

Summary of Follow-up Research on: **Children Who Graduated ALMAYA Early Childhood** **Programs in Beersheva**

Research Population:

This research took place in 1999. 68 children in compulsory kindergartens in Beersheva were interviewed.

- ☒ 24 children were graduates of the Home Visiting Program (HVP)
- ☒ 13 children were graduates of the Parent Cooperative Preschool (PCP)

The families of both of these groups of children are of low socio-economic status. They were recommended to the programs by the local welfare authorities.

The other 31 children were composed of three, almost equal, groups:

1. Children of Ethiopian origin, whose parents are veterans in Israel, ten or more years, educated (university students or holding a BA degree) and live in comparatively strong neighborhoods.
2. Non-Ethiopian children in the kindergarten.
3. Children of Ethiopian origin whose socio-economic status is equal to those families and children that participated in the HVP or PCP programs (i.e. low).

Process:

The children in the sample all completed an individual achievement test. The test was devised together with the National Training, Educational Resource and Dissemination Center of ALMAYA.

Each of the kindergarten teachers reported on the individual child and his/her parents.

Individual Tests

The test checked skills and abilities required of children in kindergarten. The following elements were incorporated into the test:

- ☒ **Relationship:** the child was asked to put two objects in relation to each other (near, above, behind, between and so on)
- ☒ **Colors:** simple tasks requiring color identification (for example: "Please bring me the blue ball.")
- ☒ **Slow-Fast:** the child was asked to repeat several requests faster and slower
- ☒ **Counting:** free counting
- ☒ **Numbering:** to count and assign a number to a group of objects
- ☒ **Storytelling:** to tell a story according to a short picture sequence

Teacher Reports

The teacher was asked to give to each child a grade on criteria that included the following: appearance, behavior, skills, knowledge, social skills and so on.

She was also asked to tell about the child's parents and their connection to her and to the kindergarten.

Findings

There were no significant differences between the HVP and the PCP graduates in cognitive and social skills.

The strongest group in the kindergartens was the group of children of Ethiopian origin parents who were more educated and living in stronger and more established Beersheva neighborhoods. The group of the early childhood program graduates was the second strongest group. Their achievements were very high and almost as high as the strongest group. The third group was the group of non-Ethiopian children. The four and last group were those children of Ethiopian origin from families with low socio-economic status. These children lagged far behind the others and were very weak.

There was a slight difference between the HVP and PCP groups of children. While parents from both of the early childhood program groups were described as cooperative and responsive, the teachers rated the PCP parents very high while the HVP parents were rated average. Two key reasons contribute to this result. First, the PCP demands the parents' active cooperation in an educational framework while the HVP does not. Second, the HVP parents are often weaker than the PCP parents.

The findings show the importance and the potential of early childhood intervention programs for children of immigrant families, like the Home Visiting Program and the Parent Cooperative Preschool, to contribute to the graduate children chances to gain equal skills and to increase their chances to compete equally within Israeli society.