

SMART START PILOT GRANTS

The Incredible Years BASIC Parent Training

Final 2009 Evaluation Report

Iheoma Iruka, FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-Chapel Hill

Kelly Maxwell, FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-Chapel Hill

Joy Sotolongo, The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc.



Overview of Smart Start Pilot Grant Program

The Smart Start Pilot Grant Program targets critical issues facing young children and their families. With limited resources, Smart Start adopted a strategic, high-impact approach by piloting evidence-based programs in a diverse range of communities across the state. To be selected, programs needed to: (1) be innovative, (2) produce clearly defined child or family outcomes, and (3) have the potential to become a statewide model.

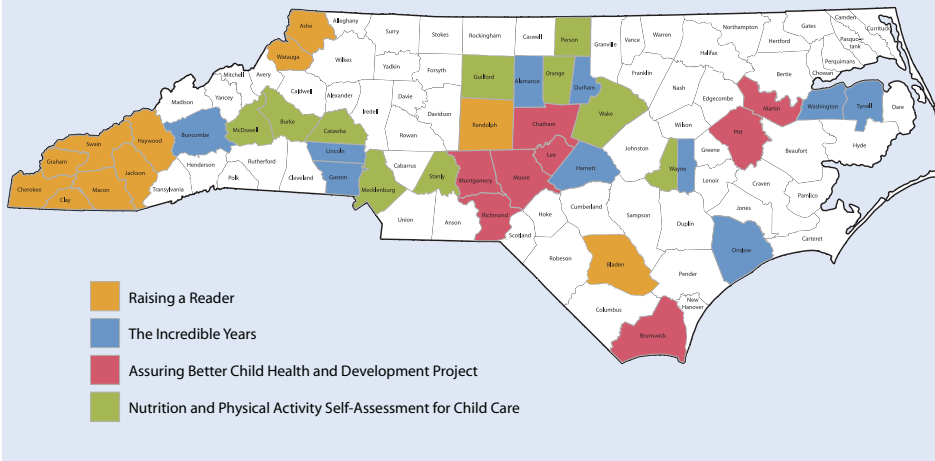
Table 1. Critical Issues and Pilot Programs

Critical Early Childhood Issue	Smart Start Pilot Grant Program
Childhood obesity	Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC)
Identification of children with developmental delays or concerns	Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD)
Improve children's pre-reading skills	Raising a Reader (RAR)
Increase parenting skills that address children's challenging behaviors	The Incredible Years BASIC Parent Training Program—Early Childhood (IY)

As of June 2009, 26 pilot grant programs finished implementation of



Figure 1. Counties Receiving 2007–2009 Grants



these evidence-based programs in 38 counties (Figure 1).

Description of the Incredible Years Program

Learning to interact well with others and control behavior are developmental milestones for young children and key factors related to school readiness. Unfortunately, rather than help children develop these skills, many early childhood programs simply expel children with challenging behaviors. In North Carolina, an estimated 13 of every

Table 2. Location of Incredible Years Groups

County	Number of Families
Alamance	27
Buncombe	21
Durham	22
Harnett	23
Lincoln/Gaston	6
Onslow	8
Washington/Tyrrell	7
Wayne	45
TOTAL	159

1,000 children enrolled in pre-kindergarten are expelled.¹ These behaviors continue on into the K-12 system, where 216 of every 1,000 children are suspended.²

To help young children develop these critical social and behavioral skills, Smart Start implemented the Incredible Years program. The Incredible Years is an evidence-based program that reduces children’s aggression and behavioral problems in early childhood classrooms and at home.³ The program provides 14 weeks of group training for parents, with an emphasis on positive parenting strategies that promote children’s social skills.

The Incredible Years program seeks to: (1) increase the number of children demonstrating social competence, and (2) increase the number of parents using positive parenting strategies, such as effective limit-setting.

Participants

Multiple parents or caregivers (such as grandparents) could participate in The Incredible Years. Between January 2008 and June 2009, 212 individual parents or caregivers completed the program. However, evaluation forms were completed by one parent or caregiver for each child, and 159 parents of children between the ages of 2 and 5 years in 10 counties completed pre- and post-intervention surveys for this evaluation.

1. Foundation for Child Development. (2005). *Preschools left behind: Expulsion rates in state pre-kindergarten systems*.
 2. Action for Children NC. (2007). *Short-term suspensions; long-term consequences; real life solutions*.
 3. Webster-Stratton, C. (1998). Preventing conduct problems in Head Start children: Strengthening parenting competencies. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 66(5), 715-730.

