mother's reported that the group helped them achieve personal goals
 - Mutual support creates change
 - Improving parent-child relationship
 - Where we go from here:
 - Thrilled to see that the treatment helped mother's depression but seeking to understand why the treatment didn't help the children more
- **Summary of Presentation #5: Marjorie Sims**
 - All research was grounded in the principles of:
 - Valuing culture
 - Meeting families where they are
 - Embracing the idea of social capital
 - Ms. Sims offered some questions to consider when thinking about the three presentations:
 - Why were the attendance rates so high at CAP Tulsa?
 - Mutual motivation and how does it work in real time for the programs?
 - Power PATH- strong logic model was developed and what can be learned and shared with other programs from that experience?
 - Many participants in Power PATH had high school diplomas and some college but still had difficulty finding opportunities. What are the economic conditions in Alabama that made this so?
 - If programs are seeking to serve parents and children simultaneously, the end goal should be for programs to be uplifting the family economically.
 - Head Start has a notion of being a two-generation program but it is primarily thought of as a child program. It would be beneficial to explore how to change the narrative around this and add the economic uplift as a strong component.

4. Brief Summary of Discussion

- Can you say more about the attendance at the CAP Tulsa program?
 - Combination of elements- bundled package of services, lots of commonality that evokes bonding between families, participants are given incentives such as gas cards, the aligned programs, meeting parents where they are and addressing what they want- to advocate for their children
- For each site, where would you say the field is on the two-generation approach?
 - California- have to get family service workers really believing they are serving the whole family not just the children, screening for depression was very difficult because many of the front line workers at Head Start were not comfortable engaging the parents
 - Tulsa- this program is still evolving and developing and looking to scale up, but the CareerAdvance program at CAP Tulsa is paired with Head Start as well and has great impacts, the career training does not interfere with children's benefits from Head Start
 - Alabama -social capital drove the parent groups, centers that did better had really strong leadership and community
- Were approaches for fathers (not just mothers) considered?
 - CAP Tulsa worked really hard to draw fathers in and it was very hard to get father attendance
 - Alabama- same issue, did have some fathers but it is more difficult to draw fathers in
 - California- mothers were our target population in our study
 - Dwyer- We found in a recent scan of two-generation approaches that many of the current programs that combine education/employment for parents and child development programming for children target single mothers

5. Summary of Key Issues Raised

- Some of the keys to success in the Head Start collaborations were meeting parents where they were, encouraging social capital and mutual support.
- Attendance rates at CAP Tulsa were impacted by creating a service for parents that specifically addressed a need they had related to their children; wanting to better engage in parent teacher conferences and advocate for their children at school.
- The alignment of programs for parents and children is key in creating successful outcomes for both and the family as a whole. Creating a worthwhile parent component to Head Start can positively impact the whole family.