ParentCorps

EVIDENCE FOR INVESTING IN FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN

THE CHALLENGE
Racial and ethnic minority children living in disadvantaged, urban neighborhoods bear a disproportionate burden of costly public health problems. Disparities in health and development are evident early in childhood and increase over time, resulting in unacceptably high rates of high school dropout, obesity and delinquency. At least half of the Black-White achievement gap is present at kindergarten entry.
In the US, 80% of the population lives in urban areas, and minority children are 6 to 9 times more likely than White children to live in concentrated poverty. The density and diversity of risks in urban areas pose major challenges and opportunities for strategic investments to improve population health.

THE SCIENCE
Advances in neuroscience, developmental psychology and prevention science provide compelling evidence that the foundation for health - or disease - is established in early childhood. Positive parenting in early childhood is a key contributor to lifelong health and productivity. Yet, poverty constrains parenting resources and jeopardizes the successful development of social, emotional and behavioral regulation skills. Collectively, these skills impact executive functioning (such as working memory, the ability to shift attention or resist distraction) and are now recognized as core components of “readiness” for school and essential for lifelong well-being and productivity.
Rigorous randomized controlled trials (RCTs) demonstrate that strengthening parenting and early education and childcare environments can ameliorate the potentially devastating impact of stress on learning, behavior and health, especially for children who are at highest risk for long-term problems. Science calls for investing in families early in children’s lives.

PARENTCORPS
ParentCorps is a family-centered, school-based preventive intervention designed to foster healthy development and school success among young children (ages 3–6) living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. ParentCorps is implemented as a universal intervention (for all children) in early childhood education or childcare settings (“school”) as a family program (14-week behavioral parenting intervention and concurrent group for children) and professional development for early childhood educators. The goal is to promote children’s social, emotional and behavioral regulation skills by engaging and supporting both parents and early childhood teachers.

ParentCorps was designed to serve culturally-diverse communities. The approach to behavior change is collaborative, autonomy-supporting and non-prescriptive. The program focuses explicitly on family cultural values, beliefs and norms, and recognizes the broad spectrum of strengths and multiple stressors associated with urban disadvantage.

THE EVIDENCE
ParentCorps has been rigorously evaluated in 2 RCTs. The evidence below is from an RCT with 1050 Black and Latino children.

ParentCorps improves learning. Compared to students in randomly-assigned control schools, those in intervention schools scored significantly and substantially higher on reading, writing and math achievement tests.

By the 4th year of implementation in a school, the impact on reading achievement in kindergarten was analogous to a 19% increase in percentile rank, moving the average reader (50th percentile) up to above average (69th percentile). This is comparable to the 0.50 standard deviation achievement gap documented between Black and White kindergarten students, suggesting the potential of ParentCorps to help close the gap.

PARENTCORPS IMPACT ON KINDERGARTEN READING ACHIEVEMENT

Size of Black-White achievement gap on reading

All Students
Students with Parental Participation
Students with Family Participation
ParentCorps strengthens parenting and early school environments. Relative to controls, families of children in intervention schools were more knowledgeable about effective parenting, they provided more support for positive behavior, and they were more involved in education (as rated by teachers). For the highest-risk families, intervention also resulted in increased parent confidence and involvement in early learning activities at home, and decreased harsh and inconsistent behavior management. Relative to control schools, independent observers rated ParentCorps classroom environments as higher quality by the 2nd year of implementation in a school. Professional development resulted in improvements in classroom climate, behavior management and instructional productivity, providing all students with more opportunities to learn.

ParentCorps yields broad benefits for the highest risk children. Young children who have difficulties with self-regulation are at high risk for a range of problems, including obesity and serious conduct problems. In this high-risk group, ParentCorps resulted in lower rates of sedentary behavior (such as TV viewing) in girls, increased physical activity in boys, and substantially lower rates of obesity (BMI > 95th%) in both girls and boys. ParentCorps altered the negative developmental trajectory for dysregulated boys, resulting in lower levels of serious conduct problems, including defiance, aggression, cheating and stealing.

**PARENTCORPS IMPACT ON PARENTING**

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<th>Magnitude of Effect (Cohen's d)</th>
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- Knowledge of Effective Parenting
- Positive Behavior Support
- Involvement in Education (teacher report)
- Involvement in Education (parent report)*
- Behavior Management*

* High-risk children and families

**PARENTCORPS IMPACT ON CONDUCT PROBLEMS**

- Boys
- Spring of Pre-K, age 5
- Spring of Kindergarten, age 6

**PARENTCORPS IMPACT ON HEALTH AMONG HIGH-RISK CHILDREN**

- Body Mass Index, age 8
- Physical & Sedentary Activity, age 8

**PARENTCORPS IMPACT ON PRE-KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM QUALITY**

- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3

- INTERVENTION
- CONTROL

**PARENTCORPS IMPACT ON CONDUCT PROBLEMS**

- HIGH RISK - CONTROL
- HIGH RISK - INTERVENTION
- LOW RISK - CONTROL
- LOW RISK - INTERVENTION

**SOURCE PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS BY BROTMAN AND PARENTCORPS TEAM**


A randomized controlled trial of ParentCorps: Promoting positive behavior supports in early childhood classrooms in high-need communities.

ParentCorps is a copyrighted program developed by LM Brotman, EJ Calzada & S Dawson-McClure

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