The Incredible Years reached families whose children are at risk for school difficulties. Nearly half (46%) of children lived in homes where the family income is less than \$30,000 per year. About a third (32%) of participating parents reported an education level of high school or less. Compared to the statewide population, more families of non-White children participated in the Incredible Years intervention (29% in NC vs. 45% in IY).

Measures

Parents completed two surveys before and after participating in the Incredible Years program. The first survey, the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI)⁴, measures children’s behavioral and social competence. The second, the Parent Practices Interview (PPI)⁵, assesses parenting practices related to managing a child’s behavior. Parenting practices assessed with the PPI are: harsh discipline, inconsistent discipline, appropriate discipline, positive discipline, positive parenting, and clear expectations.

Findings

Child Behavior

There was a significant decrease in the frequency of children’s problem behaviors, as reported by parents on the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory, after participation in the Incredible Years (Figure 3).

Parenting Skills (PPI)

- Parents reported a significant increase in their use of *Appropriate Discipline*, such as using time out (Figure 4).
- Parents reported a significant increase in their use of *Positive Parenting*, such as praising or complimenting the child or providing extra privileges for doing a good job.
- Parents reported a significant increase in their use of *Clear Expectations*, such as communicating clear rules or expectations about bed time, chores, or fighting.
- However, parents did not report a significant decrease in their use of *Harsh Discipline* (e.g., scolding) or *Inconsistent Discipline* (e.g., following through with discipline).

Figure 2. Ethnicity of Children Who Participated in the Incredible Years Pilot Grant Program

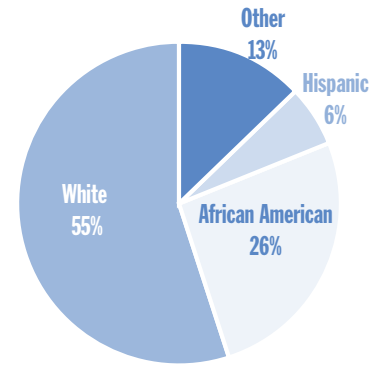


Figure 3. Percent of Parents Reporting Above Normal Challenging Behaviors for their Children

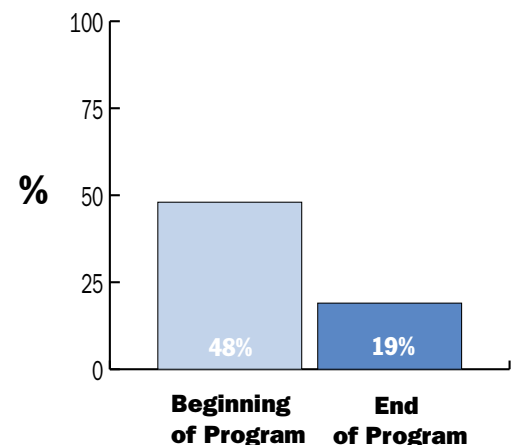


Figure 4. PPI Assessments of Improved Parenting Skills

PPI Outcomes	Mean Pre-test	Mean Post-test
Appropriate Discipline	4.3	4.8
Positive Parenting	4.7	5.4
Clear Expectations	5.2	5.8

Scores can range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating more positive parenting.

4. Eyberg, S., & Pincus, D. (1999). *Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory & Sutter-Eyberg Student Behavior Inventory-Revised: Professional Manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

5. Webster-Stratton, C. (1998). Preventing conduct problems in Head Start children: Strengthening parenting competencies. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 66, 715–730.

Success Story

When his wife signed up for the Incredible Years program in Durham, a father had little choice but to attend. He made his skepticism obvious from the first class, when he questioned the value of beginning with the topic of playing with your child. He wanted to know when the group was going to get to the “important stuff” like use of consequences. Fortunately, despite doubting the approach, he paid attention and acted on what he was learning. Over the next ten weeks, he saw a significant change in his son’s behavior and most importantly recognized the need to make changes in himself as well. By the time the class got to what he deemed the “important stuff,” he found that he hardly needed to use these tools because of the other changes he had already made. Now, this dad is a spokesperson for the program. He has shared his successes and play journals with families. And he endorses the importance of beginning with play, one of the Incredible Years key lessons for parents. Positive attention from caring adults goes a long way in preventing negative behaviors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results from this evaluation suggest that families who participated in the Incredible Years program reported significant improvements in their parenting skills as well as significant reductions in their young child’s problem behaviors.

Incredible Years is a promising program; thus Smart Start may want to expand the implementation of Incredible Years and conduct a more intensive evaluation to compare the changes in families who participate in the Incredible Years program to those who do not.

Smart Start thanks the Duke Energy Foundation for investing in the Incredible Years program.

For more information about the Smart Start Pilot Grant Program, contact Tracy Zimmerman (919) 821-7999 | tzimmerman@ncsmartstart.org

